

Handling Criticism

n/a

Ready:

“Perhaps the LORD will see my affliction and restore goodness to me.” — 2 Samuel 16:12a

Set

David experienced some very low times in his life. During one of these times, Absalom, his son, had taken over the capitol city, and David had to run to the hills for his life. During his hasty retreat, David encountered a man named Shimei, who was walking on a hillside. From where he stood, Shimei began to curse David and throw stones and dirt at him. David was flanked on the right and left by loyal members of his administration, and they were getting hit with stones as well.

Apparently Shimei assumed that David’s power was quickly failing and that he could ridicule David without suffering any consequences for his actions. Very few people have the guts to criticize us when we are winning and on the top of our game, but they do not hesitate to kick us when we’re down. The response of David’s guard Abishai was to ask permission to silence Shimei. He wanted to do so by cutting off Shimei’s head. That would certainly stop the criticism, but silencing the critic by cutting his head off is not exactly God’s way of handling the situation. Retaliation is usually our knee-jerk response but not one that God wants from us.

In contrast to Abishai, David responded with patience and discernment. He recognized that somehow his apparent fall from power was a part of God’s sovereign plan and that God would deal with Shimei and others like him.

In order to handle criticism like David did, there are three important principles for us to embrace. First, our identity and security must rest solely and completely in Christ. We can count on the fact that our true security will be exposed when we receive criticism. Second, our faith must be grounded in the sovereignty of God. We must believe that God will handle the situation as he sees best. Third, our desire to do the right thing has to be more important than our feelings. David’s response to Shimei surely went against the grain, and therefore his gut reaction to Shimei was likely the same as Abishai’s; however, David elected to do what was right rather than succumb to selfish emotions. God worked on the heart of Shimei, and he eventually repented of his sin.

Go

1. How do you feel when you are criticized? Do your feelings dictate your response to criticism?
2. Describe a situation in which a coach or a player responded to criticism from fans or others

by using force. What was the result?

Workout

Extra Reading: 2 Samuel 16:5–14; 19:18–23

Overtime

Dear God, help me to be patient when criticized, and help me to trust You for the wisdom to handle my accusers. Amen.



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