

GRUMBLING / MURMURING / COMPLAINING

NOTE: In most instances, this concept is used in a negative sense. The two or three instances in which it is NOT used in a bad sense will be noted at the appropriate times in the study.

1. PEOPLE WHISPERING TO EACH OTHER (the word used in a way that is not necessarily bad)
2. EXAMPLES OF GRUMBLING
3. THINGS TO BE DONE WITHOUT GRUMBLING
4. TWO WARNINGS ABOUT GRUMBLING

[OPTIONAL] The New Testament Greek words used in this study:

1. PEOPLE WHISPERING TO EACH OTHER

- John 7:12 - People whispering to each other - discussing whether Jesus was a good man or a deceiver.
- John 7:32 - The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering about whether or not Jesus was the Christ.

COMMENTS, THOUGHTS:

These verses do not necessarily describe whispering as a bad activity. But sometimes such whispering can become sinful, especially if it progresses to gossip, slander, or some other sin of the tongue (including the grumbling mentioned below). If you have a weakness in one of these areas (besides grumbling), it may be good for you to temporarily interrupt this study and focus on the specific area of your weakness. There are many commands in the Word about various sins of the tongue, in both Old and New Testaments. You may also benefit from a general study of the Proverbs.

2. EXAMPLES OF GRUMBLING

A. EXPRESSING DISLIKE FOR GENEROSITY SHOWN TO OTHERS (BEING SELF-FOCUSED)

- Matthew 20:11 - Parable of the workers in the vineyard: they grumbled because the owner was generous to others, whereas they themselves were paid what they agreed to work for.

COMMENTS, THOUGHTS:

How do you react when you see others receive blessings that you don't receive? Are you jealous? Do you think you deserve or should get everything others get? If others receive "gifts of generosity" that you don't receive, do you think it is "unfair"? [Remember that the workers who worked the full day were paid the amount they agreed to work for; there was no injustice done to them. The others were willing to work without knowing how much they would receive - only that it would be whatever the landowner decided to pay them (v.4). They were totally dependent on the landowner's mercy!]

If the concept of justice seen in Matthew 20 offends you, you may want to study this concept further in the Bible. What is the relationship between justice and mercy? What do you really deserve in life? What does Jesus mean, when he says, "The first will be last and the last will be first"? (Also look at other passages, which focus on other aspects of this principle.) How do the concepts of humility and love toward others fit into this picture? How does your attitude reflect (or not reflect) Jesus' attitude toward us?

In this passage, the grumbling is but a symptom of a more serious heart-issue. What type of attitude is reflected in this grumbling? What does Scripture say about such attitudes?

B. EXPRESSING DISLIKE FOR JESUS' LOVE AND CONCERN FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

- Luke 5:30; Luke 15:2; 19:7 - The religious leaders and people grumbling about Jesus' actions: 5:30 - The religious leaders didn't like Jesus eating with people who needed to hear his message and repent. 15:2 - They didn't like Jesus being friends with such people. 19:7 - The people didn't like Jesus being the guest of a despised "sinner" tax collector.

COMMENTS, THOUGHTS:

Jesus was willing to associate with people who needed the good news and were willing to listen. Are you? What types of people are you willing to be around, for the sake of Christ and his gospel? Are there people you would let perish, rather than associate with them? What is your attitude toward "sinners" (people you consider worse than yourself)?

Remember that Jesus came to show us what it means to love God with all our heart/soul/mind, and to love our neighbor (including enemies and people we don't like to be around) as we love ourselves. He did NOT come to reinforce the "religious system" of that day (or of our day), which excused the absence of love. Whether or not we are following his example is best seen by the way we interact with "unlovable" people - those who are not part of our "group." In what ways are you going to reflect Jesus' love this week?

C. EXPRESSING DISLIKE FOR JESUS' TEACHINGS & FOR HIS FOCUS ON THINGS THAT ARE OF ETERNAL IMPORTANCE

- John 6:41, 43, 61 - The people and some of the disciples grumbling about Jesus' words: 6:41 - The people didn't like Jesus' reference to himself as the "bread from heaven" - they wanted to focus on physical food, rather than on the spiritual lesson Jesus intended to convey to them. 6:43 - Jesus warned them to stop complaining and to listen to what the Father wanted them to learn. 6:61 - Even some of his disciples (not the 12 apostles) were offended and left him.

COMMENTS, THOUGHTS:

Where is your focus? Do you have a greater focus on your (and others') physical needs or your (and other's) spiritual needs? What is your attitude if (or when) God doesn't grant you all your physical wants and wishes? One way to know which you really consider more important - your physical or spiritual needs - is to examine the focus of your prayers (see the next paragraph).

What is the focus of your prayers? Compare the types of things you pray about to the examples given by the apostle Paul: Ephesians 1:15-19;3:16-21;6:18-20; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12;4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, etc.

Study Matthew 6:25-34. How does the message of this passage relate to the above verses (in John 6)? If your life doesn't demonstrate an acceptance of Jesus' message, think about these verses for the next few days, and examine your life for attitudes and actions you need to change.

D. COMPLAINING ABOUT A GENUINE PROBLEM; SOLVING IT.

- Acts 6:1 - One group of Christians grumbling about another group: The Grecian Jews were grumbling because their widows were being neglected, whereas the Hebraic widows were having their needs provided for by the church.

COMMENTS, THOUGHTS:

There may be some legitimacy in this type of "grumbling" - BUT one must deal with the problem appropriately, without ongoing complaining or griping.
(Otherwise it will become sinful.)

Think of some examples in which you have heard legitimate complaints expressed by others. In such situations, what can (or could) you do about it: a) if it was within your power to be actively involved in resolving the problem? b) if it wasn't?

Is there anything that you yourself have a complaint about? If so, is there a way that you can be involved in resolving the problem? Remember that some people complain with no intention of doing anything about the problem, but others may complain with the intent of getting the problem solved.

If sin or offense is involved, something other than complaining may be required. This is seen in verses such as Matthew 18:15-17 (if they have sinned against you) and Matthew 5:23-24 (if you have offended them). Of course, you must take care of your own sins before you "worry" about someone else's sins. (Matthew 7:3-5)
But you DO have a responsibility toward others. (Galatians 6:1)

3. THINGS TO BE DONE WITHOUT GRUMBLING

- Philippians 2:14 - Everything! Why? So that you can stand out (blameless and pure/innocent) as a contrast to the crooked and perverse generation in which you live. In such a context, you are to hold on to the word/message of life (a shining contrast to those around you).
- 1 Peter 4:9 - Hospitality to others: one of the expressions of love which involves the giving of yourself (and of things that belong to you). [The context also includes the expression of love toward God (prayer connected with clear thinking) and an awareness of the soon approaching "end of all things."]

COMMENTS, THOUGHTS:

Examine these passages. How are these things NOT compatible with grumbling? How is this type of grumbling incompatible with a willingness to do what is good and to accept (and proclaim) what is true?

Does your life stand out as a contrast to those around you who do not know God? Or are they unable to see any difference? (Or do they even consider you to be worse than they are?) If they do not see a difference, there may be numerous reasons for this - all of which need to be examined - but a grumbling attitude toward circumstances in life may be one of the reasons. (If so, consider the warnings given in the next section.)

Do others see a "giving" type of love in you? Or is your "love" focused primarily on yourself? [See section 2B (above) regarding love toward others. Love that honors God includes a love for those you might not necessarily be "comfortable" around.]

4. TWO WARNINGS ABOUT GRUMBLING

- 1 Corinthians 10:10 - Learn from Israel's example... they grumbled and were destroyed.
- Jude 16 - One of the characteristics of "apostates" (those who have abandoned the truth and ways of God) in the last day.

COMMENTS, THOUGHTS:

How do you respond when God doesn't do things YOUR way? Do you grumble and complain? If so, what types of people do these verses associate you with?

What can you learn from the examples seen in the context surrounding the above verses (1 Corinthians 10:10 and Jude 16)? (You can still learn even if you aren't guilty of grumbling/complaining!)

Some of the instances in which Israel grumbled in the wilderness are found in these passages: Exodus 15:22-17:7; Numbers 13:26-14:38; 16:1-17:10; Deuteronomy 1:22-36; Psalm 106:24-27. (It would be good to read all of Psalm 106). [Note: Some translations (such as NIV and NAS) will use the word "grumble." Others (such as NKJV and NRSV) will use the word "complain."] Consider how God constantly provided for the people, yet they remained ungrateful and filled with distrust of God's ability to take care of them. In the end, what happened to them? In contrast, what happened to those who trusted God? What is your attitude toward God, when you face troubling circumstances in your

life? To what extent are you like the Israelites? To what extent do you deserve the "reward" they eventually received?

2 Timothy 3:1-5 is another passage that describes some of the characteristics of "apostates." They may even appear to be "godly," but in their hearts, they have denied the effect that genuine godliness has on an individual (verse 5). Examine yourself. If any of the characteristics seen in these verses are present in you, take the time to deal with them. Follow Paul's example and instructions, beginning in verse 10 of that chapter.

[OPTIONAL] New Testament Greek Words used in this study:

gogguzo

- to murmur, mutter, grumble; to say anything in a low tone: John 7:12; Acts 6:1; Philippians 2:14; 1 Peter 4:9

goggusmos

- a murmur, murmuring, muttering; a complaint, displeasure (expressed in murmuring), secret talk, whispering: Matthew 20:11; Luke 5:30; John 6:41; John 6:43; John 6:61; John 7:32; 1 Corinthians 10:10

goggustes

- someone who murmurs, a grumbler: Jude 1:16

diagogguzo

- to murmur, to complain, grumble aloud (through a crowd or 'among one another'; hence always used of many - as a group - indignantly complaining): Luke 15:2; Luke 19:7

NOTE: Two other N.T. Greek words (not a part of this study) are translated as "grumble" in some translations: Mark 14:5 (to rebuke or scold), James 5:9 (to complain or groan)