

## Handling Criticism: Lessons from Nehemiah

### Chapter 2

Any time you step out to do a new thing and/or to express compassion for others—Expect Opposition! (10)

Reasons for criticism—legitimate; displaced; negative spirit; personality conflict; threatened by change

Destructive criticism is meant to: hurt or humiliate and belittle; manipulate or control; blame or create guilt; get attention

Constructive criticism is meant to: help improve or make us aware; express concern or caring; keep communication open; clear the air; motivate us to make positive change

To avoid criticism: say nothing; do nothing; be nothing; avoid risks; please people rather than God. However, if you do these things, you'll still be criticized.

### Chapter 4

Criticism can take on many different forms:

- Anger (1, 7)
- Mocking (1, 3)
- Ridicule (2, 3)
- Conspiracy (8)
- Discouragement (10)
- Intimidation and fear (11-12)

Proverbs 27:5-6 – Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

The response to criticism can vary:

- Pray (4, 5, 9)
- Trust God to settle the score (4, 5)
- Revise your plan (9, 16-18). Learn from it.
- Remember God's provision and protection (14)
- Stay faithful to the task (15, 21). Move on.

Avoid defensiveness and defenselessness. Discover if there is any truth in the criticism. Pray for your critics (Luke 6:28). Model grace—show others how to respond to criticism. Minister to your critics. Separate the criticism from the critic. Forgive. Silence (Matthew 26:63).

## Chapter 6

If criticism fails, the opposition may resort to deception, false accusations, rumors, and intimidation (1-2, 4, 6-7, 10-11, 13), all of which aim at discouraging and distracting us from what's most important (9).

Nehemiah responded to his critics by:

- Positive refusal to be distracted (3-4). Sometimes you should meet with critics and sometimes you should ignore them.
- Confronting their lies (8)
- Praying for strength (9)
- Refusing to be intimidated (11)
- Letting God handle the retribution (14)
- Staying focused on the task (15)

God is more concerned with our response to criticism than with the criticism itself.

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### An Answer to Fault-Finders

“It doesn't take genius to find faults and failures in me. I know more of my faults than anyone else ever will. There are only two who know more of my faults than I, God and Satan. God is in the business of forgiving me, encouraging me, and helping me grow spiritually. Satan is in the business of pointing out my faults, magnifying my weaknesses and inabilities, and condemning me. Whose side are you on?”

It doesn't take genius to discover my faults, but it does take spiritual maturity to see God's grace and glory in one as human as I. I am what I am by God's grace alone.”

Pastor Owen Hollingsworth