How to Hear Difficult Criticism

Matthew 5:38-48

Introduction:

1. I have not always liked criticism.
   1. There was a time when I avoided it.
   2. A Monday afternoon counseling session changed that.
2. Today, how do we deal with difficult (all) criticism; how do I evaluate criticism.
3. 2 verses in 2 chapters in Proverbs.
4. Proverbs 12.
   1. Verse 1: if criticism will help me to do and/or be better, it is stupid to reject it.
   2. Verse 16: if it is an insult, why would I want to empower and entertain the insulter, by reacting to it?
5. Proverbs 21.
   1. Verse 2.
      1. Why does the insulter insult?
      2. He thinks he is doing you, himself, his family, the church, the brotherhood a good service.
   2. Verse 23.
      1. What should be my first response?
      2. Listen, ask questions, express appreciation, listen some more.
         1. Tell me more.
         2. Thank you for being concerned.
         3. Thank you for wanting to help me.
         4. What else have I done or not done that is hurtful, ineffective, or disappointing?
   3. Why do people do wrong, hurtful things? Luke 23:34
   4. Is it possible that some of the things that are right in my own eyes are wrong, hurtful?
   5. Can I suspend Heaven and Hell judgment on them and me until the proper time and in the presence of the proper Person? 1 Corinthians 4:1-5
6. Today we will be focusing on people who are hurtful and insulting
7. There are people who are difficult.
8. There are people who are evil (wicked, malicious, mischievous [Louw-Nida]).
9. Must I continue to be hurt and abused by this person?
10. Paul’s summary. Romans 12:18
11. Jesus’ explanation of “as much as depends on you.”
12. TWO SLAPS, TWO COATS, TWO MILES.
    1. I am dealing with an abusive, overbearing, demanding person.
    2. Be sure I am dealing with an abusive, overbearing, demanding person and not that I am over-sensitive and/or having a bad day.
       1. Take two slaps. Matthew 5:38, 39
       2. Give two coats. Matthew 5:40
       3. Walk two miles. Matthew 5:41
    3. Treat people right, who treat you wrong, regardless of how you feel. Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:17-21
13. THEN WHAT: TWO VISITS, TWO WITNESSES, TWO WARNINGS−DON’T LET THAT PERSON HURT YOU ANYMORE.
    1. Two visits. Matthew 18:15-17
    2. Two witnesses. Matthew 18:16; 1 Timothy 5:19
    3. Two warnings. Titus 3:10, 11
14. OUR HOPE IS IN OUR PAIN.
    1. Pain is productive. Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-5
    2. For pain to be productive, it is helpful to be
       1. Anticipated. Matthew 16:21; Job 14:1
       2. Chosen. John 10:17, 18; Philippians 3:8-11
       3. Managed. Matthew 26:53, 54;2 Timothy 1:12
    3. What Jesus taught in Matthew 5 teaches us to manage our pain inflicted by others.
       1. I will go out of my way to get along with others: two slaps, two coats, two miles.
       2. No one has permission to continue to abuse me.
       3. There is a limit.
       4. As we grow and change, we may want to change our boundaries too. Here are some examples of boundaries common to codependents who are recovering:

* I will not allow anyone to physically or verbally abuse me. I will not knowingly believe or support lies.
* I will not allow chemical abuse in my home.
* I will not allow criminal behavior in my home.
* I will not rescue people from the consequences of their alcohol abuse or other irresponsible behavior.
* I will not finance a person’s alcoholism or other irresponsible behavior. I will not lie to protect you or me from your alcoholism.
* I will not use my home as a detoxification center for recovering alcoholics.
* If you want to act crazy that’s your business, but you can’t do it in front of me. Either you leave or I’ll walk away. You can spoil your fun, your day, your life−that’s your business−but I won’t let you spoil my fun, my day, or my life (*Codependent No More*, by Melody Beattie, pages 200, 201).

Conclusion:

1. The two great commandments. Mark 12:29-31
2. I don’t want some people loving me like they love themselves.
3. I am not helping people when I let them continually hurt me and others.
4. I do not love others when I let them continue to hurt me.
5. Once upon a time, a woman moved to a cave in the mountains to study with a guru.

She wanted, she said, to learn everything there was to know. The guru supplied her with stacks of books and left her alone so she could study. Every morning, the guru returned to the cave to monitor the woman’s progress. In his hand, he carried a heavy wooden cane. Each morning, he asked her the same question: “Have you learned everything there is to know yet?” Each morning, her answer was the same. “No,” she said, “I haven’t.” The guru would then strike her over the head with his cane

The scenario repeated itself for months. One day the guru entered the cave, asked the same question, heard the same answer, and raised his can to hit her in the same way, but the woman grabbed the cane from the guru, stopping his assault in midair.

Relieved to end the daily battering but fearing reprisal, the woman looked up at the guru. To her surprise, the guru smiled. “Congratulations,” he said, “You have graduated. You now know everything you need to know.”

“How’s that?,” the woman asked.

“You have learned that you will never learn everything there is to know,” he replied. “And you have learned how to stop the pain” (*Codependent No More*, by Melody Beattie, page 7).

1. However…WHAT IF I AM THE DIFFICULT PERSON?
2. Is it possible that in this number this morning there is one difficult person in this group?
3. What if it is me?
   1. Quit slapping.
   2. Quit suing (check translations).
   3. Quit demanding.
   4. Repent when I have been overbearing. Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9
   5. Repent when I have offended−even when others don’t
   6. Repent of the “little” I have done wrong when others have done more and bigger things wrong.
      1. Remove my planks and specks before others remove their specks and planks. Matthew 7:1-5
      2. Remove my planks and specks even if others never remove their planks and specks.
4. Rather than respond now, think about it.
   1. Do all you can to be reconciled with someONE before you are reconciled with everyone. Matthew 5:23, 24
   2. Get started soon. James 4:13-17
   3. Practice often. 1 John 1:7
5. Let the healing begin. James 5:16

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