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The Story: Nehemiah (How to Deal with Criticism)

Nehemiah felt burdened to serve God by leading the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He did it in just 52 days, and yet somehow, he still had his critics.

Let's look at 4 ways Nehemiah dealt with criticism:

#1 Prepare in Advance for Criticism

Nehemiah 4:1, 1 When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews."

- How do you prepare for criticism? Two ways:
- Remember why you are doing what you're doing?
 - If the work is something you're: (1) passionate about, (2) is in line with God's heart, & (3) your motives are right...be confident!
- Commit to not defending yourself too quickly. Instead, be open to correction.

#2 Consider the Source of Your Criticism

Nehemiah 4:2-3, [Sanballat] 2 "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?" 3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building, even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!"."

- Keep in perspective who is criticizing you.
- Separate the criticism from the critic.
- "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." (James 1:19)
- Try and determine the motives behind criticism:
 - Destructive criticism is meant to: hurt or humiliate & belittle; manipulate or control; blame or create guilt; get attention.

- Constructive criticism is meant to: help improve or make us aware of a thing; express concern; motivate a good change.
- When are obvious times to listen?
 - When it comes from someone you: (1) trust, (2) who loves you, (3) is wise, or (4) it comes from multiple sources.

#3 Talk to God About the Criticism (Not the Critic)

Nehemiah 4:4-5, 4 Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. 5 Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.

- Why is it so important to pray when you're criticized?
 1. You're usually better off telling God how you really feel than sharing that with your critic. (Proverbs 29:11; 1 Peter 2:23)
 2. It's a chance to ask God, "is there any validity in this criticism?"
 3. It reminds you of who your real audience is. (Matthew 5:21)

#4 After Considering Criticism, Simply Do Your Best

Nehemiah 4:6, 6 So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

- Don't allow criticism to become the focus. Consider it, adjust if necessary, and then keep working.
- What more can God ask than we just do our best?
- Remember, People won't say anything worse about us than the cross hasn't said, which is, we are sinners who deserve eternal punishment. That's offensive, but true. So don't get worked up by lesser criticism.
- When you feel rejected by criticism, remember you're accepted by God because of Jesus!