

The graduate school philosophy paper I had turned in was only three double-spaced, typewritten pages. The paper I received back from Dr. Mayhew, with a vicious, red C-minus, was six, single-spaced pages of critique.

“Does not follow logically...”

“Very poor grammatical construction...”

“Poor choice of words...”

“Poor grasp of the topic ...”

No one enjoys being criticized, but I kept this paper and threw out all my “better” college papers. Why? This paper meant much more to me. It was my first real breakthrough in dealing with criticism.

All people have a built in desire to be right and to be perceived as competent. Criticism attacks us at this deep level, so we prefer to avoid it. Our problem with criticism is compounded when we think the criticism is unwarranted. Perhaps our critic “doesn’t understand the whole situation.” Or he doesn’t see his own faults, so “what right does he have to criticize?” Or she’s “so picky nothing would ever be good enough.”

But you and I both know that there is no hope of escaping criticism, so we’ve got to deal with it. While there’s no easy way to deal with criticism, it’s not hard to understand how. You probably would guess that dealing with criticism is largely a matter of a change in attitude.

So let’s look at an “attitude adjustment process” that can be used easily any time you feel criticized. It is a process based on the word **LEARN**.

Listen carefully. In all criticism, whether fair or unfair there is at least a grain of truth. Find it.

Express gratitude. Thank the person if his honesty took courage or if it helped. Even if the criticism was unfair, you can thank the Lord for the chance you will have to become forgiving.

Avoid retaliation. Once criticized our tendency is either to avoid the critical person, turn cold or even find ways to “even the score” with critical comments later. You must not allow yourself any wiggle room. If you succeed at restraining any subtle “paybacks” you are more than halfway toward disarming the future power of criticism.

Respond humbly. If the criticism was fair, don't offer excuses. Just a simple "You're right" will do. If you think the criticism was unfair, still you should say honestly, "I'll consider it carefully. I promise." Then do it.

No longer I - principle. The Bible tells us that when we give ourselves in faith to Jesus Christ, He gives himself in truth to us. He now lives in us by His Spirit. That means that the person who was absolutely perfect in character and deed, and who faced the ultimate, unfounded criticism of crucifixion, the one who did not open his mouth to defend himself, and then opened it to forgive his persecutors - this Jesus now lives in you. If you ask Him, He will enable you to respond like He would. But you have to ask.

Take a few moments meditating on this brief passage of scripture and then write a couple prayerful sentences to help you handle the criticism you are facing like Jesus would.

It is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust [criticism] because he is conscious of God... To this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps... When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threat. Instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

1 Peter 2: 19-23