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Complain Much?

Luke 5:30: (NASB) *The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at his disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?*

There are certain things in life - at least in this country - that are just simply common. Everyone knows about them and for the most part participates in them, often on a subconscious level. Two of these staples of everyday life, murmuring and complaining, will be our topic. What do people most often murmur or complain about? Do murmuring and complaining have any positive effects? Are there thought patterns that lead to murmuring and complaining? Can we alter our complaining habits?

First, let's figure out what murmuring and complaining are all about!

Here's a great Bible trivia question: What do the following Scriptures all have in common?

Ruth 1:16: (KJV) *And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:*

Psalms 30:5: (KJV) *For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*

Psalms 91:1: (KJV) *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

Genesis 31:54: (KJV) *Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.*

Exodus 16:2: (KJV) *And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:*



Complaining is draining, Dr. Bill Baker, ABC News

- When you talk about holidays, you talk about getting a gift. You don't necessarily want the "gift" of grumbling...or do you?
- We want to give away the gift of grumbling! Grumbling is a habit that has a way of stealing the joy and the peace of the individual grumbler and their relationships as well. Complaining is draining! Perhaps we need to give the gift of no more grumbling!

Trivia question answer: The word for "lodge," "endure," "abide," "tarried all night" and "murmured" is all the same word!

Murmur: Strong's #3885, to stop (usually over night); by implication, to stay permanently; hence (in a bad sense) to be obstinate (especially in words, to complain):

So, our first Old Testament hint as to what murmuring is gives us great insight into the depth of impact it can have on our life. It is something we can harbor inside of ourselves that actually "lives" with us. Murmuring leads to complaining.

Is there a difference between complaining and criticizing?

(Source: www.acomplaintfreeworld.org, *The No Complaining Rule* by Jon Gordon): The author quotes some research regarding the cost and impact of negativity: Negativity costs the U.S. economy between \$250 and \$300 billion every year in lost productivity according to the Gallup Organization.)

- Ninety percent of doctor visits are stress related (the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- The #1 cause of office stress is coworkers and their complaining (truejobs.com)
- Negative emotions are associated with: Decreased life span and longevity, increased risk of heart attack, increased risk of stroke, greater stress, less energy, more pain, fewer friends, and less success.



How is murmuring different from complaining?

Murmur: Strong's #1111 to grumble: AV- 1) to murmur, mutter, grumble, say anything against in a low tone 1a) of the cooing of doves 1b) of those who confer secretly together 1c) of those who discontentedly complain

The skeptics of Jesus murmured at him: John 6:41: The Jews then **murmured <1111>** at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

But so did his closest followers! John 6:61: When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples **murmured <1111>** at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

Complain: Strong's #7878 talk, meditate, speak, complain, commune, muse, to put forth, mediate, muse, commune, speak, complain, ponder, sing

Complaining is much more of an outward expression, while murmuring is a more inward or private expression.

Psalms 69:12: They that sit in the gate **speak <7878>** against me; and I was the song of the drunkards.

Psalms 77:3: I remembered God, and was troubled: I **complained <7878>**, and my spirit was overwhelmed.

Complain: Strong's #7879 meditation, prayer, talking, communication

Psalms 143:5: I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I **muse <7878>** on the work of thy hands.

So complaining is a more outward exercise, which can have some value in its expression, whereas murmuring carries with it an obstinate inward sense of mulling and agitation.

We can observe that before any complaint is formed there is an ample supply of murmuring and grumbling to feed it! We want to avoid a constant attitude of complaining.

Built on this precarious base of murmuring, an even bigger test for Israel loomed ahead...

***After journeying through the wilderness for a short period of time, they now have the Promised Land before them:**

Numbers 13:1-2: (NRSV) ¹The LORD said to Moses, ²Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites; from each of their ancestral tribes you shall send a man, every one a leader among them.

Murmuring brings complaining which displays a deep-seated and dramatic lack of faith.

What two opposite words fit this definition: "Having an expectation of a future event - something that is believed without being seen." Faith! ...but also fear! Rather than have faith that what God searched out was good for them, the Hebrews had fear because they lost their focus.

Can complaining ever be good?

So, weren't the Israelites justified in their feelings of doubt?

 **Some whining okay, Dr. Laura, 700 Club**

For some people it is a bad habit, but for other people there are deeper motivations. A certain amount of whining is healthy, normal, natural, reasonable, and I reserve the right to whine for a couple of days at least if I'm really upset. When we whine, if we are having a reasonable reaction to an unreasonable situation and we are soliciting some sympathy, some support, love, advice, suggestions, morale boosting and that's not a bad thing.

- It's just that when we stay in the whining mode sometimes for years and for some people for a lifetime, it is like shrink wrapping your life into this unhappy state. Life is brief and it is a gift. For us to waste that gift is just so sad.

1 Thessalonians 5:18: In everything give thanks.

***An Important Sidebar to this story:**

The people originally wanted spies to precede their entry:

Deuteronomy 1:22: (NKJV) ²¹Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged. ²²And every one of you came near to me and said, Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.

God had already "searched out" the land for them!

Ezekiel 20:6: (NKJV) ⁶On that day I raised My hand in an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands.



The acknowledgement of a difficulty isn't whining. We don't have to be happy about a situation, but we have to trust God.

So the spies go check out the land and return: Numbers 13:25-33: The land showed itself to be exactly all that God had described, BUT...Numbers 13:28-30: Here we go with seeds of doubt. When seeds of doubt sprout, they can bring complaining: (The following verses are out of order to build a point.)

The murmuring produces a fierce bias which overrides the faith Caleb expressed: Numbers 13:31-33: They adopted the "complaining approach" to God's preparation for them. It wasn't good enough for them. God was minimized. Do we minimize God and His preparations for us when we murmur? So much of complaining is about "poor me," when it is really a matter of perspective and looking at our circumstances as being overruled for our highest spiritual welfare.

Faith and focus clear away the doubt - but only if we let them: Caleb believed in God's promise, but he was overruled by the whiners! The people made their own conclusions instead of listening to God.

Why people whine and the antidote, Dr. Laura, 700 club

- Some people hold onto the whining because they are just addicted to getting sympathy, of being excused from responsibility because, "I'm so sad; no one can expect me to do anything." Other people just are in despair and for this my heart aches. I have found the antidote to despair! It is called "purpose." When we have purpose in our lives, there is no despair.*

Here is a way to deal with complaining Philippians 3:8-14: Purpose is founded in perspective, Perspective is built upon honesty, Honesty is the basis for hope, Hope is the foundation for effort, Effort feeds purpose! This gives a whole new meaning to the circle of life...

Can we learn to "un-complain?"

James tells us patience is paramount in the life of a Christian: James 5:7-11: So, patience is a basis on which we can avoid complaining. "Never judge an artist by his unfinished work," and we are all unfinished works! Observation of those who endured before us helps us in our struggle for patience and to seek to be non-complainers.

Thumper's wisdom - What did your father tell you, Bambi

- He doesn't walk very good, does he? Thumper? What did your father tell you this morning? If you can't say somethin' nice, don't say nothin' at all.*

Sometimes we become so over-wrought, we need to complain - where should we focus?

Psalms 77:1-20: Whining is complaining just for the sake of complaining. However, sometimes we can look for a solution by registering a complaint.

David started out complaining, then started asking questions, and turned it into praise. There is a process we can put in place that can help us combat the murmuring and complaining that can overrun our lives. To "uncomplain" we observe reality in faith, accept it unconditionally, feed our inner mind with it, (combats murmuring) and then speak it out (combats complaining).

What do we see when we observe murmuring and complaining?

Jonah the prophet was a great example of a man who was both godly and faulty at the same time. He was given a task to preach to Nineveh, the enemies of Israel, and decided to go in the opposite direction! God grabbed Jonah's attention by having him swallowed by a great fish.

It is in this context of certain death that Jonah prays: Jonah 2:7-9: Jonah's murmurings became praises to God - after all, what is the alternative? **God heard his prayer and gave him a chance to do what he was obligated to do: Jonah 3:4-5:** It worked! Mission accomplished, murmuring defeated and complaining crushed - right???

It worked...but this didn't make Jonah happy. Jonah 4:1-4: Murmuring and complaining were back in the driver's seat! God challenged Jonah's reaction. Jonah 4:5-9: God put Jonah to the test because Jonah was stuck in a murmuring and complaining attitude - even as a prophet of God! This is a sad, sad account of one whose inner voice brought him to a point of utter despair, despite God's care.



Three steps to stop grumbling, Dr. Bill Baker, ABC News

1. *Gratitude: Look for grounds for gratitude - things to be thankful for. If I am thankful, I will not grumble.* (Jonah was happy about the plant, but he did not have gratitude that God's will was accomplished.)

2. *Grace: See the greatness of grace, being able to give to other people not what they deserve but what they need - mercy and grace.* (Jonah didn't see the greatness of God's grace. In his mind, the people of Nineveh should die.)

3. *Grit: Having a steadfast mind and courage so that we can get through hardships and difficulties; we can get through them safely without grumbling or complaining.* (Jonah allowed his feelings to override his true faith and focus. He didn't have the grit to persevere.)

Will we be fear-filled or faith-filled? Complaining just to complain is not only annoying to others, but it doesn't change anything.

What can I do right now to mute the murmuring and cancel the complaining?

We can choose! Draw a line in the sand! Joshua 24:15

- Gratitude makes God larger and more real to our thinking than the problem or obstacle!
- The question is what are we *magnifying* and what are we *minimizing*?
- The Israelites magnified that which should have and could have been minimized! The result was the enemy looked like giants and they saw themselves as grasshoppers.

Psalms 69:29-33: (NKJV) ²⁹*But I am poor and sorrowful; Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high.* ³⁰*I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving.*

The following is a GREAT EXAMPLE of the avoidance of murmuring and disputing: Nehemiah 1:1-2: The state of Jerusalem and its people was weighing heavily upon the heart of Nehemiah because things had not gone well. Nehemiah 1:3: The news was about as bad as it could be. It was in shambles and the people were barely getting by. Nehemiah 1:4: Nehemiah's prayer was one of magnifying praise! He acknowledged the situation without complaining and was looking for a solution. He had faith that something could be done about the dire circumstances.

Whining socks and perspective, Dr. Laura, 700 Club

- *One of the things in the book is about guys who leave their socks on the floor! So many women complain about the socks on the floor until I read a letter who used to complain but then her husband died and she would have loved to have woken up to find his socks anywhere, because it would mean that he was still alive. Now THAT's perspective!*

When we put things into perspective, we see that many times they aren't worth that much.

Four months later: Nehemiah 2:1-4: Nehemiah's prayer and faith over this four months had come to a point of opportunity - not only was he continually aware of the problem, he was systematically preparing for the solving of the problem to rebuild Jerusalem. He was ready when the opportunity arose. So, while Nehemiah had every reason to murmur for months, he chose to prepare in faith, against all odds. When there was an opportunity to complain, he instead faithfully recounted history and became an agent for change!

Complaining and murmuring need to be stopped. Let's put ourselves in a position of acknowledging our difficulties with the purpose of finding something good and the God-honoring way to deal with them.

***So do we complain much?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Kathy!) and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!***