

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CRITICS

In his book *Confessions of a Pastor*, Craig Groeschel offers some advice on how to handle critics:

It's a fact that "hurt people hurt people." They usually dislike themselves and criticize others in a misguided effort to validate themselves. If one of these injured souls lobbs a criticism grenade in your direction, defuse it with understanding. Part of considering the source is seeking awareness of what that person may be going through...

One time I was praying during worship, a few moments before preaching. Eyes closed, focusing on God, I felt someone slip a note into my hand. I never saw who it was, but the note was marked "Personal." I thought to myself, Someone probably wrote a nice note to encourage me before I preach. A warm, loving feeling settled over me as I unfolded the paper.

A moment later, I lost that loving feeling.

Evidently, the note was from a woman who had tried to see me on Friday, my day off. She took offense at my absence and blasted me with hateful accusations. This happened literally seconds before I was to stand up to preach. In that moment, I had a choice. I could internalize the offense and become demoralized and discouraged. Or I could ask myself, I wonder what she's experiencing that caused her to lash out?

I chose compassion over depression. My heart hurt for her. I knew that such a disproportionate reaction must indicate deep pain, so I didn't take her note personally.

Consider the source. And consider the possibility that the jab may have come from an injured heart. Dismiss it and move on. If you don't, you may become the very thing you despise.

Bro. Cleve