



Don't be Afraid to ask the Tough Questions

Have you ever wondered why someone that seems to have a lot more talent and experience than you do, and seems to have more influential contacts than you do, just can't seem to get anywhere in life? Why do they keep running in circles and are never able to brake out of the small box they are in? It seems like they are in a hamster wheel running and running, but never getting any where.

If you talk to them you might hear them say, "They have not received the right breaks in life, or that someone or some circumstance is holding them back." If you find yourself in this situation don't be afraid to ask the tough questions of yourself. And after asking the tough questions, do not be afraid of the answers. A lot of people do not ask the tough questions because they are afraid of the answers. They are afraid of the truth.

Proverbs 11:14 says Where there is no counsel, the people fall;
But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

Now this does not mean that every time we go make a decision we should ask 100 people what they think. We need to be decisive in every area of life.

James 1:8 says that a double minded man is unstable in all his ways. We need to be able to make decisions in life without asking 100 people what they think. If we ask 100 people what they think, we will get 100 different answers, and then we will be more confused than when we started.

I believe that Proverbs 11:14 is talking about when we hear the same criticism of ourselves over and over again and we ignore it and keep brushing it off as something that is wrong with everyone else, but we never look inward and never see the problem.

A lot of people either get hurt or offended when they receive criticism. Therefore; they never grow in life. They never allow themselves to be stretched. They never allow anyone to speak into their lives. Getting hurt and offended is a defense Mechanism that keeps them from facing the truth that will help them grow.

I have been blessed through out the years to work under different leaders that have spoken into my life and have stretched me. When something is stretched it hurts. A lot of times when leaders spoke into my life it hurt. Human nature never likes to be corrected or criticized.

When criticized I try to ask myself two questions:

1. Is it true?
2. Can I do anything about it?

Sometimes people just like to tear into other people and their criticism is not thought out or constructive. They lash out with criticism for others to boost their own self esteem. This type of criticism is usually not true. We cannot receive all criticism, or we would go insane.

Sometimes criticism is true but there is nothing we can do about it. We cannot get hurt or offended if what people say is true. I have found that the best way to handle the area's in my life where I might not be as talented as others or naturally gifted as others is to laugh about it. Accept the fact that I am not gifted in these areas and enjoy the area's I am gifted in. However we can always strive to improve ourselves as much as we can.

I cannot sing at all. I know this. I am not blessed with musical ability. I play no instruments except my IPod. I enjoy good music but cannot produce it.

However, there is a 3rd category of criticism that I want to talk about in this article. This type of criticism is true, and we can do something about it. These are the areas of our life that need to change, so that we can be more successful.

Over the years I have heard certain things over and over about myself. For a few years we passed out evaluation forms to every church we ministered at. We wanted to make sure that we were achieving our goals in ministry. We eventually quit using this form because people were not giving constructive criticism, but were using it to nit pick our ministry. Too much nit picking can ware on you after a while, and you become less effective in anything you do because you cannot please everyone.

A few good things did come out of using this evaluation form though. One thing that I heard a few times was that I should be more exciting when I speak. I have never claimed to be the best speaker in the world, and I still do not claim to be. I

know that there are others that are much more eloquent than me. I always used the scripture that Paul wrote in 1 Cor 2:4 to justify my lack of talent in this area

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

However after hearing this criticism a few times, I began to ask myself, "Can I do anything about this." I decided to really start working on being more exciting when I teach. I worked on body language, my voice inflection, not being monotone, and moving around the stage instead of standing in one place. I have come a long way since then. I realize that there are still others that are better, but I always have room to improve and I am continuing working on developing in this area.

When I first started hearing this criticism it hurt. I heard statement like my program and presentation was awesome, but I myself was boring. Ouch!!!! Thank God I received this criticism and worked on developing myself, so I could go to the next level in my ministry.

When young people work under me as an intern, I am very cautious not to ripe into them with everything they are doing wrong. I try and pick my battles. Most of the time when I share something it is to help them better themselves, so they can be more successful in life and ministry. One young man had a very annoying action when he would get excited that was a turn off for most people. He continually did this over and over. I could see that this would hold him back in achieving his goals in life and ministry. When I approached him about this his statement was that, "No one had ever had a problem with it in the past, no one had ever told him this, so why should it be a problem now?" My statement was that no one ever loved him enough to tell him the truth. This naturally offended him. As time went on I believe that he thought about this statement and made adjustments in his life. A lot of times pride stands in our way of receiving criticism.

If someone has experienced the same problem at every job they have had, they might need to ask themselves, "Do I have a problem in this area?" Instead human nature is to blame everyone around us for this problem. To me it's sad to watch someone go through life experiencing the same problem everywhere they go. Never able to hold down a job because of bad people skills or a "know it all" attitude that rubs people the wrong way. They never ask themselves if it could be them. Instead others are always blamed. Therefore; they never go to the next level.

I once worked under a leader that spoke into my life greatly. He stretched me to help me become what I am today. As we spoke one day the subject came up, "Why the church was not growing?" I was hesitant to share why I believed that it was not growing because I was taught not to disrespect leaders that I am

working for. I finally decided to be honest and share what I saw and what others were saying. I was very cautious with my words. I checked the motivation of my heart to make sure it was out of love for Him that I was sharing this information and not to cut him down, hurt him, or lift up myself. After sharing what was on my heart, I wished I would have kept it to myself. The leader rejected my suggestion and said, "That it was not true." He did not believe this. To this day the church continues to not grow, and has actually lost members because of this problem that was never dealt with. I never shared from my heart with this leader again because I learned that he did not receive criticism. Even though he had spoken into my life greatly and stretched me, he did not allow others to speak into his life therefore; resulting in never going to the next level that God had planned for him and the church.

I used to wear goofy hats and looney tunes ties on stage to try to relate to kids until I realized that most of the adults were turned off and thought of me as an oversized kid. I learned that I needed to dress for success. A children's minister can dress in a way that is appealing to children and is not a turn off to adults that are potential supporters and workers in your ministry.

Let's not be afraid to ask ourselves the tough questions in life:

- Is there something I am doing that is turning people off?
- Is there a reason no one wants to work under me in children's ministry?
- Is my messy lifestyle and lack of organization just the way I am or is it holding me back? Is there something I can do about it?
- Is the way I dress or my style offensive to some or a turn off? Is it just the way I am or can I change?
- Is there a reason people are not coming to my church or calling me to minister at their church? I have heard some ministers say "People are not spiritual enough to handle the truth that I am preaching, that's why my church isn't growing."
- Is my style of ministry a little outdated or not relative, even though I have done it this way for years and have worked hard on developing it?
- Do I come across hard and cold or is it that people are just not mature enough to handle the truth?
- Do I come across as a goofball or immature because of the silly things I do in children's ministry resulting in the adults in my church and community not respecting me?

- Is there something about our building or children's church room that is a turn off to first time visitors?

Let's not be afraid of the answers to the tough questions. Let's move up to the next level in our life and ministry. Let's be all that God has created us to be and cast away anything that holds us back.

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