



Does Complaining Ever Help?

Psalm 55:2: (NASB) *Give heed to me and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted.*

Complaining...everybody does it. Occasionally, we complain from a positive perspective for the purpose of effecting change and that is good. But most of the time we complain because someone or something is irritating us, or putting pressure on us, or challenging us or contradicting us. Most of our complaints are not for the purpose of truly solving any issue; rather, they are for the purpose of being heard, of having our position or circumstance or opinion verified. We complain for attention, for sympathy and to reinforce our ego. We often use complaining as a tool of destruction against those we oppose. For the most part, complaining does not sound all that productive. What do we do about it? How do we stop our complaining or transform it into something good?

(Jonathan is out today and our CQ Team Member, Julie, is filling in.)

 **Effective complaining, *How Complaining Can Improve Mental Health, Dr. Romie, Fox News, Orlando***

(Source: The Institute of Clinical Hypnotherapy Ireland) Robin Kowalski, a professor of psychology believes there are three different types of complainers: **Venters:** This is a dissatisfied person who is not interested in hearing any solutions to help them. **Sympathy Seekers:** They believe they've got it worse than everyone else and look for others to comfort them. **Chronic Complainers:** These people live in a constant state of complaint, complaining about the same thing over and over. Whenever we complain, thousands of neurons are triggered and form a neural network. The mind then finds it easier to follow this established network when reacting to everyday life. It is important we catch ourselves when we complain, but making sure we don't berate ourselves. Practice to create a new neural network for pleasant feelings instead of complaining and start to live a happier life.

In the Psalms, David seemed to do a lot of complaining. But he also did a lot of praising. What if we combined both approaches to try and drill down into the anatomy of a positive complaint?

Psalm 55 is a Psalm of Complaint written at the time of Absalom's rebellion and was most likely focused on the part that David's former trusted advisor, Ahithophel, played in that rebellion:

Psalms 55:1-3: (Please see our podcast "Is Bitterness Ruining Your Life?" from August 25, 2013 for more on the story of Ahithophel.) David was bothered to the point of physical unrest.

Anatomy of a Good Complaint: Give voice to your complaints to those whom you trust to help with the matter.

Psalm 34 is a Psalm of Praise written after David escaped the wrath of King Saul by feigning madness among the Philistines: **Psalm 34:1-3:** When we complain, we are magnifying something. Here we are supposed to *magnify the LORD*. Exalting God is the great equalizer for complaining. To the extent we magnify one, there is no room to magnify ourselves with our complaining.

Anatomy of Praise: Contextualize your life by remembering to whom and to what you owe the position of authority and exaltation in your life. (Hint: Your complaints NEVER hold this spot!)

**David in writing the Psalms complained a lot.
Was he setting a good example by his complaining?**

We absolutely believe he WAS setting a good example. As we go through his Psalm about being betrayed by his good friend and advisor, we will see how what might sound like chronic complaining to some was actually well-placed and mature reasoning and recounting of great difficulty.

 **Organized complaining, *How Complaining Can Improve Mental Health, Dr. Romie, Fox News, Orlando***



We influence a LOT of people in one day, children, co-workers, our spouse or friends - reinforcing a behavior of complaining encourages others to either see this is an okay behavior OR that we are someone to avoid.

A positive benefit of "journaling" your complaint is an emotional release. Isn't that what David did? Not only did he journal his complaints, he directed them to the Eternal Complaint Solver, God. Our complaints need to be disciplined.

(Psalm of Complaint) David had just given voice to his complaint: [Psalm 55:4-8](#)

Anatomy of a Good Complaint: Describe the depth of the effects that your complaint has upon you. Be honest!

(Psalm of Praise) David had just exalted God in His majesty! [Psalm 34:4-7](#)

Anatomy of Praise: After exalting and honoring God in your life, personally and diligently seek Him out!

Complaint test: Is the following complaint legitimate? If not, what went wrong?

[Luke 19:1-10](#): This seems like a wonderful event! What could be worth complaining about here? (Please see our podcast "Is Your Heart Looking for Jesus? The Story of Zaccheus," from November 3, 2016 for more on this story.)

As a tax collector, Zaccheus was looked down upon and was in a position to defraud people. *They all began to grumble* - perhaps they should have asked what Jesus saw to be so special in this man and try to get invited to his house as well!

How did Jesus handle the complaint? *He, too, is a son of Abraham* - Jesus verified Zaccheus had a right to Jesus as much as they did. He explained why - *the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

Was their complaint legitimate? We can see why they were upset that they or someone they knew did not get picked for this special honor. The delivery of the complaint was off. The reason for the complaint becomes important.

**What about when a whole bunch of people have the same complaint?
Is there strength in numbers?**

This is actually a very common occurrence both now and historically. To an extent, there is strength in numbers, but there is never *infallibility* in numbers or automatic truth in numbers. As we shall soon see, the basic principles of complaining always exist, but is the complaint venting, sympathy seeking, or chronic? Does it have a basis in more than how a group of people feel?

(Psalm of Complaint) David had just described the internal effects of his complaint: [Psalms 55:9-11](#)

Anatomy of a Good Complaint: Describe the external effects of your complaint to your complaint handler. If there are none, that indicates something personal and properly handled directly with the subject.

David's complaint had a large domino effect for many people within Israel that needed to be described. If my complaint only affects me, it is best handled one-on-one with the person I am bothered by. If there are external effects, give it to your complaint handler. Ultimately that complaint handler is God. But trusted people around you can be used as long as they will help you take the emotion out of the equation and redirect you to exalt God through growth and positive action. If they are going to feed the complaint or absorb the complaint, they are not a handler.

(Psalm of Praise) David had just personally sought his exalted God: [Psalms 34:8-14](#)

Anatomy of Praise: Experience the blessing and power of God's grace and overruling.

 **Complaining monk, [Do Everything without Complaining and Arguing, Pastor Greg Laurie](#)**

Complaint test: Israel's national murmuring over food and water. 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, and yet...Exodus 16:1-3: Hmmm...they had just left Egypt *with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock* (Exodus 12:38) no more than 30 days prior and already they were complaining. Do we expect our Heavenly Father to provide our every need, miraculously, even when we have the capability to provide for our own needs?

Was there legitimacy to the complaint? Yes, they were hungry. Was there legitimacy to the DELIVERY of the complaint? No, it revealed a deep lack of faith, patience and reverence. They were not respectful of Moses and Aaron and what they were trying to do for them. They were ungrateful in their complaining. This complaint lost its legitimacy by the way in which it was delivered. Beware of "group think" complaining, as it is most often illogical and emotion-driven and not principle-driven. We feel so entitled to having everything and everything right now. Therefore, if I do not have what I want right now, you are going to hear about it. Part of our entitlement is to be able to just spout off with whatever level of emotion we have.

**A reasonable complaint is delivered in an unreasonable way.
How does God respond?**

While we may look at the experience of Israel in this instance and think, "shame on them," their reaction really is a telling example of how we all can and do respond to difficulties. So often we see the need, the lack or the challenge, but as we communicate what we see, we insert our emotional passion which is easily a corrupter of clear truth!

Complaining is an insult to God. – Monica Johnson

Now THAT is some perspective! As Christians, we know that God has a plan. We should be the LEAST likely to be bothered by things, so maybe if we think of it in terms of when we complain God views it as insulting and ungrateful - none of us want to be like that.

Stop! Is what I am saying and how I am thinking magnifying God? If I am not magnifying God, I am making the Creator of All Things second or third or fifth.

How does God respond? He uniquely fulfills their need: Exodus 16:4-7: ...but not without a test of faith and loyalty...They could only collect enough for the day and had to work for it. They had to show loyalty and be forced to trust it would keep coming each day except for the day of rest. He answered the complaint but without drawing them to a higher level. Here we have grace and accountability all rolled up into one neat package they called "manna."

Julie asks a question of Trish, Rick's wife: I have known Rick for many years and have talked to him for hundreds of hours. I know your life is not all unicorns and meadow flowers, and you two have had your share of difficult moments. But not once have I ever heard Rick complain. How is it that he has the discipline so many of us don't? *(Please see full edition Rewind for the transcript.)*



Settle for sympathy, My Biggest Complaint About Complaining, Matthew Hussey

(Psalm of Complaint) David had just described the external effects of his complaint: Psalms 55:12-15: *Let them go down alive to Sheol* - This is probably a reference to Numbers 16 where Korah and his sons rebelled against Moses. They were trying to take control of Israel and Moses separated the people, saying, "Everyone who is with Korah, stand over there. Everyone who is with God, stand here." There was an earthquake that swallowed up all those who opposed God. David was betrayed and likely using this example since they stood against everything that was good.

Anatomy of a Good Complaint: Detail the depth and damage of the complaint. It has been given voice and its effects are apparent - now expose it for its destructive nature.

Complaining, when put in the right framework, can be constructive. This is good, but most complaints do not qualify for such treatment. How do we handle them?

Part 1, Complain©, Loni Boyd, www.suitcasefullofgrace.weebly.com

(Psalm of Praise) David had just experienced the blessing and power of God: Psalms 34:15-18

Anatomy of Praise: Because God watches those who revere Him, His eternal protection for them is guaranteed!



As you might expect, David takes this process all the way home. It is utterly inspirational to see that he detailed his complaints to God in such a positive way, and it is even more inspiring that he instructed many of his productive complaints to be put to music and played for the people. Not only did he learn from his complaints, he taught with them as well!



Your significance, My Biggest Complaint About Complaining, Matthew Hussey

(Psalm of Complaint) David just revealed the destructiveness of his complaint:

Psalms 55:16-21: *I will complain and murmur* - because this is hurting me, but I am going to complain and murmur only to God; He will deliver me. God will deal with this enemy. The power of that is, "I do not have to." It is in God's hands. When David complains to God, it is a handing over of the emotion. He transferred those complaints so He can handle it for David. David trusted God would deal with the complaint in whatever manner was according to His will. Therefore, he had peace. That is the way to complain!

Anatomy of a Good Complaint: Having given his complaint a voice before God, and describes of its description of its effects, and a detailing of its destructive nature, David now had peace!

David fully handed over the complaints, knowing God would handle it in the time and circumstances in which He saw fit. David had peace with whatever the outcome.

Part 2, Complain©, Loni Boyd
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When we magnify God, we can learn to live with gratitude.

(Psalm of Praise) David had just acknowledged God's watchfulness: Psalms 34:19-22

Anatomy of Praise: God's eternal protection brings complete eternal deliverance! PRAISE HIS NAME!

David had just been given peace and reason to stop complaining. What follows? Praise.

A Psalm of Complaint has now become a Psalm of Praise: Psalms 55:22-23: There is great similarity in how Psalm 55 (Psalm of Complaint) and Psalm 34 (Psalm of Praise) end. That tells us how our complaining should end. David turned it into a positive.

Anatomy of a Good Complaint/Praise: Let your complaint become an inspirational tool of praise for yourself and others!

David published many of his songs of complaint as inspirational tools to show others how to put their complaints in the hands of God. Our complaints should bring us to a place where we can praise and magnify God!

We choose how we act in the face of adversity. We can choose to be bitter or we can choose to be better.

Choose to let your complaints eat you up with emotion or choose to eat up your complaints with constructive direction. Which way do you go? Psalms of Complaint are actually Psalms of Praise!

***So, does complaining ever help?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***