



# Midweek Study

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## REBUILDING my BROKEN WORLD

Through Nehemiah

# Conquering Criticism

Nehemiah 2:9-10, 19-20

“In the 1960’s, research psychologist Victor Goertzel and his wife Mildred published a study of more than 400 gifted and highly successful people. They later expanded that study to include more than 700 successful people, and they published the study under the title *Cradles of Eminence*. Looking at all the different factors that motivated these people to become successful in their various fields of endeavor, the Goertzels only found one common thread, one factor nearly all of them had in common: **they had overcome difficult obstacles and opposition to become the kind of people they were.**

“Some had to overcome:

- abusive or domineering parents
- alcoholic or failure-prone parents
- physical disabilities or childhood illnesses
- poverty
- racism
- tragedy
- abandonment
- mental illness

“Yet it was the very factor that seemed the most likely to destroy them that actually made them stronger. When we have to overcome obstacles and opposition to achieve our goals, those difficulties can actually make us stronger and increase our likelihood of success. God uses the difficult experiences in our lives to increase our strength and intensify our trust in Him.”<sup>a</sup>

### 3 Opponents to the Work on the Wall:

- Sanballat – the Governor of Samaria
- Tobiah – Ruler of Ammon
- Geshem and his sons – ruled the Arab nations

They wanted to embarrass and intimidate Nehemiah.

1. They criticized the project (“What is this thing?”) 2:19
2. They criticized the motives (“Are you rebelling?”) 2:19

<sup>a</sup> Ray Stedman, *God’s Blueprint for Success* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2017), 50-51.

James Hamilton writes, “They insinuate that pursuing the kingdom of God could be perceived as rebellion against the reigning power on earth. For a long time Christians in the United States have lived in a culture that at least on the surface, valued Christianity. More and more, however, we are living in a culture that will interpret faithfulness to God and Christ as rebellion against the governing authorities.”<sup>b</sup>

## ***Opportunities always come with Opponents!***

### **Nehemiah Responded (2:20)<sup>c</sup>**

1. This is **God’s Work**
2. We are **God’s servants**
3. This work will be accomplished by **God’s power!**
4. You have **NO PORTION** here (No property inside this city)
5. You have **NO RIGHT** here (No claim of authority over Jerusalem)

- This could imply they have no right to require taxes or tribute from the citizens of Jerusalem.

6. You have **NO MEMORIAL** here.

- This is a religious implication that could be understood, “You have no place of worship within Jerusalem’s community of believers.

## ***Don’t let the critics drain you, distract you or derail your vision.***

A wise leader will evaluate the opposition in light of the spirit and attitude in which criticism is given. He will also consider the voice to which the opposition listens. If your critics listen to God’s voice, you had better listen to them. But if they are marching to a different drumbeat, use the Nehemiah technique: “Look, they’re not even in the same camp. Let’s go right on.”<sup>d</sup>

Romans 8:31b says, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

Matthew 16:18b says, “On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Do you prefer to build or tear down? Do you seek to encourage or to discourage? Do you spread faith and optimism – or do you prefer to spread gloom and doom? If you are a builder, a constructionist, and you are determined to dare something great for God, then you can expect opposition.<sup>e</sup>

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<sup>b</sup> James Hamilton, *Exalting Jesus in Ezra and Nehemiah* (Nashville, TN: Holman, 2014), 108.

<sup>c</sup> Stephen Davey, *Nehemiah* (Apex, NC: Charity House, 2012), 63.

<sup>d</sup> Charles Swindoll, *Hand Me Another Brick* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1978), 67.

<sup>e</sup> Michael Youssef, *God, Help Me Rebuild My Broken World* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2016), 51.