

JOY IN THE ADVENTURE

INTRO: DO YOU SEE THE GLASS HALF FILLED...OR HALF EMPTY? Recognizing a pattern of complaining in my life. *“The people grumbled and complained.”* Exodus 16

I. WHAT: We love complaining...and there’s nothing new about it!

Do everything without complaining or arguing. Philippians 2:12-14

- Paul is in jail, yet he’s free.
- We are free, but we are in jail.

II. WHY: The e coli principle.

...¹⁵So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe. Philippians 2:15

- Complaining is contagious & spreads rapidly; it can be deadly.
- People are looking for shining stars... am I one?
¹⁶as you hold out the word of life – in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. Philippians 2:16
- Images Paul uses: Athlete & Roman Sacrifice.
¹⁷But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. Philippians 2:17-18.

III. HOW: Paul shows us how *not* to complain.

1. Eyes are not on himself.

- *²⁰I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. ²¹For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.* Philippians 2:20-21
- *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross.* Hebrews 12:2
- *But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also a messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.* Philippians 2:25,30. Actual Greek word means “Gambler.”

2. Knows he is where he is supposed to be.

- God has us right where God wants us to be. What are we going to do *with* it, not *about* it? Then we can get beyond complaining.

3. Paul had hope.

- *²³I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. ²⁴And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.* Philippians 2:23-24.

CONCLUSION: WHEN WE FEEL “HOPELESS” & “HELPLESS,” WE COMPLAIN.

Our Study Guide this week is aimed at helping us understand the biblical understanding of “complaining” and to assess our own complaining nature. Paul was in prison, but he was free! We are free but find ourselves locked in prison...the prison of being addicted to complaining.

Sometimes, some kinds of complaining are healthy and needed. Social change, like the Civil Rights Movement, would never have happened had victims not complained and complained... and acted! There are times when complaining leads to needed change within a family, church, organization or nation. But more often than not, ‘complaining’ is not helpful and can become destructive.

The bible speaks of ‘murmuring’ and ‘complaining’ as the same. The Greek word is “murmurings=goggusmos” ... Paul borrowed the word used in the OT to describe the murmuring against Moses in the wilderness (*Exodus 15:24; 16:2; Numbers 16:41*). William Barclay says it means “the low, threatening, discontented murmuring of a mob who distrusts their leaders and are on the verge of uprising.” Paul used it to proclaim that we need not distrust our spiritual leader, Jesus Christ; that because we can trust him, we can be calm, serene and satisfied...filled with joy no matter what happens to us!

CT SCAN “COMPLAINT-TIME SCAN”

How much time do you spend complaining? How intense is your complaint quotient? Be honest as you quickly scan your life-patterns for the ‘Complaining Virus.’

Circle the answer that best fits where you are:

1. I complain... Rarely, Infrequently, Sometimes, Frequently, Lots, Constantly.
2. Y N My friends and co-workers would agree with the above assessment.
3. Y N I tend to make what I’m complaining about worse than it really is.
4. Y N I focus on the negative in situations & people, rather than the positive.
5. Y N I wonder why people I want to be close to seem to avoid me.
6. Y N When people ask about my job or life, etc. I complain to them.
7. Y N It seems that more and more of my conversations drift to complaining.
8. Y N People who care about me say, “Stop complaining so much!”
9. Y N It’s hard to sleep because I get so mad about the things I complain about.
10. Y N I can’t seem to stop complaining and whining and blaming others.

I’m not a professional in this field, so I can’t tell you how to grade your responses. But if you feel you may be becoming addicted to complaining and *want* to change:

1. You’ll need to acknowledge it. (Like any addiction it’s hard to see it in yourself. You many need to talk to a friend who will “speak the truth in love” to you.)
2. Get professional help.
3. Follow the biblical principles of: (a) take your eyes off yourself; (b) realize God needs you right where you are; and (c) look to Jesus Christ as the Hope of your life, regardless of circumstances.