



Plus One

Living with Criticism

#npplusone

Week 3
3 of 4

August 15, 2021

Bottom Line: When you push against darkness, it pushes back.

Icebreaker: What's one thing you can't stand that everyone else likes? What do you like that no one else does?

Key Verse: *Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives in your homes.* Nehemiah 4:14 NIV

Any time God leads you to do anything meaningful, generous, significant, something that benefits others and is eternal, expect opposition. Nehemiah was an ordinary man, cupbearer to the king, who had a burden for the plight of his people. Something had to be done, and he felt God sending him back there. First he started building the wall of the city for protection. The people joined him and soon they were the target of ridicule and opposition, being called hopeless and feeble. The enemies said, "Who do you think you are?" That's one of the first ways you know that you are doing something significant—you encounter ugly opposition. When you are advancing, the enemy will push back. When you coast along, you get no opposition. But as sure as you start moving in the right direction, the enemy releases waves of opposition. Some of the criticism will be valid because you can't know how it will all happen. A vision always has far more solid information on the WHAT side of the equation than on the HOW side. But you can't let what you don't know stop what you DO know. The vision will die and with it the significant purpose of your life. Don't quit; adjust to a new way of doing it. This is the challenge: to choose to go through a season of struggle instead of embracing the relief of quitting. If you are a Christ-follower you have a unique opportunity when it comes to responding to criticism. Ask, "How can I honor God through this criticism?" Your heavenly Father is more than willing to get involved in the conflict. Nehemiah knew God was interested in the success of the mission, so he did three things: **He prayed.** He took his anger and frustration right to prayer. He told God exactly how he felt and then went right back to work. We tend to get distracted and defensive by criticism. Not Nehemiah. Prayer puts criticism in its proper context and robs it of its power. **He remembered his Source.** He deliberately recalled the goodness of God. This gave him courage to push through the threats and opposition. He remembered it was impossible, but the powerful God had called him. He led the people to remember. **He adjusted the strategy.** He understood the balance between walking by faith and leading strategically. He adjusted the strategy. Be stubborn about the vision and flexible with your strategy. Visions don't come with instructions. Channel your emotions toward your heavenly Father. God came through. They finished in 52 days! He will work with you!

THINK IT OVER >>>

What was the most significant part of Sunday's message to you?

Advancement invites opposition. How have you experienced opposition or becoming a target when you started pushing forward? What makes criticism an effective tool of Satan?

Satan does not bother anyone who is not a threat. When you step out, the devil tries to step in to stop you from doing the work of God. If you don't want any opposition, just stay out of the game, live a self-centered life, and you're probably gonna be left out of the trouble. Does that help you or scare you? Explain.

The nature of any vision is that it is going to have gaps. If there were no gaps, someone else would have already delivered the goods. A God-ordained vision always has more question than answers. When you are part of a vision, are you more likely to pull away when there are gaps or push forward? What makes the decision for you?

LOOK IT OVER <<<

What are you tempted to quit on today? What is your core weakness? Do you need to see immediate results? Do you need to be affirmed?

What is your natural response to criticism? How might you train yourself to immediately respond with prayer?

What instances of God's faithfulness are most encouraging to you when you are discouraged? How can you encourage others who are being criticized or are stalemated on their vision?

When criticism is held against the backdrop of our Father's resources and omniscience, it loses its power.

There are times when every visionary must revise their plans. Don't be afraid to learn from your critics. In retrospect, who has helped you because of their criticism?

NEXT STEPS

1. Pray. Take your current frustrations and confusion to God.
2. Remember God's faithfulness. Make a list of how He has come through for you previously.
3. Ask God to help you realize and make any changes necessary in your situation.
4. Invite others to join you in a small group for 52 days.

EVALUATION/ACTION

Realizing and reaching your full potential in Christ

Bottom Line: When you push against darkness, it pushes back.

Rate yourself from 1 to 10 1 (never), 10 (always)	1	2	3	4		6	7	8	9	10
Why did you give yourself this rating?										
What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating?										
Do you know someone who demonstrates this bottom line well? What do you admire about that person?										
What specific action can you put into practice to raise your rating?										
At the end of this week, reflect - where did you see the bottom line show up in your actions throughout the week?										

PRAYER

List group members and their prayer requests for this week:

DAILY STUDY

Want to dig deeper? Check out **The Daily** this week at newpointe.org/daily:

Monday: Galatians 6:9

Tuesday: Proverbs 15:31-33

Wednesday: Proverbs 26:4-5

Thursday: Deuteronomy 4:9, 1 Samuel 17:37

Friday: Psalm 32:8, James 1:5

Don't let the conversation stop here. Keep talking it over with others throughout the week.

(Don't forget to bring this paper to your next small group meeting)