

#### **Complain Much?**

<u>Luke 5:30</u>: (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:



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:

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

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

<u>Genesis 31:54</u>: (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.

<u>Exodus 16:2</u>: (KJV) And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Agron 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:





**Murmur:** Strongs #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

Less success

#### How is murmuring different from complaining?

Murmur: Strongs #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:

<u>John 6:41</u>: 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!

<u>John 6:61</u>: When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured <1111> at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

**Complain:** Strongs #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.

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

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

Complain: Strongs #7879 meditation, prayer, talking, communication

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. <sup>22</sup>And 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) <sup>6</sup>On 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.

<u>Psalms 143:5</u>: 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.

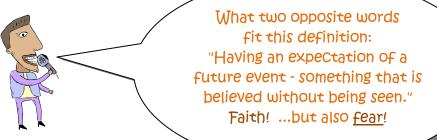
We can observe that before any complaint is formed there is an ample supply of murmuring and grumbling to feed it! We want to avoid a constant attitude of complaining.

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) <sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>Send 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.



Rather than have faith that what God searched out was good for them, the Hebrews had fear because they lost their focus.



DOUBT

#### Can complaining ever be good?

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

(1) Some whining okay, Dr. Laura, 700 Club

- For some people it is a bad habit, but for other people there are deeper motiviations. 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.

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: (NRSV) <sup>25</sup>At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. <sup>26</sup>And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the Israelites...they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. <sup>27</sup>And they told him, We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.

#### The land showed itself to be exactly all that God had described, BUT...

Numbers 13:28-30: (NRSV)<sup>28</sup>Yet the people who live in the land are strong, and the towns are fortified and very large; and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. <sup>29</sup>The Amalekites live in the land of the Negeb; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live by the sea, and along the Jordan. But Caleb (one of the ten spies) quieted the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.

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: (NRSV) <sup>31</sup>Then the men who had gone up with him said, We are not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we. <sup>32</sup>So they brought to the Israelites an unfavorable report of the land that they had spied out, saying, The land that we have gone through as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are of great size. <sup>33</sup>There we saw the Nephilim (the Anakites come from the Nephilim); and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.

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:

<sup>30</sup>But Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.

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:



#### Purpose is founded in perspective:

<u>Philippians 3:8-14</u>: (NASB) <sup>8</sup>More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

#### Perspective is built upon honesty:

<sup>9</sup>and may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith...



#### Honesty is the basis for hope:

<sup>10</sup>that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death; <sup>11</sup>in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

#### Hope is the foundation for effort:

<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

#### Effort feeds purpose! This gives a whole new meaning to the circle of life...

<sup>13</sup>Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Can we learn to "un-complain?"



#### James tells us patience is paramount in the life of a Christian:

<u>James 5:7-11</u>: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. <sup>8</sup>You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup>Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

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!

<sup>10</sup>As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup>We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

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: (KJV) <sup>1</sup>I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me. <sup>2</sup>In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. <sup>3</sup>I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah

Whining is complaining just for the sake of complaining. However, sometimes we can look for a solution by registering a complaint.

<sup>4</sup>Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. <sup>5</sup>I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. <sup>6</sup>I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. <sup>7</sup>Will the Lord cast off forever? And will he be favourable no more? <sup>8</sup>Is his mercy clean gone forever? Doth his promise



fail for evermore? <sup>9</sup>Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah <sup>10</sup>And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. <sup>11</sup>I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. <sup>12</sup>I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. <sup>13</sup>Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? <sup>14</sup>Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people. <sup>15</sup>Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah

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).

...<sup>19</sup>Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. <sup>20</sup>Thou leadest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

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: (NKJV) <sup>7</sup>When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple. <sup>8</sup>Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy. <sup>9</sup>But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

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:

<u>Jonah 3:4-5</u>: (NKJV) <sup>4</sup>And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown! <sup>5</sup>So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

It worked! Mission accomplished, murmuring defeated and complaining crushed - right???

#### It worked...but this didn't make Jonah happy.

Jonah 4:1-4: (NKJV) <sup>1</sup>But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. <sup>2</sup>So he prayed to the LORD, and said, Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. <sup>3</sup>Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live! <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said, Is it right for you to be angry?

Murmuring and complaining were back in the driver's seat! God challenged Jonah's reaction.

<u>Jonah 4:5-9</u>: (NKJV) <sup>5</sup>So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. <sup>6</sup>And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah,



that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. <sup>7</sup>But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. <sup>8</sup>And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. <sup>9</sup>Then God said to Jonah, Is it right for you to be angry about the plant? And he said, It is right for me to be angry, even to death!

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!

<u>Joshua 24:15</u>: (NASB) If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

- 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.

<u>Psalms 69:29-33</u>: (NKJV) <sup>29</sup>But I am poor and sorrowful; Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high. <sup>30</sup>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:

<u>Nehemiah 1:1-2</u>: (NKJV) <sup>1</sup>The words of Nehemiah... It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, <sup>2</sup>that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

The state of Jerusalem and its people was weighing heavily upon the heart of Nehemiah because things had not gone well.

<u>Nehemiah 1:3</u>: (NKJV) <sup>3</sup>And they said to me, The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.

The news was about as bad as it could be. It was in shambles and the people were barely getting by.

<u>Nehemiah 1:4</u>: (NKJV) So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

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: (NKJV) ¹And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. ²Therefore the king said to me, Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart. So I became dreadfully afraid, ³and said to the king, May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire? ⁴Then the king said to me, What do you request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

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...!

## And now <u>even more</u> to think about... only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!

#### First, a few quotes that can really make you think twice before complaining!

"People who never achieve happiness are the ones who complain whenever they're awake, and whenever they're asleep, they are thinking about what to complain about tomorrow." *Adam Zimbler* 

"Complaining - we all do it, but do we really need to? Catherine Pulsifer

"I had no shoes and complained until I met a man who had no feet." *Indian Proverb* 

"If you don't like something change it. Don't complain because you don't have. Enjoy what you've got." *H. Stanley Judd* 

"Maturity is the ability to reap without apology and not complain when things don't go well." *Jim Rohn* 

"You can complain because roses have thorns, or you can rejoice because thorns have roses." *Ziggy* 

Next, another national murmuring event - this time it is Israel right after their deliverance from Egypt:

Here we drop in on a nation that was, just over a month ago, miraculously delivered from generations of slavery in Egypt. They saw the Ten Plagues, their release and the parting of the Red Sea all as evidences of God's care for them. But we now find a national murmuring over food and water.

#### Selected verses from Exodus 16:

Exodus 16:1-2: (KJV) <sup>1</sup>And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. <sup>2</sup>And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:

There are a lot of people unhappy without addressing the issue. Murmuring sparks mutiny!



Exodus 16:3: (KJV) And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots (pots of meat), and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

Those who murmur have short memories for that which is good!

Exodus 16:4-5: (KJV) <sup>4</sup>Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. <sup>5</sup>And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

God's kindness and willingness to continue to protect His people handled their *needs* - not necessarily their *wants*.

Exodus 16:6-7: (KJV) <sup>6</sup>And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: (They needed to be reminded! We also have short memories and need to be reminded about God's goodness to us.) <sup>7</sup>And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us?

God hears those things spoken in private and those things that we mull over in our minds and He still provides His answers - maybe not the exact answers we may want, but He answers nevertheless!

Murmuring leads to disaster because it has an undertone of building something bigger than it needs to be. Oftentimes we don't even know that we are doing it. Our minds can get stuck in a rut of constant complaining without any resolution.

Exodus 16:10: (KJV) And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

More evidence of God's care for those who have doubted... but instead they focused of the fact that they were in the wilderness with no food.

Exodus 16:11-12: (KJV) <sup>11</sup>And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>12</sup>I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.

God again reminded them of two things - I hear what you are thinking and I am caring for you! The continual recounting of the murmuring seems to indicate that it has become a mindset.

Exodus 16:13-15: (KJV) <sup>13</sup>And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. <sup>14</sup>And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup>And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

So God is again as good as His word. Again!!!