

Are You Being Too Critical?

2024-06-10 • PASTOR MATT ROSE



Proverbs 15:1

FOR THE LEADER

These questions help you run the conversation. They are not your study. Get into the passage yourself first, because your group needs what God taught you, not just a list of questions. These also lean on Sunday's message, so a few will not land for anyone who missed it. Watch it before you lead.

WHAT THE MESSAGE WAS ABOUT

Criticism is a real need expressed without forethought. That is Pastor Matt's definition, and it explains why criticism lands as a nag and produces nothing. There is usually something legitimate underneath it, but the packaging ruins the delivery. He named the forms it takes: a sharp tone, an exaggeration, the words always and never, an accusing why question. The alternatives are a gentle start and I statements. And underneath the whole message is one deeper point: no spouse, boss, or friend can meet the need that Christ has already met.

To get started

- What is a phrase someone uses that puts you on the defensive immediately?

Looking back at the message

This is the first of four on relationship patterns. Some in the room are in painful marriages; keep the tone gentle and do not push anyone to disclose.

- 1 Pastor Matt named three kinds of marriages: the ones that fight, the ones that never fight, and the ones that have learned to manage conflict. Which one describes yours, or the relationships closest to you?
- 2 Criticism shows up as a sharp tone, exaggeration, the words always and never, and accusing why questions. Which one is your habit?
- 3 Criticism is a real need expressed without forethought. Think about the last time you criticized someone. What was the real need underneath it? OPTIONAL

Looking at the passage

Read Proverbs 15:1 and Galatians 5:15. Short verses, direct application.

- 4 Read Proverbs 15:1. Two outcomes are named. What determines which one you get?
- 5 Read Galatians 5:14-15. Paul warns about biting and devouring each other. Who does he say ends up consumed?
- 6 Read Ephesians 4:29. What standard does Paul set for every word that leaves your mouth?
- 7 Read James 1:19. Quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. How often do you get that order right, and which step trips you first? OPTIONAL

Bringing it home

The I statement is the concrete tool. Have people practice one out loud if they are willing.

- 8 Pastor Matt said a conversation usually ends the way it starts, so a gentle start changes everything after it. When have you watched that play out?
- 9 Think of one conversation you have been having badly on repeat. How could you restart it this week with an I statement?
- 10 Pastor Matt said the goal of a hard conversation is not to change the other person but to love them the way Christ loved you, and to trust God with the changing. Does that land on you as giving up or as relief?
- 11 What need have you been asking a person to meet that only God can meet? OPTIONAL

The group together

If anyone describes a situation involving safety, do not problem-solve in the group. Talk to them afterward and involve a pastor.

- 12 Why is it easier to criticize someone than to just say what you actually need?
- 13 How could this group be a place where people speak honestly without cutting each other?
- 14 Who in your life is used to hearing criticism from you? What could you say to them this week instead?

BEFORE YOU FINISH

What is the one conversation you will start gently this week?

You might pray about

- For relationships that have been worn down by criticism
- For the self-awareness to name our own needs
- For anyone in the group whose home is hard right now