



Life Principles Notes™

Facing Life's Obstacles Part 4: Facing Criticism and Praise

Summary:

How do you respond to praise and criticism? We can tell a great deal about others by how they handle the positive and negative suggestions that come from other people. The right response to praise can motivate us to do our best, to look our best, and to be our best in a spirit of humility and thanksgiving. The right response to criticism can be a powerful tool in building us to be the Christians God wants us to be.

What happens when we fail to properly accept either of these? Throughout Proverbs we are warned

about the terrible damage to our lives when we fall short of godly principles for handling words of advice and instruction. Proverbs 27:21, for example, tells us that each person is tested by the praise that is accorded him. It makes no difference who is speaking to us or whether the observations are accurate. Our response is our measurement in maturity.

Key Passage: [Proverbs 27:1-2, 21](#)

Supporting Scripture: *Proverbs 10:17; 13:18; 15:31-32; 16:5, 18; 28:13; 29:1, 23.*

Scriptural Principles:

1 What are the wrong responses to criticism?

Criticism can be difficult to accept, and therefore we are often quick to respond in negative ways. The first mistake we can make is to become angry. We should always control our temper when we are criticized. Second, we should avoid being defensive and arguing over our weaknesses. Third, we should avoid going on the attack. Many people turn the criticism back toward the one doing the criticizing, and this can create a personal battle. It is also a mistake to accept criticism in silence or by pouting. No one enjoys being around us when we respond in that immature way. Instead, we should meet criticism with openness and maturity, with reasonableness rather than with negative emotions.

2 Why do people respond to criticism in negative ways?

For many reasons, most people fail to accept criticism in a mature fashion. One reason for this is a poor self-image. Some people grow up in an atmosphere of criticism rather than acceptance, and they have been too often victimized by mean-spirited words. A second reason is a feeling of insecurity. Such people expect the worst from others, and therefore criticism feeds their insecure feelings. A third factor is perfectionism. This is a form of enslavement that comes from setting our standards too high. We are so concerned about perfection that we become defensive toward any opposition. Finally, sinful pride and arrogance definitely encourage poor responses to criticism. As mature believers, we are always humbly looking for opportunities to grow.

3 What are the consequences when we cannot accept criticism?

Our response isn't determined by who speaks or whether the criticism is valid. As godly men and women, we respond in ways that are pleasing to God. The Proverbs warn us that many unhappy results come to us when we don't know how to deal with criticism. We suffer loss and we lose valuable opportunities. Those

who can't accept criticism miss out on love, because unconditional love must speak the truth. Defensive people isolate themselves and miss out on the wonderful love they need. We must also learn how to offer criticism with a gentle spirit. Being abusive can damage other people, particularly young people. Giving and receiving criticism lovingly makes a tremendous difference in life.

4 What is the proper response to criticism?

When someone offers a critical word, we should listen attentively and carefully, looking that person in the eye. We should keep silent while the critic is speaking and ask ourselves, "Is this a valid criticism? Is God trying to say something to me?" We should keep an open and teachable spirit rather than being defensive or going on the attack. Then, after the critic has spoken, we should always thank him for his words and promise to consider them. The criticism, of course, may not be valid. But if we feel that it was, then we should ask for forgiveness, and we may even thank them for the opportunity to improve our life.

5 What is the difference between praise and flattery?

As we think about praise, it is especially crucial to define our terms. When someone comes to us with inflated compliments designed to manipulate some kind of response, this is flattery rather than praise. Flattery often appeals to someone's pride or vanity, and it is deceitful and deceptive. Praise, on the other hand, is an expression of genuine appreciation for someone else, offered out of love and for that person's encouragement. God works in this kind of praise to build our love for one another and to strengthen us in maturity and skill.

6 What is the proper response to praise?

Some Christians immediately give God the credit verbally when they receive a compliment. As proper as it may seem, this habit can become a pathway to pride. It isn't necessary to say these words aloud each time. How, then, should we respond? When someone offers a compliment, we shouldn't look the other way or add an explanation. We should simply say, "Thank you." We should never contradict the compliment. Again, false humility is dangerous. However, it is very helpful to ask questions about the compliment. We may learn something valuable by gratefully asking what prompted these encouraging words. Most importantly we should deflect and redirect. To deflect is to thank God immediately in silent prayer. To redirect is to share the compliment with someone who has helped us, perhaps a spouse or a co-worker.

7 What are the rewards for handling criticism and praise properly?

We have all handled positive or negative words in the wrong way, and we have been discouraged by the results. What happens when we accept these remarks in the way that honors God? First, we experience a sense of peace in our relationships. Second, our gracious reactions attract other people to us, so that we find we have more rewarding friendships. Third, we discover that we have a healing influence in our relationships. Finally, we have the fullest impact with others as we allow Jesus Christ to live His life in and through us.

Conclusion:

What about you, my friend? Do you accept the words offered by others with the graciousness that the Holy Spirit provides us when we walk in His strength and His peace? Think about how you responded on the most recent occasion when someone criticized you at home or at work. If you silently deflected your last compliment to God, you will have a reliable indicator of your present maturity as a believer.

Words can build up and they can tear down. We serve an awesome God who gives us fresh opportunities for growth every single day, simply by hearing and applying constructive observations from those around us. My desire for you is that you would join me in the joy of following Jesus Christ, and pleasing Him through these important tools of praise and criticism. He will honor our obedience, and we will give Him all the glory. 🙌

Contact us:
1-800-789-1473

Customer Care
8:00 A.M.–10:00 P.M. | M-F (EST)

This and other Life Principles Notes are available to download at www.intouch.org
To learn more about *The Charles Stanley Institute for Christian Living* visit www.charlesstanleyinstitute.com