

Facing Criticism as a Leader: 3 Responses

One of the things young leaders are often unprepared for is the amount of criticism they will face. Their enthusiasm and optimism lead them to believe everyone will be just as excited and committed to their mission as they are. Unfortunately it doesn't take long until their idealism collides with criticism. This can be a defining moment for a leader's character, confidence and ultimately their credibility.

There is nothing like a small dose of criticism to stir your emotions, disfigure your self-esteem and get you off track from pursuing the thing God has called you to do. That's why it's essential we process and respond correctly when criticism comes our way. There are basically three options we can choose from.

- **Submissive leader** – The submissive tends to be a people pleaser. They have a mentality that *“the customer is always right and I must please them to keep them.”* When faced with criticism they cower, wiggle and accommodate in order to keep everyone happy. The submissive leader truly loves people but his love for people can cause him to put people's preferences above what God's called him to do. Some signs you might be a Submissive leader include: seeking unanimous agreement, shying away from conflict, suppress your feelings or opinion about a matter, and putting peace keeping above truth telling. *REMEMBER THIS- People pleasing creates a confusing culture where there's no clarity or conviction around the mission.*
- **Aggressive leader** –The aggressive leader tends to be very decisive and passionate. They have a mentality that *“I'm on a mission and my way is the right way.”* When faced with criticism they react without forethought, become defensive in order to prove they are right. The Aggressive leader truly loves the mission but his defensiveness can prevent him from hearing from wise counsel that God may be sending to bring greater depth to the mission. Signs of an aggressive leader include: they come out swinging when they're opposed, push people out of the inner circle when they sense disagreement, failure to listen to others input, and they respond first and process later. *REMEMBER THIS – When you fight to win someone loses and ultimately the mission is the one that suffers.*
- **Assertive leader** – The Assertive leader understands that criticism is a natural part of leadership. They have disciplined themselves to process before responding so they can respond in way that honors God, others and the mission. They possess a mentality that says, *“People's perception is their reality, so I can serve them and the mission better if I first listen, strive to understand and speak the truth in love.”* Signs of an Assertive leader include: Practice active listening, sees criticism as an opportunity, uses differing opinions to discover new insights, seeks to understand before seeking to be understood, stands boldly for what's right while speaking the truth in love. *REMEMBER THIS – Assertive leadership requires spiritual maturity and patience and protects the integrity of the mission and the people who are carrying it out.*

What criticism are you facing? In what way is it impacting your character? Confidence? Credibility? What next steps do you need to take to process it correctly?

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