

LIFT

Ministry Group January Resource

Pastors' Top Five

In which areas of ministry do you experience the most criticism? Below are the top five answers fielded from a variety of pastors.

Preaching

Often pastors hear, "I'm not being fed." as an excuse for why people leave a church. The reality is they are unhappy with the pastor's preaching style (expository vs. topical), theological positions, lack of passion, or skills as a communicator. Personal preferences clothed as criticisms.

Leadership Decisions

This can include staffing, starting/stopping ministries & administrative decisions. There are a lot of arm chair quarter backs sitting in our pews who want to call the plays, but don't want to take the hits when things go wrong.

Counsel

Sound counsel is not always received with joy from those who are being disciplined or rebuked for bad behavior or poor decision-making.

Vision

Many people are resistant to change. If a pastor's vision is bold or under-communicated it can cause a backlash of criticism.

Expectations

Everyone seems to have their own unwritten job description for the pastor. You can expect criticism if you do not meet the unspoken expectations of the people you serve.

Take time to discuss your group's top five.



Shop Talk:

It would be difficult to have an honest discussion about pastoral ministry without breeching the topic of criticism. Criticism can be crippling in a minister's life if it is not intentionally harnessed to glean the good out of it. Proverbs 18:21 declares:

**"Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruits."**

Criticism is a form of judgment drawn from an individual's observations and opinions regarding the negative aspects surrounding a decision, person or circumstance.

As a leader, criticism comes with the territory and it is only a matter of time before we experience the scrutiny of those we are called to serve. Perhaps that is why, as ministers, we tend to take criticism so personally. Deep wounds derived from critical remarks can have far-reaching ramifications:

- Criticism can shake our confidence.
- Criticism can re-cast the way we see others.
- Criticism can cause us to question our leadership ability/calling.
- Criticism can cause bitterness to take root in our hearts. (Heb. 12:15)

Discuss: How has criticism influenced or impacted your ministry?

Criticism vs. Critique.

One way to battle criticism is to train your staff & people on how to properly critique rather than criticize the efforts of others.

Critique focuses on analysis and assessment. It focuses on building clarity, finding specific solutions and identifying what is working. It is voiced in a kind, honest and objective tone. It is motivated by a desire to serve and help leaders reach their goals.

Criticism, however, is judgmental, vague, it identifies what is lacking, and focuses on placing blame. It is often voiced in a demeaning, indifferent, or sarcastic tone. It is motivated by the critic's goals rather than the leader's objectives.

This does not mean that difficult things should not be addressed, however, how we lead the conversation can determine our success.

Excerpts from Randy Bowman:
<https://www.iacet.org/news/iacet-blog/blog-articles/critique-but-dont-criticize/#:~:text=Criticism focuses on the critic's, and focused on finding solutions.>

Criticism is a catalyst for change.

"Criticism is not a crisis to be avoided; it is the Lord's appointed means of change as you respond well to it—for yourself, for your critic, or for both of you."

~Lewis Allen~

We can either allow criticism to impede our progress or use it to be a catalyst for change. We cannot control the motivation or intentions of those who direct their critical remarks towards us, but we can choose how we respond to them.

Here are a few ways to harness their remarks to make us better leaders:

- Take time to consider if there is any element of truth to their statement. We will never grow in our leadership by dismissing every concern that comes packaged to us in hurtful words. Learn to dissect the hurt from the concern and address the issue.
- Understand that critical remarks come from a place of hurt feelings and wounded emotions. As ministers we are called to bind up the brokenhearted. We can actually deepen our relationships with others if we will take time to listen beyond their pain.
- Allow the criticism to build godly character in you. Criticism can either elicit unrighteous anger or foster meekness in us. Remember, deep roots are developed in times of adversity.
- Take every criticism back to God's Word and to prayer, rather than trusting your emotions with it. The heart is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9), but God's Word is eternal-firmly fixed in heaven (Psalm 119:89).
- Be honest with yourself. No leader is gifted in every area. Yet, how often are we guilty of trying to project an image of strength in every area, only to become defensive when someone notices our weakness? **Take time to discuss.** Rather than become defensive, look for other leaders to bring alongside you who are strong in the areas of your weakness.

AREA MINISTER'S MEETINGS

PASTOR, SPOUSE, STAFF, CREDENTIALLED MINISTER

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20 | CENTRAL #1
REALIFE CHURCH, 5151 W US HWY 40, GREENFIELD, IN

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22 | CENTRAL #2
CROSSROADS CHURCH, 7209 E COUNTY RD 100 S., AVON, IN

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26 | SOUTHWEST
OAKHILL CHRISTIAN CENTER, 4901 OAK HILL RD., EVANSVILLE, IN

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27 | SOUTHEAST
MADISON ASSEMBLY OF GOD, 1636 CLIFTY DRIVE, MADISON, IN

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29 | NORTHEAST
SWEETWATER ASSEMBLY OF GOD, 2551 STATE RD 114 E., NORTH MANCHESTER, IN

FRIDAY, MARCH 1 | NORTHWEST
LIVING HOPE CHURCH, 9000 TAFT ST., MERRILLVILLE, IN

2024

RSVP: INDIANAAG.ORG REGISTRATIONS BEGIN CLOSING FEBRUARY 5, 2024

DINNER 6:30PM
DRESS IS CASUAL

You're Invited

