

# Profiting from Criticism

## LIFEFAITHFUSION DEVOTIONAL DAY ONE

### SCRIPTURE STUDY

2 Chronicles 7:91-21  
Proverbs 12:1, 14, 16  
Proverbs 22:15  
Proverbs 10:8, 10, 14  
Proverbs 18:2  
Proverbs 11:29  
Proverbs 29:9

### DIGGING DEEPER

The fool is oblivious to criticism:  
“A rebuke impresses a man of discernment more than a hundred lashes a fool.” Proverbs 17:10 (NIV) Listen and learn.

### PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,  
I want to be teachable and sensitive to Your voice and to the exhortation of wise people You place in my life.  
Amen



### CRITICISM IS PROFITABLE

Movie critics, food critics, sportscasters, business consultants, and pollsters are collecting large paychecks for their services. Fair and balanced evaluation of businesses, performing arts and public services is considered to be of great value. King Solomon, in his wisdom, also affirmed this fact. It takes love, great courage, and candor to help someone to get an objective viewpoint. Conversely, criticism can be petty, unfounded, and unfair. Self-proclaimed critics can use scathing accusations that only lead to pain and devastation. So how do we determine which criticism to receive, and which to reject? Proverbs gives us some great clues. The Old Testament prophets were able to warn of God’s judgment with integrity and boldness. We will also look at the life of Jesus, because He had mastered the art of speaking the truth in love. King Solomon summarized the importance of receiving constructive criticism in Proverbs 12:1:

“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.” (NIV)

In Hebrew, *towkechah*- *correction* or *reproof* implies argument, correction, reasoning, and chastening. Solomon paints a colorful picture of strong rebuke in this verse. Notice the steps that have to occur to respond properly to strong correction: we have to see another point of view (argument), we have to be willing to mentally engage with the criticism (reasoning), we have to correct our behavior (correction), and we must accept the consequences of foolish choices (chastening). The Hebrew monarch writes that the teachable person loves and receives such information. The fool hates it.

- What is your typical response when you are criticized? Are you emotional? Do you find it difficult to listen without defending yourself? Why or why not?
- How do you best process information? Are you a visual learner (what you see) , an auditory learner (what you hear), or kinesthetic learner (what you experience)? How will this affect the way you learn from others?
- What is the best feedback you ever received? Who gave it to you? What was your relationship with them?

We punish our children for labeling a classmate as “stupid” when they get into an altercation on the playground. No one wants to have their character assassinated in such a crass way. However, Solomon defines a fool several times in his book of Proverbs. In Proverbs 12: 1, the New International Version uses the moniker “stupid.” The word in the original language is *brutish*, and depicts a person who is wasteful, burning up all that is worthwhile. In Proverbs 10:14, the wise king further elucidates the concept that the wise man treasures knowledge, while the stupid man, in his flippant ignorance, throws it away:

A “brute” is defined in English as someone who lumbers roughshod over everyone and everything in his path-destroying others by self-absorption and insensitivity.

“Wise men store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.” (NIV)

Foolishness is instinctive-it does not have to be learned. In Proverbs 22:15, Solomon pens these insightful words in Proverbs 22:15

“Folly is **bound up** in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.” (NIV)

Parents often tease that the children who listened and responded to parental guidance in their early years, grow deaf when they reach adolescence. To Mom and Dad’s amazement, when these teens become young adults, their parents grow “smart” again! Part of the reason for such cavalier attitudes and flagrant disregard for parental guidance is simply developmental. Scientists tell us that a set of genetic reactions fire as our children reach puberty to distance themselves from their mothers and fathers when they mature. God’s purpose is to give them the ability to learn who they are and to launch successfully into adulthood. However, teens can be incredibly foolish, especially when parents lovingly warn them of the consequences of their unwise behaviors. Neurologists also reveal that the pre-frontal cortex of the brain-the place where judgments and moral decisions are made-is not completely formed until a female reaches eighteen and a male reaches twenty-one. No wonder insurance companies charge an arm and a leg to insure teenage boys! One of the best defenses to combat the “foolishness” of our growing children is to build a strong relationship with them in their early years. When we are pouring love, acceptance, affirmation, time, teaching and discipline into our children in their early years, they will be more receptive to reproof in the difficult adolescent years. For more information regarding parenting and correction, please refer to the studies “The Indispensable Tool to the Life of Wisdom” and “Train Up a Child.” Wisdom must be taught! Criticism is valuable, and when we waste it by disregarding what is said, we experience great loss.

- How do you most often correct others? Are you able to admonish someone without being angry?
- Do you find your children (adolescents) to be receptive to your correction and advice? Why or why not?

- What are some creative ways to build a bridge to your children (physical and/or spiritual) that will help them to be more receptive to your admonition?

### WHO IS A FOOL?

King Solomon has many descriptions of foolish people in Proverbs. In Proverbs 10: 8, 10, and 14, the king assures us that the fool will come to ruin. Proverbs 10:18 states that that the foolish person is a slanderer. The fool enjoys unwise behavior (Proverbs 10:23) and seems to act without a moral compass (Proverbs 12:15). He is hot-headed, easily annoyed, and reckless (Proverbs 12:16; 14:16). He not only refuses advice, he scorns the messenger (Proverbs 23:9). The imprudent person is ultimately oblivious to constructive criticism, and will be destroyed by his arrogance:

“A fool finds no pleasure in understanding, but delights in airing his own opinions.” Proverbs 18:2 (NIV)

Solomon’s conclusion is that the arrogant, stubborn person who will not receive correction is in a dangerous place. He warns that he will always be subservient to the wise (Proverbs 11:29), and is implacable (Proverbs 29:9). He is a trouble-maker and will wreak havoc wherever he goes.

We might assume that a fool, according to Solomon, was always unsuccessful and despised. Fools can be famous and wealthy. Even Solomon, the wisest man on the planet, ultimately lived a foolish life because he ignored God’s warning:

“But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them, and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. I will make it a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. 2 Chronicles 7:19-21 (NIV)

The wisest, wealthiest king in the history of the world heard God’s timely warning to avoid idolatry. Solomon was chosen among all men to build God’s glorious temple, and by his flagrant regard for God’s Word, he lost it all. Most of us do not have divine appearances where Jehovah speaks directly to us, but we have something better. We have the Word of God. His instructions are clear, timely, and specific. When we follow the Guidebook, we will be blessed to live wonderful, fulfilling lives.

- List some of the wisest people you know. What qualities do you see in them that you want to emulate?
- Have you ever made a foolish choice? Have you ever disregarded wise counsel? What was the advice? What were the results of your decision?
- What are some ways that you could become more teachable and humble? Who in your life do you approach to seek counsel? Are your mentors mature, spiritual people? What steps could you take to develop “truth-tellers” in your life?

### APPLYING THE TRUTH

*Re-read these verses and list the qualities a wise person needs to have in regards to criticism.*

2 Chronicles 7:91-21, Proverbs 12:1, 14, 16; Proverbs 22:15, Proverbs 10:8, 10, 14; Proverbs 18:2, Proverbs 11:29, Proverbs 29:9