

How to... give and receive godly feedback¹

Spectrum of experience on receiving feedback: some well used to it (campus, work etc.), others it will be first time. Acknowledge that spectrum – especially those of us who are used to it. But if you're not used to it, get used to it – will happen a lot in ministry! Will happen a lot in the marketplace. Massively important life skill and it's close to the heart of what it means to be a disciple.

Proverbs has loads to say about giving and receiving godly feedback (Prov. 10:17; 13:18; 15:31-32; 19:20; 27:6,17).

A very important skill but a rare one

Proverbs 9:7-10:

- the mark of a scoffer/mocker is that he hates you for correcting him
- the mark of a wise man is that he loves you for correcting him

Why?

- the wise man knows it is the only way to learn (v9), but the deeper answer...
- the wise man knows the Fear of the Lord and knowledge of the Holy One (v10) – the holiness of God is the burning passionate jealous love of God – root of his judgment and his salvation – and the fear of the Lord is the right response to that holiness – it is a humbled recognition of who God is – in NT language this is the Gospel a Holy God sends The Holy One to die for the unholy to bring us into the Holy Place – Knowing that, recognising that, means that you respond differently when people criticise you.

If don't know God and his gospel then focus on me, my performance, my trying to look holy and good → pride or despair, and **defensiveness** – "I might be found out!"

If focus on Jesus and his holiness and his saving me a sinner → freedom from trying to prove yourself or defend yourself, you know you are an appalling sinner who has been completely justified by Christ, freed from:

- a) Being too thin-skinned – over-sensitive. (Don't defend yourself. Don't make excuses!)
- b) Being too thick-skinned – not sensitive enough! (Don't brush off criticism, another way of being defensive.)

When receiving criticism remember the gospel (see above) and A.I.M.:

- Appreciate – love them for giving you criticism
- Investigate – weigh up the truth of the criticism, almost always at least a grain of truth
- Move on – don't lie in bed thinking about it

When giving criticism – again remember the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of the Holy One:

- We have been united into one family by the death of Christ – completely equal as justified sinners at the foot of the cross – so no point scoring or competition; we just want to help each other along the road by speaking the truth in love.

And make a sandwich: Something nice / The hard thing / Something nice

Affirm something good / Ask a question about something unclear or unhelpful / Affirm something good

¹ Based on Robin Weekes, 'An Introduction to Tuesday Afternoon Gobbets', session delivered at the PT Cornhill Training Course, London, 2011.

Dangers:

- Saying too much (Prov. 10:19; 13:3) – where words multiply so does sin, don't add another sermon
- Saying too little (Prov. 10:11, 21; 15:23; 25:11) – words can be a fountain of life
- Only giving encouragement (Prov. 26:28; 28:23) – beware flattery
- Only giving correction (Prov. 26:21; 27:15) – beware a quarrelsome, contentious spirit – don't get into the habit of listening with a critical spirit to God's word being preached, looking for the mistakes – God speaks through imperfect humans and we must remain humble and learn the skill of feeding ourselves and being discerning at the same time (cf. 1 Thess. 5:21)

Conclusion:

A life-long **process**. If you can **give and receive godly feedback** – remembering the **gospel**, lovingly giving criticism and gratefully receiving it – then you will be able to continue learning and growing and encouraging others for the rest of your life.