

Grace Under Fire: How to Respond to Criticism Without Burning Bridges

You put yourself out there, try something exhilarating, and then it happens. An email from someone you respect throws a wrench into your otherwise glowing experience. How do you respond? Sit tight; I'm about to share my journey through this very landscape.

My Unforgettable Encounter: John's Unexpected Email

So, there I was, riding high on the applause of a stand-up comedy gig—200 people, laughter, a real hit. Just when I thought I could take a breath and enjoy the afterglow, an email notification on my phone caught my eye. It was from John, a friend and mentor who'd always been in my corner.

John wrote, "I'm disappointed, Preston. Why work so hard to build the image of a godly man, only to perform the same kind of comedy everyone else does?"

His words hit me like a freight train. I was ready to hit back, and boy, did my fingers itch to type out a defensive masterpiece. But then, I stopped myself.

Turning Points: How I Navigated the Criticism

The Pause: A Moment of Gravity. Right there, I had a choice: give into the gut reaction or let wisdom take the wheel. I chose the latter.

Asking the Unasked: I took a deep breath and typed, "What did you find offensive?" Sometimes, asking for specifics can defuse a situation more effectively than you'd think.

The Soft Answer: My Line of Defense. John replied, specifying

that he turned it off during the “farting part.” Instead of being confrontational, I chose humor. “Ah. William Shakespeare and I have something in common, then; we both love a good fart joke.”

Reflection: Facing My Inner Jury. I pondered, “Did my stand-up align with my higher goals and values?” It’s the tough question we often sidestep, but it’s crucial for personal growth.

Preservation: Keeping the Door Open. It’s tempting to cut ties when criticism hits close to home. Instead, I opted for grace. “Thanks again for the note. All my best and take care.”

The Outcome: A Lesson Cloaked in Criticism. It could have been a battle of egos, but it ended as a valuable lesson and a preserved friendship. “You too. And keep in touch,” John replied. These simple words carried the weight of a meaningful, if challenging, exchange.

So, what will you do when that email, text, or comment hits you like a ton of bricks? Will you let defensiveness cloud your judgment? Or will you choose a path that might lead to growth, understanding, and perhaps even a deepened relationship?

The moment after you read a critical message can either be the countdown to an emotional detonation or the beginning of a wiser, more understanding you. Which will you choose?

Have you ever been in a similar situation? I’d love to hear your thoughts and experiences. Share them below; your story might be the guidepost someone else needs today.

Want to discover how to become an exceptional leader? Visit my website, <http://www.prestonpoore.com>, today.

Cheers!

Preston