

# How Should We Respond When Our Faith Is Criticized?

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“If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name” ([1 Peter 4:14](#)).

Christians are called to live and speak differently than those “of the world.” But many believers find themselves worrying that if they fully live out their [faith](#), others will judge or criticize them. So they back off, and their light for Christ is dimmer than it should be. In this verse, The Apostle Peter says that obeying God could very well cause other people to come against us. But, he also tells us that this unpleasant experience is actually a good thing, because it means we are aligned with God. And by learning how to deal with criticism in a righteous way, our witness can have more impact.

## The First Steps to Responding Well to Criticism

Since faith is such a huge part of who we are as Christians, being criticized can feel like a verbal attack. It’s hard enough when the comments come from strangers or acquaintances, but especially so from well-meaning family and friends.

No matter the source, reacting well to negative critique starts with listening - which can be one of the hardest things to do at that moment. But listening helps us do three very important things: understand where a person is coming from, how to meet them where they are, and what God wants us to say to them.

Sometimes criticism is just meant as an insult, and our best response is to let it go to God. Other times, rough words can be a roundabout way of asking us about our beliefs. In those times, God may be giving us a chance to have a spiritual conversation with that person. We may not be able to discern for ourselves which of those is happening, and we need to rely on the [Holy Spirit](#) to give us wisdom for each encounter.

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires” ([James 1:19-20](#)).

#### **4 Truths about Facing Criticism for Our Faith**

1. It will come, and we should expect it.

“Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you” ([1 John 3:13](#)).

2. It will challenge us, and we need to prepare ahead of time.

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil” ([1 Peter 3:15-17](#)).

3. It will test us, and we need to lean on God for strength.

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” ([2 Corinthians 12:9-10](#)).

4. It is a tool the enemy uses, and we need to understand how he uses it.

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” ([John 15:18-19](#)).

#### **How To Respond Well When You Are Criticized**

##### **Stay Respectful of Others**

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse” ([Romans 12:14](#)).

When we are criticized, it's hard not to feel defensive. But the last thing God wants us to do is throw insults or unrighteous judgments back. We ought to take a few moments and let the Holy Spirit soothe any anger and temper our words before we respond.

### **Stay Faithful to the Lord**

“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you” ([Philippians 1:27-28](#)).

Hearing criticism can distract us by stirring up our emotions. But, we as God's people are called to give Him glory and worship no matter what our circumstances are. We have to ask the Holy Spirit for help to keep our main focus on the Lord, and how we can relate lovingly to other people.

### **Stay Bold about Sharing the Gospel**

“ ‘...you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict’ ” ([Luke 21:12-15](#)).

Critical comments can lead us to start hesitating or holding back. But God doesn't want us to miss opportunities to share the Gospel through words and actions. We need to remember that we have been equipped to walk with confidence, and that the Holy Spirit will advise us about what to say and do.

### **How Did People in the Bible Respond to Criticism?**

In Scripture, we can find people who responded rightly to criticism from others, even from religious leaders or those within the church. Two of them in particular stand out:

#### **Jesus**

“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...” ([Matthew 5:44](#)).

- He always held love for the people coming against Him
- He tried to engage them in discussion

- He used their criticism as a basis for teaching them

## Paul

“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...” ([2 Timothy 3:10-12](#)).

- He accepted criticism as par for the course
- He considered it an honor, as a way to share in Jesus’ ministry
- He encouraged others to handle negativity with grace

God’s Word clearly instructs us to share the Good News of Jesus with the world. We are to let the way we live be a testimony to others about what He is doing in our hearts. So, it’s reassuring to know that the Lord is already equipping us to deal with any criticism that may come our way in the process of doing just that.

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