

**CONQUERING COMPLAINING**  
**How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 5 of 12**  
**Philippians 2:12-13**  
**Rick Warren**

PHILIPPIANS 2:14-15 *"Do everything without complaining or arguing, so 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."*

**I. FOUR COMMON TYPES OF COMPLAINERS**

1. THE "WHINER": \_\_\_\_\_

(David) *"Have I been wasting my time Why take all the trouble to be pure? All I get out of it is trouble and woe."*

Psalm 73:13 (LB)

*"They took their money and started grumbling against the employer ... `We put up with a whole day's work in the hot sun -- yet you paid them the same as you paid us."*

Matt. 20:11-12 (GN)

2. THE "MARTYR": \_\_\_\_\_

*"Moses said to the Lord, `Why pick on me, to give me the burden of a people like this? I can't carry this nation by myself! ... If you're going to treat me like this, please kill me right now -- it will be a kindness! Let me out of this impossible situation!"*

Numbers 11:11-15 (LB)

3. THE "CYNIC": \_\_\_\_\_

(Solomon) *"Life is useless ... you spend your life working and what do you have to show for it? ... the world stays just the same ... what has been done before will be done again."*

Eccl. 1:2-4,9 (GN)

4. THE "PERFECTIONIST" \_\_\_\_\_

*"A nagging wife is like water going drip, drip, drip on a rainy day."*

Prov. 27:15 (GN)

*"Better to live out in the desert than with a nagging, complaining wife."*

Prov. 21:19 (GN)

## II. HOW TO CONQUER COMPLAINING

1. \_\_\_\_\_

*"A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance." Prov. 28:13 (LB)*

2. \_\_\_\_\_

*"Some people ruin themselves by their own stupid mistakes and then blame the Lord." Prov. 19:3 (GN)*

3. \_\_\_\_\_

*"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." I Thess. 5:18*

*"... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." Phil. 4:11*

4. \_\_\_\_\_

*"This small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble. So we fix our attention, not on the things that are seen, but on the things that are unseen. What is seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts forever." 2 Cor. 4:17-18 (GN)*

5. \_\_\_\_\_

*"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." Eph. 4:29*

*"Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. rather, bring them up with loving discipline ... and godly advice." Eph. 6:4 (LB)*

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Complaining is a kill-joy. It makes you unhappy, everybody else around you unhappy. The problem is that it is a hard habit to break. We are naturally negative. We tend to look at the bad things in life. We are conditioned by society. Bad news makes the headlines. We are bombarded continuously with what's wrong with everything. By our own nature and by our conditioning we tend to develop the habit of complaining.

The Bible says God wants Christians to be different. Philippians 2:14-15 "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so 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."

What does God's word have to say about dealing with this habit of complaining?

## **I. FOUR COMMON TYPES OF COMPLAINERS**

### **1. THE "WHINER" -- David**

These people wake up negative. They rise and whine. David whines all through the Psalms. Psalm 73:13 "Have I been wasting my time? Why take all the trouble to be pure? All I get out of it is trouble and woe."

The tell-tale sign of the whiner is: "It's not fair. I don't deserve this. Everybody else gets all the breaks."

"They took their money and started grumbling against the employer ... `We put up with a whole day's work in the hot sun -- yet you paid them the same as you paid us.'" Matt. 20:11-12

Life is not fair. God never said it is going to be fair. It will be fair in Heaven. He will settle the score in Heaven and hell. As long as you complain about the fact that life is not fair it only makes you more miserable. But it will never change the fact that life is not always fair. Complaining does not work.

### **2. THE "MARTYR" -- Moses**

Favorite phrase: "No one appreciates me."

Numbers 11:11-15 "Moses said to the Lord, `Why pick on me, to give the burden of a people like this? I can't carry this nation by myself! If you're going to treat me like this, please kill me right now -- it will be a kindness! Let me out of this impossible situation!"

These people are pros at having pity parties. When they are sick or under pressure they want everybody to know about it. How do you react when you don't get your way? Do you mount a complaining campaign?

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### 3. THE "CYNIC" -- Solomon

Favorite phrase: "Nothing will ever change."

Eccl. 1:2-4,9 "Life is useless. You spend your life working and what do you have to show for it? The world stays just the same ... what has been done before will be done again." Actually, this last phrase probably refers to picking up after children. What's the use?

### 4. THE "PERFECTIONIST"

Nothing is ever right for this person. It is never good enough.

Favorite phrase: "Is that the best you can do?"

Proverbs 27:15 "A nagging wife is like water going drip, drip, drip on a rainy day."

Proverbs 21:19 "Better to live out in the desert than with a nagging, complaining wife."

This refers to husbands, too! Nagging perfectionists. Nothing is ever right. Always arguing. Nothing destroys the warmth of a home faster than complaining. Nothing destroys the harmony of a marriage faster than complaining. Nagging doesn't work. It just makes everybody upset.

If your kids are complaining continuously, ask yourself if you are setting the example.

## HOW DO YOU CONQUER COMPLAINING?

The Bible says "Do everything without complaining and arguing." How do you do that?

### 1. ADMIT IT IS A PROBLEM

Admit it is a problem for you, not for other people, but for you. Proverbs 28:13 "A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance."

Often the most difficult part in learning how to handle complaining is recognizing it in yourself. If someone recorded you for a week, what would it reveal about your speech. How much time do you spend griping, grumping, complaining, arguing, and saying "life stinks." You've got to admit it's a problem for me.

Circle the word "admit" and "confess". Complaining isn't just a bad habit; it's a sin. We need to confess it. It's a sin; it's serious. Complaining was the sin that kept the Israelites out of the promised land. God destroyed them in the desert because they grumbled. Seven times, Scripture says, "they murmured." The reason the children of Israel never got into the promised land was because they were complainers. That's how serious God says what we're talking about is. Admit it!

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### 2. ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY OWN LIFE

Many times complaining is just an attempt to blame other people for the problems I've created. Or excuse myself and put the focus on somebody else. I brought the problem into my life, I'm the cause of it, but if I complain maybe I can shift the focus onto somebody else and it will make me feel just a little bit better. We like to pass the buck and it makes us feel better.

Proverbs 19:3 "Some people ruin themselves by their own stupid mistakes and then blame the Lord."

Do not complain how the ball bounces if you drop it! When I bring problems into my life, I have no legitimate right to complain. Many times complaining is just an excuse to be irresponsible and to not accept the fact that I caused this situation. We reap what we sow. When I reap what I sow I have no legitimate right to complain about the results. You are free to choose what you want to do in life. God has given you the freedom of choice. But once you have made the choice, you are no longer free. You're free to make the choice, but you're never free from the consequences of that choice.

I hear so many people complaining about being in debt. Is it possible you were irresponsible about spending and saving? That you made a purchase you really shouldn't have made? I hear people saying, "I'm just not appreciated at home." Maybe you don't appreciate the others at home. We reap what we sow. Whatever you want in life, you've got to give it out. That is inviolable rule of God. If you want friends you've got to be friendly. If you want appreciation at home you've got to give appreciation. If you want to be put first in your marriage, you need to put your partner first in your marriage. We reap what we sow.

Accept responsibility for my own life and the choices that I make. The changes that are going to take place is because I choose to change.

There are three kinds of people in life: accusers, excusers, and choosers.

Accusers are always going around saying "It's your fault." When Adam sinned he took it like a man and blamed his wife, "Eve did it," and then he blamed God, "You gave me that woman."

Excusers say "I'm a product of my environment. It's not really my fault."

The people that are really successful in life are neither accusers nor excusers. They are choosers. They accept responsibility for their own decisions. When they reap what they sow they take it and move ahead.

### 3. DEVELOP THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

I Thes. 5:18 "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Circle "all". God says "I want you to be thankful in all circumstances." It does not say "for all

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circumstances". You cannot always be thankful for the circumstances, but you can be thankful in the situation. I know that God is working all things for good. He has a pattern and He fits even the bad things in our lives into that pattern for good. God's purpose for my life is greater than my problems, so in everything I can give thanks. Not for but in.

I develop the attitude of gratitude and I learn to be grateful for what I have. It's a tremendous antidote for complaining. Whenever we are complaining, we are usually being ungrateful. You can focus on either the negative or the positive. Is the cup half empty or half full? It all depends on how you look at it. Why is it that we often don't value what we have in life until it's gone?

We, in America, have so much to be grateful for. Yet we take it so much for granted. Overseas, American tourists are known for their complaining.

Of course there are things in your life that you are not satisfied with. There are some things in your marriage that you don't like, things in your business, habits in yourself, your mate, your children, your boss. But I believe there are also some things in those situations and people that you could learn to be thankful for. The Bible says that Christians are to be different. We are to do everything without complaining and arguing that we may be the sons of God, blameless and harmless in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation in which we shine as lights of the world. We stand out in a crowd. We shine like lights because we're different.

Phil. 4:11 "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." Circle "content". When Paul wrote this he was in prison at Rome. The situations do not determine happiness.

When you learn to be happy and joyful in spite of the circumstance, that is maturity. That I am not determined or controlled by the circumstances around me. Boredom is actually a complaint -- a complaint against God. You're basically saying, "God, you gave me a raw deal. I can do nothing with the circumstances that you dealt me. If I were God I could do a better job. I am bored, God, because You did not give me what I really need in life and therefore life is lousy." Develop the attitude of gratitude.

#### **4. LOOK FOR GOD'S HAND IN CIRCUMSTANCES**

If you want to get victory over complaining, look for God's hand in your circumstances. II Cor. 4:17-18 "This small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble. So we fix our attention, not on the things that are seen, but on the things that are unseen. What is seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts forever."

Paul is saying there are problems that come into our lives, no doubt. But the way you look at them determines your attitude. Because God is working these things for good in your life and the good that you're going to get out of them will be much more long lasting than the problem. The problem is temporary in light of how long you're going to live in eternity. So look for God's hand in the circumstances. Positive people realize that God is controlling circumstances. God is fitting everything into a pattern and His purpose is greater than your problem.

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The reason why over and over in the Bible we are told not to complain is this, complaining is, in essence, rebellion against God. When I complain about my circumstances that are beyond my control I'm really saying "If I were God things would be different. If I were in charge the whole human race would be much better." That's rebellion and that's why it's so serious. God says don't do it.

We're challenging three things:

1. I'm questioning God's wisdom. "Do You really know what You're doing? Do You see what's going on? Is this really wise?"
2. I'm doubting God's care. "Do You really love me? Really care for me?"
3. I'm forgetting God's goodness. I'm focusing on what I don't have rather than focusing on what I do have. I'm being ungrateful.

Often the things that I personally complain about the most, are often the very things God knows I need the most in order to become all that He wants me to be. It is a warning light of God. He's saying, "There's something wrong here. Let's change it. Stop complaining. Start changing!" The only way you change other people is by changing yourself. Then they have to react to you differently.

## 5. PRACTICE SPEAKING POSITIVELY

Complaining is a habit. Habits are only broken by replacement with something else. Take out the negative complaining and replace it with positive speaking. Ephesians 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

The Bible says we're going to give an account of every idle word. Paul is saying don't let any junk come out of your mouths but only that which helps people with their needs, that benefits them. If you can't say something good, don't say anything at all. Replace your criticisms and complaints with compliments.

This is a crucial factor in parenting. Affirmation always gets better results than nagging. Ephesians 6:4 "Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather, bring them up with loving discipline and godly advice." Parents, do your words help your kids? Or do they hinder your kids? Are you building your kids up or tearing them down? Be positive in your speaking.

### **What are the results of complaining?**

"Do everything without complaining or arguing..." and then he gives us three results. "so that you may become blameless ..." This means that when you don't complain, nobody can find fault with you. Nobody can point a finger at you.

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"... and pure..." The Greek word here means "having integrity". Non complainers are people of integrity.

"Children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe." Our culture is so negative. When you find a person who is genuinely positive they stick out like a sore thumb. The contrast is obvious. They shine like a star in the middle of a dark night. It is so different to be positive in this world, to not be a complainer, not be critical, not be a put-down person, that when you become that in your own life, you will shine like a star.

The point of the passage is Paul is saying that Christians are to react differently to the circumstances in life. A complaining Christian is a bad witness. A positive attitude is a great witness; it has impact.

How do you make an impact in the world so that the world takes notice? Check your attitude. Be positive in a negative world.

Wouldn't it be great that our church had the reputation of "That's where all the positive people go. You never hear a complaint or grumble over there. That's the church where there is love, unity, harmony." Where there is harmony, love, unity you would have to lock the doors to keep people out. The church would grow automatically because people are looking for love. Every time you say a smile, shake somebody's hand, say "Hi", greet somebody, give a hug, you are spreading love in this body. You're making a difference. You're making an impact. You're shining like a star in a dark world.

What would happen in your business if all of a sudden all of the complaining stopped? What would happen in your home if your family made a pact that they wouldn't complain, be critical, tear each other down? Kids, what would happen in your family if all of a sudden you stopped griping? Maybe you would get your way a little more often.

Last week we looked at v. 13 "For God is at work in you to will and to act according to His purpose." The first thing he talks about after he talks about God working in us is complaining. How do you know when God is working in your life? The first clue: check your attitude.

You need a power beyond yourself, Jesus Christ. He is the antidote to our culture and our nature. He makes us new people inside. Maybe the complaining is an imbedded habit. The only way that will be broken is by an external power in your life who will begin changing you from the inside out.