

The Opinion Blender

by
Amy Carroll

*"Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."
Proverbs 12:18 (NIV 1984)*

I stood in exhausted shock after the first women's ministry event I coordinated. I was the hero of the day, and I couldn't quite take it all in. After waving good-bye to the gushing attendees, I looked at my friend Peggy and said, "I have no idea what to do with all of that praise."

She smiled wickedly. "Don't worry. The criticism is coming."

She was right.

When in a position of leadership of ANY kind—pastor, speaker, women's ministry director, Sunday school teacher, mother, project manager, executive—you will be thrown into the world of opinions. They'll swirl you around like a blender, and if you're not careful, they'll totally spin you silly, chop up your self-confidence and make you into a soupy mess.

Author and pastor Mark Driscoll has been quoted as saying, "Pastors (insert your position here) have lots of foes and lots of fans but very few friends." That's a truth that resonates with many types of leaders. I personally struggled with identifying who were my foes, fans and friends. When I received feedback, it varied from constructive criticism to harsh critiques to sweet compliments. Talk about leaving my head and heart spinning!

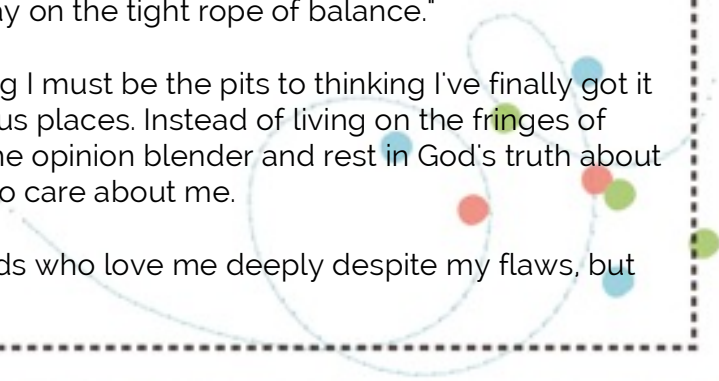
Some wisdom gained along the way has helped me navigate the opinion blender with more insight and grace.

Dealing with Criticism

Pastor Perry Noble gives this sage advice, "If you listen to the criticism, you'll think you're worse than you are. If you listen to the praise, you'll think you're better than you are. If you listen to your friends, you'll stay on the tight rope of balance."

I've struggled with wild swings of thinking I must be the pits to thinking I've finally got it all together. Both extremes are dangerous places. Instead of living on the fringes of shame or pride, I'm learning to turn off the opinion blender and rest in God's truth about me, as well as the counsel of people who care about me.

I surround myself with truth-telling friends who love me deeply despite my flaws, but



also have a clear view of those flaws. They're the ones who don't shrink back from telling the truth, but who stir love, kindness and gentleness into the hard things I need to hear. They celebrate my successes and mourn my defeats.

Processing Praise

My friend Jane, a gifted worship leader and singer, paraphrased a quote from Corrie ten Boom when she passed on her secret to receiving praise. "I take each compliment as a flower, and at the end of the day, I give the bouquet to Jesus."

Her advice has helped me respond to praise. Because I want to respect the giver without seeming flippant about their kind words, I'm not comfortable saying, "Give Jesus all the glory" every time someone says something nice. But I *want* Jesus to get all the glory.

Now, I simply say "thank you" and receive the "flower" gratefully. At the end of the day, I gather each compliment in my mind and gratefully give Jesus the beautiful bouquet in prayer. It's not only a joy to return to Jesus what is His, it's a sure way to hit the "stop" button on the opinion blender in my head.

If you're in leadership, I want to encourage you. You're not as bad as your foes say. You're also not as wonderful as your fans say. (Smile). The truth is somewhere in between.

Like me, you're not perfect, so learning to receive helpful criticism is part of growth. Welcoming praise as encouragement and then passing Jesus the compliment helps us calm the swirl of the "opinion blender." And most importantly, both help us remember we are loved servants of God on a journey to being like Jesus.

When His Truths permeate us, His opinion becomes the one that gives faithful guidance, soothes our hearts and settles our souls.

Dear Lord, help me find the balance of truth in how I receive both criticism and praise. I want to learn from legitimate criticism and return the praise to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Reflect and Respond:

Who has "earned the right" to tell you hard truths?

How can you be this kind of faithful friend to others?

Power Verses:

Proverbs 15:12, "A mocker resents correction; he will not consult the wise." (NIV 1984)

Proverbs 15:31, "He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise." (NIV 1984)

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