

Praise and Criticism

Objective

To learn how to respond to praise and criticism as a Christian and how to benefit from them in our life.

References:

- ❖ Sermon about Praise and Criticism by Charles Stanley www.insight.org.
- ❖ Book of Proverbs

Scriptural Verse

“The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise” (Proverbs 15:31)

Introduction

We often encounter comments of criticism and praise in our daily life. Comments of criticism are probably heard more often than praise, probably because it is easier for others to criticize than to praise. What matters is how we as Christians should interact and respond to both criticism and praise. We must also be careful in how we praise or criticize others.

Lesson Guidelines

I. Praise:

- Praise is not a reliable indicator of how well I am doing because many times we receive praise from people who are just trying to flatter and deceive us with words.
- Praise may have some merit if it is coming from a loving, caring, and honest source. However, even then it may still not be reliable as people have different standards in evaluating what is good or bad.
- Praise is also relative depending on its source. A person who is of lower level in any aspect may look up to you and praise you. On the other hand, a person who is of higher level in that aspect may look down on you and would not consider you worthy of praise.
- A true Christian ensures that praise does not make him proud or self righteous (Proverbs 27:2).
- Praise should be considered as an act of kindness and goodness of the praising person.
- Praise should be perceived as a source of encouragement to do more with better performance. As a Christian it should be considered as a means to excel in good deeds and virtues (John 12:43).
- Praise should not be considered an accurate marker of performance, (although it may be useful in some instances). God and His Word should always be the ultimate reference point on which performance is evaluated.
- We should always acknowledge, complement and praise good works and encourage one another to build stronger members in the body of Christ.

II. Criticism:

- Should be evaluated and accepted for construction regardless of the source or aim of the criticizing person.
- Some of the saints have excelled in their spiritual life from a word of criticism, e.g. St. Moses the Black and St. Anthony.
- A Christian should respond to criticism with a calm and objective attitude.
- An offensive or an exaggerated defensive attitude towards criticism demonstrates a weak personality.
- Ignoring criticism may also lead to uncontrollable situations.
- A strong Christian does not allow criticism to destroy him or lower his self esteem but rather to build him up into a better person.
- A true Christian has an obedient and desiring ear to constructive criticism.
- A true Christian also considers the manner and the time when they communicate their constructive criticism to others, making sure that they are not hurtful and condescending.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ's manner of communicating with the Samaritan woman teaches us how to choose the correct manner and time to communicate criticism to others.

Conclusion

A Christian carefully chooses the time and the manner to praise and constructively criticize others (Proverbs 15:23). A true Christian also accepts criticism and praise to excel spiritually.

Activities/Discussion Points

1. Divide into groups and give hypothetical cases of criticism and praise. What would be appropriate responses in all situations?
2. Can a negative person who continuously criticizes others change? How?