

I Declare: Criticism

Week 4

Discussion Guide



Icebreaker

On a scale of 1-10, how much does criticism usually affect your mood or confidence?

- 1 = "It rolls right off me"
- 10 = "It keeps me up at night"

Read

Take turns reading 2 Corinthians 10 1-11 and John 15:18-25

Discuss

Jesus warns His followers in John 15 that they should anticipate criticism and even hatred. He shares that He was hated without reason and so naturally the world will hate His followers. Anticipating criticism doesn't make it go away, but it lessens the blow because we are no longer blindsided by the world's standards.

- **Why do you think Jesus wanted His followers to expect criticism instead of being surprised by it?**
- **How does anticipating criticism change the way we experience it emotionally?**
- **Where have you felt tension or push back in your life lately?**
- **How does knowing that Jesus faced the most criticism help you process the criticism you receive today?**

In 2 Cor. 10:1-6 Paul explains that we live in a world of criticism, but we don't have to fight back using the world's weapons. He explains that we can demolish arguments by "taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

- **What thoughts tend to take over your mind during or after criticism?**
- **What does it mean to "take every thought captive?"**
- **How can you practically "take that thought captive" instead of letting it spiral into a stronghold of insecurity or anger?**

Paul is being criticized for how he leads and is accused of being tough in his letters, but weak in person. Paul responds by building them up instead of tearing them down.

- **How can we discern the difference between life-giving reproof (Prov. 15:31) that builds us up and criticism that is merely based on outward appearances or a desire to tear us down?**

Application

How we respond to criticism is often a leading indicator of our personal and spiritual health. Just like a car's dashboard has warning lights for low gas, our level of sensitivity and our response to criticism can tell us when our "tanks" are empty. When we are close to Jesus and remaining in His love, we are better equipped to handle the weight of others' opinions. Read Luke 6:45 and evaluate your tanks using the RPMS method.

- **R (Relational): Are your relationships (work, home, friends) giving you life or draining you?**
- **P (Physical): Are you getting enough rest and managing your energy?**
- **M (Mental): What dominant thoughts are currently filling your mind?**
- **S (Spiritual): Do you feel connected to God through prayer or Scripture?**
- **Thinking through your answers to these questions, what is one change that you can make this week to fill one of these tanks?**

Prayer

Spend time in prayer asking God to search your heart and reveal any areas where you are spiritually, emotionally, or relationally depleted and invite Him to help replenish those tanks.