

- [Narrator] This is the Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast.

- Hey, I'm excited to have you back for another episode of the Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast, where we are passionate about building leaders because we know when the leader gets better, everyone gets better. I want to say, as always, thank you to those of you who are sharing this on social media, it's a real gift to me. Also, I appreciate you rating or reviewing it. If you would like to receive show notes, you can subscribe to the Leadership Podcast, go to [life.church/leadershippodcast](http://life.church/leadershippodcast). If you subscribe there, we'll send you the show notes every single month, and you can cover those with your team. We had amazing feedback on our bonus episode, doing Q and A. If you didn't listen to that just between the last episode on criticism and the one we're going to do on this episode. If you do have any questions, email me anytime at [leadership@life.church](mailto:leadership@life.church), and we may do more bonus episodes dealing with your questions. Today I want to dive in deeper on the subject how effective leaders handle criticism, how effective leaders handle criticism. In this episode I want to talk about understanding your critics, because they are not all created equally. And how do you respond to critics. I would encourage you to stay with me until the end because we're going to add application questions, and that's where we're going to put to use what we've learned that will help our leadership. First, let's review from our previous episode on this subject. We need to understand that dealing with criticism is a part of leadership, period. No matter how hard you try, you can never avoid all criticism, nor should you try to avoid all criticism. Well you cannot avoid all of it, you can minimize some of it by leading thoughtfully, we talked about how to do that. The first thing is we want to build a positive culture starting with ourselves. As the leader we set the tone, we want to lead from a posture of positivity. When we speak of others, we want to be caught speaking well. We want to err on the positive, we want to believe the best. We want the people in our organization to see solutions and not have a critical spirit. Number two, we're going to create an avenue for helpful feedback. What are we going to do? We're going to build a culture that demands helpful feedback, but discourages unhelpful criticism. You know the difference? Some people just point out what's wrong, other people bring solutions. In our organizations what do we want to do? We're going to learn from people who care about us, learn from those on the inside so that we won't be unnecessarily shot by those on the outside. Help from the inside eliminates trouble on the outside. Number three, we lead with the why. You're a change agent, that's what you do as a leader. What do we know? Uniformed people generally resist change. Why do they resist change? It's not because they don't like it, it's because they don't understand it. That's why we lead with the why before the what. We're going to have critics, we're going to have bystanders, we're going to have advocates anytime we do something new. What does the why do? It disarms the critics, it educates the bystanders, it empowers the advocate. The why matters. Number four, to minimize criticism we're going to be wise in the way that we live and lead. As leaders we're held to a higher standard. We're going to be wise, avoid shortcuts, we're going to live above reproach. We're going to be hyper selective on what we say, how we say it, and when we say it. While we cannot avoid all criticism, we can minimize unnecessary criticism, some of it, by leading wisely and thoughtfully. So, let's dive into new content today. Let's talk about understanding your critics. When people shoot at you, it's helpful to understand who they are, what their motives, because all critics are not created equal. There is a big difference between critics. There is a massive difference between an incessant critic and a constructive one, and we need to be wise enough to recognize the difference. Because our responses will be different based on the type of criticism that we receive. Who gives the criticism determines how we receive it, let me say that again.

Who gives it determines how we receive it. What do we need to remember, here's a few things we need to remember about criticism. Number one, that criticism is often not about you. It's often not about you. Those who are most angry or most critical are often those who are hurting the most. What do we know? Hurt people tend to hurt people. I was at a gas station with my family one time, and I got out to pump the gas and a guy came up to me, and said I'm going to kick your you know what and just started yelling at me, and so I told the kids roll up the window and look away, in case this thing went down. I was talking to the guy, and literally within about three minutes he went from going to lay into me to head on my shoulder sobbing crying, because he had lost a child and was just devastated and has spiritual questions and didn't understand. Sometimes those that lash out the hardest or the most often are those that are hurting the most. We need to understand that criticism is not always about you. I heard a counselor say behind every anger is a hurt. Behind every anger is a hurt. And we need to understand when people are leveling us with criticism, it's not always about us. The truth is, honestly, I have never met a well adjusted, happy, productive and positive person who consistently bangs out hateful comments on Facebook. Just remember that. It's not always about you. If someone else has a problem, we're not going to let their problem become our problem. If they're an incessant critic that's just hurting and always angry, we're not going to let their problem become our problem. Number one, all criticism isn't necessarily about you. Number two, people are quick to criticize what they don't understand. They're quick to criticize what they don't understand. You know this because when someone criticizes us we often say it's unfair, they just don't understand. They don't know my heart, they don't know my motives, they don't know what we're trying to accomplish, or whatever. The truth is, the majority of the criticism you get comes from those who don't understand your context. They don't understand your context. They don't sit where you sit, they don't see what you see, therefore they don't think how you think. Your role is to fulfill your mission, not to explain yourself to those who don't have your perspective. Just because they're criticizing and they don't understand, it's just often we get really defensive, but they don't understand. We're not going to whine about that, it's just a part of life. Our job is not to convince our critics, our job is to get our job done. Let me shift gears slightly for a minute, because this is important. I want to take the focus off of other people criticizing us and I want to think about when we find ourselves being critical of others. The moment you find yourself criticizing some leader, some organization, some thing, pause and recognize this. We often feel offended when others shoot at us, but we feel justified when we shoot at others? Just acknowledge the irony in that. When you find yourself being really critical about someone you read about, I just want to remind you, you cannot believe what you read or watch. You cannot believe everything you read. There's so much fake news, and it's not just fake, it's grossly inaccurate, highly exaggerated, slanted, social media is gossipy, communicating partial truths that lack context. You just don't get caught up being unnecessarily critical just because you read something. I always tell myself there's more to the story, and I'm not going to get caught up with a critical spirit, just shooting at things that I don't fully understand. I also tell myself this, what I criticize the most often reveals what I understand the least. Let me just shift it to you, you think about this. What you criticize the most often reveals what you understand the least. What we want to do is we want to train ourselves not to be critical, because criticism breeds ignorance. When we're criticizing something else, we're not learning from them. When you pushback the most, this might be an indicator of where you have the most to learn. Let me say it again. Whenever you push back the hardest, that might be an indicator that you really have a lot to learn in that area. I've found in my own leadership whenever I say things like well I would never do that, that's stupid. You know, he's an idiot or she's

out of line. What generally is true is I'm lacking in context to understand the why behind what that leader is doing. Not always, but what I criticize the most often shows where I have the most to learn. So, remember, critics often criticize what they don't understand. What do we need to know? Number one, all criticism is not about you. People are quick to criticize what they don't understand, Number three, sometimes your critics are right. Sometimes we need to learn from them because they actually have an objective view on something that we could do much better. Honestly, if you can't name a few times in your leadership that you've learned from your critics, you're likely missing great opportunities for growth. If you can't name a few times where they said hey, you're doing this, and you actually learned from them and started doing something better, you're missing massive opportunities. Sometimes they're right, and you need to learn. For example, I was criticized for years early as a young pastor for being too crude in my messages. And, again and again and again I defended myself with strategy, very passionately saying they were wrong. The truth of the matter is, as I grew up and matured, they were really right. And I changed my approach because I eventually had the wisdom to listen to my critics. There are times when you really, truly want to learn from your critics, because all critics are not created equal, some actually have valuable content to communicate to you. So, please don't write off all your critics as uninformed idiots. Some can be a source of wisdom with insight to help you grow. Criticism isn't necessarily about you, people criticize what they don't understand. Sometimes your critics are right. Let's talk about how we respond to criticism. Massively important, you're going to want to get this right. How do you respond to criticism, let's look at three thoughts. Number one, often you don't respond. Often you do not respond. Many times you don't even need to acknowledge the criticism. In fact, when someone is incessantly critical, they just won't stop they just hate you they're just kind of always abusing you and whatever, the best way you can reward them is to acknowledge them. You're giving them satisfaction that they know that they're getting to you. Just ignore it. Don't even let them know that you know that they are there. Don't reply, don't respond. Online, especially with social media and comments in the media and such if people are criticizing you, I honestly almost always always always always always ignore them. In fact, in the last 10 years, I think I can honestly say there's only one category where I responded and literally hundreds and hundreds and hundreds where I just let it go every single day, you don't have to respond. What you feed grows, what you starve dies. If you respond to criticism, it's likely to grow, if you just have the wisdom to look away and too endure if for awhile, it generally will go away. On another note, just because someone can guess your email, just because they call your office, just because they send a letter, you do not have to respond. There are times that you're going to want to respond, there are some times, a category or something, you just don't respond. Be free, hit the delete button, okay. How do you respond, oftentimes, you don't. Number two, when you do respond, it's often wise to wait. Why? Because if you're emotional, you're going to be unwise in your response. If you find yourself angry, full of emotion, don't send the email, don't send the text, don't make the call. When your emotions are high, your wisdom is low. Let me say it again. When your emotions are high, your wisdom is low. Every time I'm emotional, I've trained myself to wait, because in the past when I didn't wait I always said something in a tone or in a way that I would regret. Number one, you don't have to respond. When you do, it's often wise to wait. Number three, this is what's so important. Lead from a deep and grounded confidence. How do you rise above criticism? You lead from a deep and grounded confidence. As a leader, you must be able to say and believe with confidence this is what I stand for. This is what I do, it's not just money or not just notoriety but it's a higher purpose, it's a higher purpose. For me, it's spiritual. I know what I'm called to do, and I know who I'm serving.

Whatever your context is, you're going to want to find that higher calling, that mission. That higher purpose helps you endure criticism from small minded people. Let me say it again. A higher purpose helps you endure criticism from small minded people. Ultimately, when you're grounded, you don't need praise and acknowledgement from people to be successful. If you live by praise from people, you'll die from the lack of it. We're not doing what we do so people will like us or find us popular, we do what we're doing because we're making a difference in this world. You have to remember this. You are not as good as your fans think or as bad as your critics think. We're not living for their applause. We're living on mission to do what is right. Someone said this, they said, don't let the compliments get into your head, and don't let the criticism get into your heart. Don't start believing what your fans think, you're not that good, neither am I. But don't let the criticism get into you heart. There's nothing worse than a leader who starts to get defensive, who starts to fight back, who starts to get angry. We're just going to move that aside, and we're going to lead from a posture of calling, of confidence. We're deeply grounded, knowing what it is we're supposed to do. Who I am matters more than what they think. In your leadership, who you are matters more than what they think. Ultimately, if no one is criticizing you, you aren't leading effectively. Because when you lead change, when you are more effective, when you are more successful, you will have people criticizing you. That's why I always say I don't worry when people are criticizing me, I worry when they're not. What are we going to do? We're going to lead from a deep and grounded confidence, what I'm doing matters. Tell yourself, I'm going to outlast them, I'm going to outperform them, and I'm going to out good them. I know out good is not a word, I put it in there just to give you something to criticize, okay. I'm going to outlast them, I'm going to show back up. I'm going to keep doing this mission. I'm going to outperform them. Honestly, the people who are criticizing the most often generally aren't doing much and so I'm going to find satisfaction from doing something meaningful. I'm going to out good them. If they're going to waste their time tearing other people down, I'm just going to invest my time doing something that matters. Just keep showing up, keep making a difference, keep on doing good. If you ever need a little boost, just tell yourself critics are loud, but success is louder, faithfulness is louder, dependability is louder, making a difference is louder. Just let them criticize, you show up and be louder with your life doing something that matters. Now, what do we know about people. Unfortunately, people are naturally critical. We're just going to have to deal with it. But we're not going to let it get in our heart, we're not going to let it take us off mission. No one ever made a difference by throwing stones, and we're not going to be that type of person. So, anytime something isn't going well, people are going to criticize it. If you're struggling in your organization, if your team is losing, if you're not growing or whatever, people are going to criticize you. Remember this. It's easy to criticize what happened then. That's what they're doing, they're criticizing the past, they're criticizing what you didn't do, they're criticizing what you did and you shouldn't have done. It's easy to criticize what happened then, a leader focuses on what needs to happen now. We're not going to let the criticism of the past taint our hearts, we're going to show up and we're going to lead effectively today. We're not just enduring criticism, we're leading through it. Let me review, and then we're going to dive in to our applications questions. All critics are not created equal. There's a difference between an incessant one and a constructive one. Our response will be different based on the type of criticism we receive. Who gives it determines how we receive it. What do we need to remember? The criticism is often not about you. Those who are most angry are often the most hurting. Hurt people hurt people. If someone else has a problem, we're not going to let their problem become our problem. Number two, people are quick to criticize what they don't understand. The majority of the criticism you receive comes

from those who don't understand your context. They don't sit where you sit, see what you see, or think how you think. Your mission is to fulfill your calling, not to explain yourself to those who don't understand your perspective. Number three, sometimes your critics are right. If you can't name a few times where you've actually changed because of the criticism that you received, you're missing opportunities for growth. How do you respond? Number one, you often don't. When someone is incessantly critical, the best way to reward them is to acknowledge them. What you feed grows, what you starve dies, you don't have to respond. When you do, number two, it's often wise to wait. If you're emotional, don't respond immediately. When your emotions are high your wisdom is low. And number three, lead from a deep and grounded confidence. A higher purpose helps you endure criticism from smaller minded people. Don't let compliments get in your head or criticism get in your heart. Who we are matters than what we think. If no one's criticizing you, you're not leading effectively. We don't worry when we're being criticized, we worry when we're not. We're going to outlast, outperform, and out good them. It's easy for someone to criticize what happened then, but a leader focuses on what needs to happen now. Questions, there are three of them. Number one, what is a specific type of criticism that you've let into your heart that you need to keep out, what can you do to keep it out. What is a specific type of criticism that you're tempted to be poisoned by, to be hurt by, to be distracted by, what can you do to keep it out. If you're in any type of public leadership with any type of real platform, staying off social media might be something for you. Not reading the comments in articles might be wise, I'm just saying. Number two, what is a criticism that might be correct about you. What can you learn from it, what should you change. Some of you right now, there's a consistent criticism that you're receiving that you are not taking seriously, maybe you should take it seriously, maybe you have something to learn from it. Number three, try to put into words your higher purpose that keeps you above the lower criticism of small minded people. Try to put it in to words. If you can define it clearly, you can state it. This is what I stand for, this is why I don't let those lower minded, smaller thinking people take me off of the mission. End of the day, we need to understand this. If we have those go to phrases we can rise above those who would try to take us off. We're not just enduring criticism, we're leaders, we lead through it effectively. Being criticized is never ever fun, but I would rather be criticized for leading something that makes a difference, than avoiding criticism and doing nothing at all. Again, a big thank you for sharing this to people that haven't maybe been a part of our community. Thanks for rating or reviewing it. Be yourself, be yourself. I'll see you next month for another episode of Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast. Be yourself because people would rather follow a leader who's always real than one who's always right.

- Thank you for joining us at the Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast. If you'd like to go deeper into this episode and get show notes or a discussion guide, you can go to [life.church/leadershippodcast](http://life.church/leadershippodcast). You can also sign up to have those notes delivered straight to your inbox when a new episode releases. In the meantime, you can subscribe, rate and review on iTunes so that more people can hear from Craig's podcast. Until next time, thank you for joining us at the Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast.