

ENCOUNTERING CRITICISM

BY PASTOR RICK SAMS

How do you handle criticism?

I've often been taught there is a grain of truth in every criticism. Jesus said He could separate the "wheat from the weeds." Can we? He told us to look at the log in our eye so we could see clearly enough to remove the speck from another's eye (Matthew 7:1-5). We need to look in the mirror, not just out the window, according to Jesus' brother, James (1:22-25).

Do you agree? Or are there some critics we can simply ignore? Like the critic who...

...criticizes others for not being accountable, but then is accountable to no one, especially when their "facts" are proved false,

...offers no solutions...EVER, ("It's always easier to curse the darkness than light a candle.")

...is just an unhappy (neurotic, socially stunted) individual (Don't let crazy people drive YOU crazy!),

...loves to fight. (Hear the homespun wisdom of Lincoln: "When you wrestle a pig, you both get dirty, but only the pig likes it.")

...just doesn't like YOU,

...reveals their character defects by the WAY they criticize (they don't fact check, they intentionally distort truth, are mean spirited, go on rumor-hearsay, hit below the belt, are immoral themselves, etc).

Presidents have to be among the most criticized. Teddy Roosevelt was one that weathered those "storms" better than most and shows us the right attitude in the face of inevitable critiques: "It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust, sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again...who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly."