

# Profiting from Criticism

## LIFE FAITH FUSION DEVOTIONAL DAY FOUR

### SCRIPTURE STUDY

Proverbs 1:5-6, 8-9  
Proverbs 4:10, 20-21  
Proverbs 5:7,  
Proverbs 13:1, 19-20  
Proverbs 23:19, 22  
Ecclesiastes 5:1-2

### DIGGING DEEPER

Worship has many expressions. Perhaps one of the most sincere offerings we can give to God is our silence and respect. Isaiah, Job and Paul, and John were speechless in the presence of the Almighty.

### PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,  
Help me to be a good listener,  
both to You and to those wise  
counselors You have placed in  
my life.  
Amen



### THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

The key to profiting from criticism is a receptive, teachable heart. Solomon wrote many practical verses in the book of Proverbs about the benefits of listening to reproof. Because Proverbs are “poetic” in conception, the words pictures utilized by the Hebrew king to personify the eager listener are poignant and helpful. Solomon begins his book with the stated purpose of teaching and correcting the learner:

“Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance —for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.” Proverbs 1:5-6 (NIV)

The wise person not only listens to counsel, but appropriates the knowledge into his “repository” of wisdom. He is then able to apply the information, utilize it to sift through life choices, and make a good decision. The spiritual person never stops learning. He is always a student of wisdom. Proverbs 1:8-9 states that heeding a father’s advice, and never ignoring a mother’s counsel will beautify a life and make others want to emulate it. The king teaches in Proverbs 4:10 that the listener must accept what is being said—not just hear the words. The verbs to **accept**, *laqach* implies to receive and carry away, to fetch. We should take the truth, put it in our “tote bag,” and never leave it at home. Like a golden retriever, good counsel is thrown out to us like a tasty bone, and we should persistently and eagerly seize it, and digest it.

- When you approach God’s Word, are you eager to read it, or do you find it to be an obligatory, routine task? Why do you feel this way? What are some ways that you can vary your Bible study to make it more compelling for you? (For example, reading different translations, journaling, word studies, devotional books, etc.)
- Are there times when you receive prompting from God and you don’t want to listen? Why? List some areas of your life where you would like to become more pliable and receptive.
- When you are listening to a sermon, how can you utilize the information and apply it to your life? Do you take notes when you go to church? Do you bring your Bible? Do you make notes in your Bible or highlight key passages? Do you talk with your family about the sermon after services?

### RETAINING WISDOM

We further learn from Solomon that we should hold wise advice close to our hearts:

“My son, **pay attention** to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart.” Proverbs 4:20-21 (NIV)

“Pay attention” literally means to “prick up the ears.” Alluding back to our eager puppy, we remember how our canine friend comes to attention the moment he hears the slightest sound. His ears lift, his tail wags, and he runs to the door. Wise criticism should cause us to sit up and take notice. We should be alert to those teachable moments when God speaks to us directly, through others, or through His Word. Proverbs 19:20 promises us that when we listen and obey Him, we will most assuredly become prudent people.

Another key to becoming wise is to know to whom we should listen. King Solomon reiterates several times in Proverbs how essential it is to revere mother and father, for several reasons. First of all, because it was one of the ten commandments God handed down to Moses. The commandment had a promise: honoring parents produces long life. We believe this because God said it. Furthermore, it’s just common sense. Parents have been around the block. They know from experience how life works, and their wisdom can prevent us from attending the “school of hard knocks.”

- List some advice that you have received from your parents (or key influencers in your life.) What did they say? What did you learn?
- How have you applied nuggets of parental wisdom you have been given? List some situations where you have benefited from their sagely advice.
- Have you ever suffered from disregarding your parent’s advice? What were the consequences? What could you have done differently?

## LISTENING TO GOD'S ADVICE

When we honor our progenitors, we also learn how to honor our Heavenly Father, and humbly learn from Him. We should approach God carefully and humbly-not speaking in a cavalier way, but quietly and reverently listening:

“Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.”  
Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 (NIV)

Court etiquette was very specific in the time of the Hebrew kings. When you entered the throne room, you bowed. You did not speak unless you were spoken to, and you never left the ruler's presence without being excused. We learn in the book of Esther that the Medeo-Persian customs were even more strict. Queen Esther knew that if she went before her husband the king uninvited, she could be put to death. Entering the throne room was serious business. Approaching God's throne room should be even more significant. We must recognize God's awesome power and holiness. We measure our words and open our ears. And when He speaks, we immediately and unquestionably do what He says.

Finally, we have the assurance that when we come before God with a humble spirit and an obedient heart, He most assuredly will lead us. God is not a cosmic Easter Bunny hiding His Will from His poor, hapless creatures. No, of course not! He is waiting to show us His plans and purposes for our lives. Our job is to be still, listen carefully, and obey what He says:

“He (God) guides the humble in what is right, and teaches them His way.” Psalm 25:9 (NIV)

- Take some time to remember when you have met God in your quiet times with Him. What were you feeling? What did you take away from that experience? If you cannot remember a time of intimacy with Him, spend some time praying and ask Him to reveal Himself to you in a personal way. That's a prayer He will always answer!
- How do you prepare to go to church on a Sunday morning? Do you rush out the door, fighting the kids and the traffic? Can you plan to make more time for Sunday mornings to be less chaotic? What can be done the night before to make Sunday less hectic? Do you pray with your family before you go to church?
- Do you set aside times to worship God? Do you give your heart to God in worship when you are in church? How can your corporate worship experience be more meaningful? Which of the following would help your **personal** worship time to be more fulfilling? Circle the ones you enjoy, or would like to try.

*Writing prayers of adoration and thanksgiving. Singing or praying through the Psalms. Listening to worship music and singing along. Playing an instrument to God. Spending time in quiet meditation as you look at the world God has made. Praying and praising God with a friend. Writing praise poetry.*

## APPLYING THE SCRIPTURES

Proverbs 1:5-6, 8-9, Proverbs 4:10, 20-21, Proverbs 5:7, Proverbs 13:1, 19-20, Proverbs 23:19, 22, Ecclesiastes 5:1-2