

Constructive Criticism

Ready:

Don't rebuke a mocker, or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man, and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man, and he will learn more. — Proverbs 9:8–9

Set

Nobody likes to be criticized, and athletics is full of criticism. Whether it's from players, coaches, parents, or fans, any coach on any level has had to deal with the "critic."

Unfortunately, not all criticism is constructive. Not every letter, signed and unsigned, becomes "fan mail." Not all comments, phone calls, or conferences seek to gracefully instruct us. Instead, some are hurtful. Our verses today state that a wise man loves those who rebuke him. He's open to instruction and learning— learning that can even occur from a critic who's not out to teach, but to hurt. Sometimes these critics become our best counselors. Although their intentions most likely border on "taking a shot" or two, in the process we can receive some valuable insights we might not have gotten otherwise. Proverbs says, "Lashes and wounds purge away evil, and beatings cleanse the innermost parts" (Pr 20:30).

A great Christian leader once said to look for the seeds of truth in every criticism. That's good advice. A turning point in my attitude as a coach came from one of my biggest detractors. Through their wounds, I paused to reflect and God exposed some things in my life that needed to go. If God's trying to get a message to us, and we're not listening, a critic is often one way He can get our attention. God doesn't want to hurt us, but He does desire to transform us. The Bible states that God disciplines us so that we may share in His holiness (Heb 12:10). Evaluate criticism for seeds of truth, then grow in the grace God provides. If, after reflection and prayer, you realize they're missing seeds of truth, move on. Leave things in God's hands. Even Jesus was criticized and He was never wrong.

Go

1. As a coach, what causes you to be critical?
2. Why does criticism hurt and make us angry?

Workout

Extra Reading: Hebrews 12:5–11

Overtime

Father, help us look for truth, even when criticism might hurt. Amen.

Bible Reference:

Hebrews 12



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