

Do not Listen to Your Critics. Listen to God Instead!

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It seems like for every really big project I have been associated with over the years, critics and naysayers were standing in the way. I can hear them now, years later, those critics and naysayers.

- “You can’t do it that way.”
- “You’ll never make it work.”
- “Who are you to think you can do that?”

I bet you just had a picture flash into your mind of someone in your life who is like that. They are negative. They oppose your ideas. They always stand up and say a thing cannot be done rather than lend a hand to help!

It is a sad reality. Whenever you try to build something or do something really important, some folks will oppose you—people who love nothing more than to take the wind from your sails. My advice is whenever you are about to do something important, do not listen to your critics, listen to God instead!

One of the best examples of someone listening to God and not to his critics is Nehemiah.

Nehemiah’s Big Project

Nehemiah was cupbearer to Artaxerxes, the Persian king who ruled the world. As cupbearer, Nehemiah was perhaps the second most powerful man in the kingdom, even in the world.

One day some fellow Israelites came to Nehemiah from Jerusalem and told him about the sad state of affairs in Jerusalem. After years of occupation, the city walls and gates had not been rebuilt.

Nehemiah’s response to the news was to pray and fast for days asking God to give him success before the king. Nehemiah planned to ask the king for a leave of absence to go to Jerusalem and see to the rebuilding of the city walls and gates. And he wanted the king to pay for it all!

God answered Nehemiah’s prayer. The king agreed to all Nehemiah’s plans and requests, so Nehemiah headed off to Jerusalem to see to the rebuilding of the city. As soon as Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he spent three days surveying the city and making plans.

Once he completed his investigation, Nehemiah gathered the city leaders and explained his plan to rebuild the city. Once he had secured the support and cooperation of the city leaders, the work of rebuilding Jerusalem began.

Opposition from Critics

The work of rebuilding the city had just gotten underway when the critics and naysayers showed up. They tried to slow or stop the progress of rebuilding the city using six different tactics.

1. Ridicule

The first critics to show up were Sanballat and Tobiah, both enemies of the Jews. They ridiculed the Jews and their rebuilding efforts in an attempt to embarrass and shame the workers. (Nehemiah 4:2-3)

2. Fear

When ridicule did not stop the Jews from rebuilding the city, Sanballat and Tobiah gathered a group of Arabs, Ammonites, and men from Ashdod who threatened to kill the workers. (Nehemiah 4:7-23)

3. Deception

Nehemiah and the people of the city persisted in their work and managed to get all the walls of the city rebuilt. This made Sanballat, Tobiah, and all the others angry, so they hatched a plot to kill Nehemiah. They sent a message to Nehemiah telling him they wanted to meet outside the city. They tried five times to lure him away from the city, but each time Nehemiah refused. (Nehemiah 6:2-4)

4. False Accusations & Threats

When their plan to lure Nehemiah out of the city to kill him failed, his critics tried to stop the work by making false accusations (fake news). They said Nehemiah and the Jews were rebuilding the wall because they were planning a revolt and that Nehemiah planned to become their king. They even threatened to tell King Artaxerxes these lies. (Nehemiah 6:5-9)

5. Intimidation

When Nehemiah ignored their false accusations and threats, Sanballat and Tobiah hired a Jew living in the city to intimidate Nehemiah. This Jew told Nehemiah that his enemies were coming to kill him, so he should hide in the temple of God. His hope was by getting Nehemiah to hide in the temple, Nehemiah would be discredited and lose the support of the people in the city. (Nehemiah 6:10-13)

6. Saboteurs

Nehemiah also had to deal with Jews who tried to sabotage the work of rebuilding the city. Nobles of the city who had ties to Tobiah were sending letters back and forth between themselves and Tobiah. They kept Tobiah informed about the progress of the work and Nehemiah's plans, and Tobiah told them how to undermine Nehemiah. (Nehemiah 6:17-19)

Critics Failed

If you read back over the story of Nehemiah, you will see that every time he was confronted with opposition from critics and naysayers, he went to God in prayer. Nehemiah leaned not on his own understanding but on the wisdom and strength he received from God.

Despite the actions of the critics and naysayers, Nehemiah and the people of the city rebuilt the city walls and gates of Jerusalem in only 52 days!

This great work was accomplished because Nehemiah was determined to do the work God had called him to do. In the face of relentless opposition from outside enemies and inside saboteurs, Nehemiah was a leader who refused to listen to critics and listened to God instead!

The world is no different today. If you are a leader called by God to do a great work, you can expect critics and naysayers to stand in your path. Be ready. Satan would love nothing more than to keep you from doing what God has called you to do!