

Helpful Criticism

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1



Lesson 12

Focus:

Give and receive constructive criticism with love.

Lesson 12

Bible Basis:

Galatians 2:11-14;
2 Peter 3:15-16

Lesson 12

Memory Verse:

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. —
Ephesians 4:15

Students will learn that while correction may be painful, criticism given with love can help us grow.

Materials:

- None

➤ **When's the last time you were criticized for doing something wrong?** (Allow your students to share brief stories, either funny or serious. Keep it short and upbeat—don't let your students turn this into a serious gripe session.)

➤ **It sounds like all of us know what criticism feels like. Did anyone enjoy the experience?** (Answer will undoubtedly be: Of course not!)

Being told that you did something wrong is never fun. None of us like it. However, criticism can still be helpful, such as when it keeps us from doing something dangerous. Aren't you glad your parents criticized you when you tried to play in traffic?

➤ **What are some other examples of criticism that might be hard to hear but are actually helpful?** (Accept all reasonable answers, which may include constructive criticism about growing a skill, getting better at a sport, working on musical performance, etc.)

➤ **What types of criticism are hurtful?** (Criticism that seeks to hurt or feelings without helping us improve, criticism that isn't rooted in love and care for others.)

In our lives, we often get criticized by the people around us. It's easy to just ignore criticism because it doesn't feel good. But if we listen to what people who care about us are saying, their criticism can keep us safe and make us better people.

➤ **Can you think of a time when criticism from someone you trusted made you a better person?** (A teen might mention a coach who criticized his jump shot to help him improve it, or a teacher who criticized her lack of effort to keep her from failing a class.)

The people we meet in the Bible were subject to criticism, too. Even Jesus' twelve disciples were corrected for doing things wrong. But when they took it to heart, it helped them grow. Let's see how Peter responded when another spiritual leader told him he messed up.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

Helpful Criticism

for use as
STEP 4 

Lesson 12

Focus:

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Lesson 12

Memory Verse:

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. —
Ephesians 4:15

Materials:

- Index cards (1 per student)
- Pens/pencils (1 per student)

If your class is meeting online, invite your students to bring a pen/pencil and index card with them to class.

All of us face criticism at times, and it's never fun. But when criticism comes from people who care about us, we should pay attention! What they're saying may keep us safe or help us become better people. It worked for Peter, and it can certainly work for us.

At the beginning of the lesson, we talked about criticism we've received. Think for a minute about the last time you were criticized. Was it *helpful* criticism, given by someone who cares about you to help you grow? Or was it *unhelpful* criticism, given by someone who was just having a bad day?

If it was *helpful* criticism, keep it in mind. If it was *unhelpful*, feel free to forget it! But for the sake of our closing activity, try to think of a time when someone gave you *helpful* criticism.

- **Would anyone be willing to share the helpful criticism you received?** (This may be a difficult topic for your middle schoolers to discuss. Encourage them to share by telling your own brief story first.)
- **Have you done anything about that criticism—in other words, has it helped you grow?** (Be careful not to shame your teens if they haven't addressed the problem yet.)

Hand out index cards and pens/pencils to your students. If your class is meeting online, invite them to have those items ready. **On your index card, write down the criticism you received. So you might write, "My algebra teacher said I didn't do my homework," or "My friend told me I didn't listen to her when she was upset."**

Now, flip the card over. **On the other side, write down something you can DO to grow from the criticism—something that you can realistically accomplish this week. You might**

write **“I’ll turn in my algebra homework every day this week,”** or **“I’ll apologize to my friend for not being a good listener.”** Give your students a minute or two to record their thoughts.

Criticism is never fun. However, when it comes from people who care about us, it can help us grow. Make a commitment to the action step that you wrote on your card.

Criticism doesn’t have to leave you feeling weak and discouraged. Instead, it can make you stronger than ever!

Close in prayer. Ask God to help you and your students genuinely grow from criticism during the week ahead. If time permits, ask (but don’t require) your students to share the growth plans they wrote down on their notecards.

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