

- [Announcer] This is the Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast.

- Hey it's great to have you back at another episode of the Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast where we are very passionate about building strong leaders. Because we know that when the leader gets better everyone gets better. If you're new with us, we release a brand new leadership teaching on the first Thursday of every single month. And I just wanna say thank you so much to those of you who are telling others about this on social media. Thank you to those of you who have rated this teaching or reviewed it. Also if you wanna subscribe you can go to [life.church/leadershippodcast](http://life.church/leadershippodcast). If you subscribe there we'll send you the show notes every single month. So you can go over these with your team if you'd like to. Also I love hearing from you. Many people have comments or questions. If you have a question you can email me at [leadership@life.church](mailto:leadership@life.church), [leadership@life.church](mailto:leadership@life.church). In fact we've had hundreds and hundreds of questions come in from all over the world. So many great questions that this month I'm gonna give you a bonus episode absolutely free. There all free, but this one's free as well. So one week from this episode release, on the next Thursday, one week from this release we're gonna have a brand new teaching to answer your questions. I'm gonna look at some of the most commonly asked questions and some of the most interesting questions, so this month there'll two episode releases. In this episode, and in the one next month I wanna talk about a very important subject that all leaders will deal with. I'm calling it this title, How Effective Leaders Handle Criticism, How Effective Leaders Handle Criticism. Because if you're in any field at all, you'll have, any leadership field you'll have people second guessing you, criticizing you, tearing you down, and picking you apart. We need to understand that dealing with criticism is a part of leadership, period. It doesn't matter who you are, how hard you try, how much you care, you can never avoid all criticism. Nor should you try to, or you'll be putting your energy towards something that's less important rather than the more important mission that you're called to. And you know this. At some level we're all criticized. You may be criticized for what you said on social media, for the way you dressed your children, for how you cheer at their games, for your opinions about this or that. In your leadership, in your business, in your non profit, if your succeeding some people will not like you and they're gonna criticize you. If you're confident they may pick you apart. They may not trust your motives and criticize you. They'll criticize your leadership decisions, who you hire, they'll criticize what you do. They'll criticize what you don't do. I like what Aristotle said. He said, "To avoid criticism, say nothing, "do nothing, be nothing." This is not acceptable for us. We are leaders and we do things, we're aggressive, we make changes. And when we do so we know that criticism is a part of the job title. In leadership, I need to tell you this, the more you succeed, or the higher you rise, the more visible you become, the more critics you'll have. You may say, well I really wanna have great influence, I wanna be really successful. I hope that you do have influence, and I hope that you do become successful. But you need to understand, with that always comes more critics. And there will be more of them than you can imagine. And the criticism will be annoying and it may be even sillier than you could imagine, but it's gonna be there. In Australia and New Zealand they have something called the tall poppy syndrome, the tall poppy syndrome. And that is the tendency to cut down people who have risen above, those who've become more successful or more popular. They just chop them down. Someone said this, "the tallest trees "endure the harshest winds." In other words when you become more successful, do not be shocked, do not be surprised, and don't be upset when you have more critics come along with it. It is part of making a difference. I had a mentor years ago who told me, "Craig, you can't avoid criticism, "so you need to learn to live with it." It's a good starting place for advice. But I wanna take it up a notch, and I would

say this, you can't avoid it. So we're not just going to live it, but we're going to learn to lead boldly through it. We're not just gonna tolerate it. But we're gonna learn to be successful and thrive even though we're gonna be facing criticism. We're not just gonna try to survive it, we're gonna rise above it, and we're gonna thrive despite of it. Now some of you might say, okay, I understand. Since I'm gonna be criticized then I might as well do whatever the heck I want. Yeah, haters are gonna hate. That's not gonna be our attitude at all. Just because there are gonna be critics that doesn't mean we go off half cocked and do whatever we want. As leaders we're gonna work hard to be wise, to be thoughtful, and to be intentional about how we lead. In fact this is an important thought. While you cannot avoid all criticism you can minimize some of it by leading thoughtfully. Let me say it again, While you cannot avoid all criticism, you can minimize some of it by leading thoughtfully. In this episode that's what I wanna talk about. How do we minimize criticism as leaders. In the next episode I wanna talk about how do we understand our critics, because all critics are not created equal. And then how do we respond when we are under fire. When someone doesn't understand how do we respond to it. I don't want you to miss next month because I promise you if this does not apply to you today it will apply to you in the near future. We're all gonna deal with criticism. Let me say it again. While you cannot avoid all criticism you can minimize some of it by leading thoughtfully. Let's talk about it. How do we minimize criticism in our organizations, and in our leadership? Number one, what we wanna do is we wanna build a positive culture, starting with yourself. We wanna build a positive culture, starting with yourself. Let's be honest. Some work cultures are more negative than others. In fact if you've ever worked in more than one place you know this to be absolutely true. In some organizations people go around and they assume the best about others and about their leaders. In other organizations people go around finding things that are wrong, and they're assuming the worst about other people and their leaders. That's culture, and we as the leaders set the tone of culture. How do you wanna lead? You wanna lead from a posture of positivity. If we're gonna be caught speaking of others, we're gonna be caught speaking well of others. We're gonna err on the side of being positive not negative. We're gonna believe the best about other people rather than believing the worst about other people. When we give suggestions for improvement we're not going to be harsh, we're going to be helpful in our critique. We're not going to be critical and we're not going to push off others to make ourselves look good. This is so important. If you want your team to be positive we're not going to make our organization look good by pushing off of other people or other organizations. For example, as a pastor I can't help if some pastors don't like me. I can't make them all like me, and keep all of them from hating me, some of them do. But if I'm constantly criticizing other pastors, or other churches then I am begging them to be critical of me. What we wanna do is we wanna lead from a posture of positivity. We want our team to see what they're doing as so important, so critical to real success that we don't have time to be critical of other people. We are making a difference. So we wanna build a positive culture starting with yourself. You'd be wise to ask yourself, and I leading from a positive posture? Do people in my organization believe the best or did they start with an assumption of believing the worst. The second thing we wanna do to minimize criticism is to create an avenue for helpful feedback. Create an avenue for helpful feedback. What we wanna do is, we wanna empower the people around us to give us helpful feedback in our leadership. Now there's a difference between critiquing to make something better and critiquing to be critical. There's a big difference. And you've seen the difference likely in your organization. What we wanna do, and this is important. Is we wanna build a culture that demands helpful feedback but discourages unhelpful criticism. Let me say it again. We wanna build a culture that demands helpful feedback

but discourages unhelpful criticism. You've seen it. Some people only point out problems. This is wrong, and this is bad, and you shouldn't do this. That's unhelpful. But others are finding solutions. Here's a way to make it better, here's how we can all improve in our leadership. What do we want? In our organizations, we want to learn from people who love us so we won't be unnecessarily shot by those who don't. Let me repeat it. We wanna learn from those who care about us, those that work with us, so we won't be unnecessarily shot by those who don't. The truth is I have blind spots, and so do you as a leader. If we can help each other see those blind spots, those who care about us will speak into our leadership. Then we won't make unnecessary mistakes that bring on deserved criticism from those outside our organizations. One of the best ways we can do this is to implement a 360 review. What is a 360 review? We've talked about it before. You can go online and Google and find different free 360 reviews. This is where people in your organization, people that care about you, and want you to grow, have the ability to anonymously give you feedback about your leadership. When you do this, what's gonna happen? Someone's gonna tell you your arrogant, or you're kind of a know it all, you don't listen, you're controlling, you're very passive. What's happening when you give people, when you empower them to give you feedback. We're demanding helpful feedback, but we're discouraging unhelpful criticism. Suddenly you're gonna realize, that help from those inside can eliminate trouble from the outside. We've got each other's backs. We're getting better, we're getting stronger, we're getting wiser, we're demanding helpful feedback, but we're discouraging unhelpful criticism. What are we doing? Building a positive culture. We're creating an avenue for helpful feedback, number three, we're gonna lead with the why. If we wanna minimize criticize then we're gonna lead with the why. As a leader what are you? You are a change agent. That's what you do. What do we know about people? We know that uninformed people generally resist change. Uninformed people generally resist change. Why do they resist change? Now before I answer that question, if you have something to change I'd recommend you simply Google Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast, Embracing Change. That'll take you to a whole session on this subject. Why do people resist change. They don't resist change because they don't like it. That's what most people think. People like change. They like to change their hairstyles. They like to change and get better in the gym. They like to change where they live. Often people don't resist because they don't like it, they resist because they don't understand it. They're gonna criticize what they don't understand. That's why as leaders we're going to lead with the why before the what. We're going to give our people, or whoever we're communicating with the reason why we're changing before we tell them actually what we're changing. Any time you lead with something new, you're creating a new initiative, you're changing something, you're going to have three groups of people. You're gonna have the critics, the bystanders, and the advocates. Critics are the loudest. Just because they're the loudest does not mean they're the most. What Babe Ruth said, Babe Ruth said, "The loudest boos come from the cheapest seats." What does the why do? The why disarms the critics. The why educates the bystanders. And the why empowers the advocates. When you tell them why, this disarms the critics. And they might say, a reasonable critic might say, oh well that actually makes sense. It educates the bystanders. If there's someone kind of neutral, like oh, well I could see why we should do this. And then it takes your advocates and it gives them the power to help tell the story of the why behind your change. And suddenly we can make very positive progress. How do we minimize criticism. One we build a positive culture, starting with you. Two, we create an avenue for helpful feedback. Three, we lead with the why. And number four, we need be be wise in how you live as a leader. Here's what we need to remember. As a leader we are held to higher standards. You may have great ability. But

if you do not have great character your character will cost you. Ability may get you to the top, but character will keep you at the top. We need to be wise. Avoid shortcuts and live above reproach as a leader. Someone said it may take years and years to build a good reputation. But a few foolish moments you can rule it all just by making unwise decisions. So what we're gonna do as leaders to avoid unnecessary criticism is, we're gonna be hyper selective on what we say, when we say it, and how we say it. On what we say, when we say it, and how we say it. What do we need to know? Presentation matters, how we present it. Timing matters, when we present it. Who you tell matters, and how you say it matters. For example, everything true doesn't need to be said. Every opinion you have doesn't need to be said. Social media, if you wanna avoid unnecessary criticism, be wise with social media. As a leader people are looking to you, more people are looking to you. You don't have to tweet everything you think. You don't have to comment about everything. Also I would encourage you to be wise about humor. What may be funny with a few, is not necessarily funny or appropriate with many. For example one time I made a mistake when my wife turned 40. I put something on social media that said happy 40th birthday, I love you with all my heart. At the age of 40 you are way better than two 20 year olds. That's pretty funny with a few people in the office. Wasn't funny on social media. I got blasted, hammered. People were crazy mad. I would defend it by telling you, that number one it is kinda funny. Number two, it's true, my wife is amazing. But nevertheless that was not the appropriate context. You need to be really, really wise in how you live. What are we gonna do? We're gonna build a positive culture. Create an avenue for helpful feedback. Lead with the why instead of the what. We're gonna be wise in how we live. Now while you cannot avoid all criticism, you can minimize some of it by leading thoughtfully. So let's do this. Let's review. And I wanna encourage you to stick with me all the way to the end because we're gonna look at three important questions for application. And that is where the rubber meets the road. We're gonna apply what we learn. Let's review. Dealing with criticism is a part of leadership. No matter how hard you try you can never eliminate or avoid all of it. While you cannot avoid all of it you can minimize it if you lead thoughtfully. How do we minimize criticism? Number one we're gonna build a healthy culture starting with ourselves. As the leader we set the tone. We're gonna lead from a posture of positivity. We're gonna let others catch us speaking well of others. We're gonna err on the side of being positive. We're gonna believe the best about others, and therefore our culture is gonna reflect our heart and attitude. We're not gonna push off others. That's negative and that builds a critical spirit. Number two, we're gonna create an avenue for helpful feedback. We're gonna build a culture that demands helpful feedback, but that discourages unhelpful criticism. You know the difference. Some people just point out problems. That's not acceptable with us. We want people who bring solutions. In our organizations what are we gonna do? We're gonna learn from those who love us on the inside so we won't be unnecessarily shot from those on the outside. Help from the inside can eliminate unnecessary trouble from the outside. Number three, we're gonna lead with the why. You're a change agent. That's what you do. What do we know? Uninformed people generally resist change. Why do they resist change? They don't resist it because it because they don't like it. Typically they resist it because they don't understand it. That's why we're gonna lead with the why before the what. Anytime we initiate change there will be critics, bystanders, and advocates. The why helps move all of these different groups forward and we can make significant changes. Number four, we're gonna be wise in the way that we live. As a leader we are held to a higher standard. Ability may get you to the top, but character keeps you at the top. We're gonna be wise. We're gonna avoid shortcuts. We're gonna live above reproach. We're gonna be hyper selective on what we say, when we say it, and how we say it, because

we cannot avoid all criticism. But we can avoid some of it if we lead thoughtfully. Questions for application. This is where it gets really important. Number one, where do you see unnecessary negativity in your culture? What can you do to fix it? Where do you see unnecessary negativity in your culture? What can you do to fix it? I cannot overstress how important this is. You do not want a critical minded culture. You want a solution oriented culture. If your people just point out problems without bringing solutions, no one's getting better. If you're people are assuming the worst rather than believing the best you have a real problem. Number one, where do you see unnecessary negativity in your culture and what can you do to fix it? Number two, what tools can you implement to get feedback early to help you eliminate critical errors in the future? That is incredibly important that we create a culture where people feel the freedom to give us feedback. The higher you rise in leadership the more difficult it is to get honest and helpful feedback because people are gonna tell you what they think you wanna hear. That is unacceptable. We have to create a culture where we have avenues. Where people are encouraged and rewarded for giving us truthful feedback. Because when we learn from those on the inside, we can be better at eliminating unnecessary conflict from the outside. What tools can you implement to get feedback early to help you eliminate critical errors in the future? Number three, and this is so important. Is there anything you're doing in your personal or professional life that if it were discovered, would compromise your reputation and ability to lead. Is there anything your doing personally or professionally that if it were to come out and became public would compromise your ability to lead? If so, what are you going to do about it? You may wanna pause. Because some of you right now. You've been playing in a gray zone. We as leaders, we're held to a higher standard. We don't play in the gray. We're gonna live in a black and white world. We're gonna do what's right. As often as we can choose wisely, we're gonna make the wise choice. Remember, one week from today, on the second Thursday of this month there's a bonus session. And we're gonna dive into your questions. And I believe it's gonna be very, very helpful. Then on the first Thursday of next month we're gonna talk more about criticism. We're gonna talk about how do we understand our critics. And how do we appropriately respond to those inside our organization that don't understand, and to those outside. We're gonna look at three big things to remember about criticism. And I believe it can be very, very helpful. You're gonna deal with this. We wanna deal with it wisely. Again thank you for rating. Thank you for reviewing. Thank you for subscribing. Thank you, thank you to those of you who are sharing the word on social media. It means a lot to me. I'll work hard to bring you content that's valuable. And when you invite others it's a big big blessing to me. Remember be yourself. You can be criticized, don't be criticized for being somebody else, be yourself. People would rather follow a leader who's always real than one who's always right.

- Thank you for joining the Craig Groeschel. Leadership Podcast, a new episode comes out each month. So make sure that you subscribe in iTunes or your favorite podcast app so that it comes straight to your device on Thursday, June 7th. In the meantime you can check out Craig's five favorite episodes of this podcast by going to [life.church/favoritefive](http://life.church/favoritefive). We'll send you show notes and a guide so that you guys can discuss insights and concepts of every episode with your team. If you're enjoying this show make sure that you subscribe, rate, and review on iTunes so that others can learn from it as well. Until next time. We'll see you at the Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast.