

GO DEEPER: BIG DREAMS AND BOLD FAITH

A Reflection Guide for "Big Dreams? Expect Criticism (and here's how to handle it)"

INTRODUCTION

In this powerful episode of Making Sense of Faith, Adam Hamilton takes us inside the New Room in Bristol, England—Methodism's first building—to explore John Wesley's revolutionary approach to pursuing God-sized dreams despite inevitable criticism. As you reflect on this conversation, use this guide to examine your own calling, consider how you handle opposition, and discover practical wisdom for taking bold steps of faith in your everyday life.

3 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take a moment to consider what resonated most deeply with you from Adam's exploration:

1. Think about a time when you felt called to do something but held back because of potential criticism. How does Wesley's declaration that "the world is my parish" challenge or inspire your approach to your own calling?
2. Adam mentions that "if all you ever did were things that nobody ever complained about, you're not gonna do anything of significance." What significant thing might you be avoiding because you're afraid of how others will respond?
3. Wesley integrated "faith in action" from the very beginning—the New Room housed preaching, teaching, a food pantry, and a pharmacy all in one space. How might your own faith be calling you to address practical needs in your community?

2 KEY INSIGHTS

1. Criticism is the price of significance

"If you have a big dream, you're gonna be criticized. It happened at Resurrection. We were criticized all the time when we began, sometimes still today. And when that happens, you know, part of what you decide is I'm gonna just throw up my hands and give up because I'm being criticized or I really feel God is calling me."

Question: How might reframing criticism as a sign you're doing something meaningful change your response to opposition?

Reflection: Consider a current situation where you're facing pushback. What would it look like to view this criticism as confirmation that you're on the right track rather than a reason to quit?

2. True faith addresses both spiritual and social needs

"Methodists believe that we champion that, and so we're constantly looking around at the community and saying, where is there a need? Where is there somebody hurting? How is it that we can be a part of the hands and feet of Jesus wherever we are, to close the gap between the world as it's supposed to be, and the world as it is?"

Question: What specific need in your community could you help address as an expression of your faith?

Reflection: Wesley didn't separate spiritual ministry from practical service—the New Room had both preaching and a food pantry. How might your own spiritual growth be connected to serving others in tangible ways?

1 PRACTICE EXERCISE

The Vision and Criticism Assessment

Take 10 minutes for this reflective exercise:

1. **Write down one significant dream or calling** you feel drawn to but haven't fully pursued
2. **List the criticisms or objections** you imagine (or have already heard) about this dream
3. **For each criticism, ask yourself:**
 - Is this a valid concern that requires adjustment, or fear-based resistance to change?
 - What would Wesley do if faced with this same objection?
4. **Identify one small, concrete step** you could take this week toward your dream, regardless of potential criticism
5. **Write a brief prayer or intention** asking for courage to take that step

Remember: The goal isn't to be reckless or ignore wise counsel, but to distinguish between helpful feedback and the kind of resistance that comes whenever someone tries to do something significant.

QUOTES TO CONSIDER

"You've gotta be willing to think differently and then to try new things. And then sometimes people are gonna be upset."

"I look at all the world as my parish. I'm a preacher of the gospel and there are people who need it."

"Until I feel called to leave, I'm staying and doing what I'm doing."

"This isn't politics. This is morals and spirituality and faith. We have to speak out against this. This is injustice and we've gotta speak against it."

CLOSING REFLECTION

Wesley's legacy reminds us that the most meaningful contributions often come from those willing to step outside conventional boundaries when called by something greater than themselves. As you close this reflection time, consider what bold step of faith you might be avoiding—not because it's unwise, but because it's uncomfortable. Remember that criticism often indicates you're touching something that matters, and that true significance rarely comes without some degree of opposition.

This reflection guide was created to accompany the Making Sense of Faith podcast episode "Big Dreams? Expect Criticism (and here's how to handle it)." For more resources like this, visit makingsenseoffaith.com.