

Outstanding. . . Unsatisfactory

I have struggled with criticism in my ministry years. For quite some time I felt unsolicited advice was NEGATIVE CRITICISM. Often I would react in less than a mature fashion—at least in my heart. So what does Scripture have to say concerning evaluation and “suggestions”?

Paul wrote the Corinthians to “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test.” (2 Cor 13:5-ESV)

Proverbs, the book, is filled with admonitions of gaining wisdom and accepting instruction. Proverbs 3:11-12 says; “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves as a father the son in whom he delights.” (ESV) Or take Proverbs 12:1 “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.”



So, arming myself with this concept, I went on a journey to discover means to allow folks to speak into my life without becoming ruffled. I actually had two forms of evaluation. One was an ad hoc committee made of a cross section of folks in the church to evaluate our worship service. These folks made recommendations to the Board, and over the years, it enabled us to bring innovation to our worship service. I will share another time lessons learned by means of this evaluation.

The other area of evaluation was shared decades ago by Dan Clausen, our CBNC Regional Executive Director at the time. Dan directed me to a tool that I have used for 35 years. He called it “Ministry Staff Performance Appraisal”. The Appraisal dealt with 11 areas of performance. These included: Leadership Skills; Relationship Skills; Communication Skills; Initiative; Vision; Creativity; Quality of Work; Quantity of Work; Personal Skills; Dependability; & Use of Time. Each area has 3-8 questions upon which to be rated. These ratings were from “Outstanding” to “Unsatisfactory” with comment space available. At the end of the Appraisal, there were a couple of open-ended suggestions. These were “In the future, the pastor should spend more time on” ... “less time on.”

How did we make it work? Usually, just before our annual meeting, I would ask the Board to fill out the form either collaboratively or individually. Then they would share the results with me. We would set out a plan on one or two things that we would strive to change.

The benefits of this appraisal were, as I see it: 1. It gave permission for leadership to speak into my life. 2. I was “bucked up”, ready for criticism and not blind-sided by a disgruntled lay leader. 3. Board meetings focused on vision casting and ministry, versus every month analyzing and dictating to the pastor what he needed to change. Leaders knew that an appraisal was coming. 4. The list itself reminded me of ALL the duties of leadership.

If you are interested in the Appraisal for your church, email me and I will send a digital copy. You are free to adapt to your situation.

Pastor Eldon Carlson
CBNC Networking Director
ecarlson@bloomer.net