

Unbelief in 140 Characters or Less

Humble Unity Part 11
Philippians 2:14-15 5-8-2016

Summary: Complaining is sin – especially egregious sin. Complaining is an attitude of negativity, hostility, or self-pity in response to hardship, and so the solutions are faith, humility, and gratitude (emotional responsiveness to God’s love).

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Philippians 2:14 Do everything without complaining or arguing, 15 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 16 as 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. 17 But 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. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Introduction

I’m going to admit something to you that will shock you. I don’t use Twitter. I know you are stunned to hear that, because when you think of me, I know the first two words that come to your mind are “hip” and “trendy.” So you’d think I’d be all over social media, but I’ve just never understood the purpose of Twitter. What could you possibly say that’s worthwhile in 140 characters or less? So I just never got it ... until last week. I went online and just read some tweets, and it came to me. I finally get it. The purpose of Twitter is very simple: Twitter is a platform for celebrities to complain about how difficult their lives are. I read about how miserable it is when you have a bad experience with your private jet, or when your limo driver doesn’t do a good job, or when you’re having trouble selling your Ferrari. Or when you’re stuck on a yacht in paradise without a jet ski. These are the kinds of tweets that go out from the celebrities. It’s amazing how much they complain. Every time they get a sore throat or a stomach ache or even chapped lips, they have to get on Twitter and announce it to the world.

“Just stubbed my toe”

“Bit tongue during dinner.”

A lot of them were just two words: “I’m sick.”

“I’m tired.”

“Sore foot.”

Here are a few others:

“i hate xmas cause everything is closed i need excitment in my life ive been so bored recently...”

“I’m so sleepy...why is it time to get up?!?!” (Can you imagine being too tired to get out of bed, so with the little bit of strength you have, you reach over and get your phone and send out a tweet complaining about it?)

“I hate trying to spread cold butter on a slice of bread...” (The project is just so laborious, he has to take a break from the meal and type out that complaint out on his phone.)

“i hate when hotels dont have ... movie menus.”

“Packing for this week is giving me so much anxiety.”

“i hate when they put olives in salads that still have pits in them” (The horrors that some of these people have to live through.)

“I have a headache I’m tired and I’m cranky. I want a nap and I want tortilla chips.”

“I have a piece of quinoa stuck in my throat.”

“my canon printer says it has no paper but it does”

This one might be the most painful of all: “I lost my selfie stick.”

So the way Twitter works is you sign up to follow these people. That way, if one of them gets a runny nose, you don’t have to be in the dark about it.

Isn’t this amazing? These are the people in our society who have it all. They can buy anything they want, they’re famous, they are admired by millions, they have power and influence, they live in the most extreme luxury imaginable, and they incessantly complain. Our whole culture essentially worships a bunch of whining crybabies.

But aside from the celebrities - we all do this. I don’t have to look at anyone’s Twitter feed. If I want examples and illustrations of complaining, I don’t have to go any farther than my own heart. We are a complaining culture.

A Function of Selfishness

It’s actually not surprising that the wealthiest people among us have a problem with complaining, because complaining is a function of selfishness. And so the wealthier the culture, the more self-absorbed people are, and the more complaining there is. As a culture gets wealthier, family sizes get smaller, and kids grow up in a situation where the family revolves around them.

“What would you like for breakfast?”

“What do you want in your lunch?”

“You don’t like that?”

OK, I’ll just take it off your plate and get you something else.”

Whenever he gets bored, one of his parents will be a playmate for him. If he has soccer practice or needs to go somewhere, mom will chauffeur him all over town. And so he grows up thinking the world revolves around him. You grow up in a family with 6 or 7 kids, you look at your diner and say, “I don’t like this,” one of your siblings says, “good,” and takes it. If you need to go to soccer practice your mom says, “There’s your bike. It’s snowing, so don’t forget your jacket.” The family doesn’t bend to fit your needs; *you* have to adapt to the system. Now, some of you have small families and you’re doing a great job. But the natural course in a wealthy culture is for a child to grow up thinking that happiness comes when all his impulses are satisfied. And he doesn’t know how to have joy when he gets into the real world and the world doesn’t bend to accommodate his desires and impulses. So he complains.

I think most people, even unbelievers, would agree that complaining is not a great thing. I’ve never heard anyone say to me, “Man, I just *love* being around whiners. I’m trying to teach my kids to complain a lot more.” We all agree it’s bad, but ... not as bad as violent crime or abortion or fraud or things like that. Even Christians don’t take it all that seriously. A kid in a Christian home who swears might get his mouth washed out with soap, but nothing like that happens to the kid who complains. It’s not a big deal to us. But how does God look at it? How important it is in his eyes?

The Evil of Complaining

Let's start by saying this: it's strictly forbidden in Scripture. Complaining is sin – plain and simple.

Philippians 2:14 Do everything without complaining or arguing.

That is clear. It's straightforward. And it's absolute. It doesn't say "Cut back on complaining and arguing." That's what most of us would say. Most of us think of complaining almost as an unavoidable reality, and you would be doing well if you just did it less than most other people. Don't do it all the time. But if you do it just the normal amount that most people do it, then you're fine.

But God doesn't tell us to cut back. He doesn't tell us to cut back on murders, or to cut back on kidnapping or adultery – they are all completely forbidden altogether. And so is complaining.

14 Do everything without complaining or arguing

Pop quiz: What are we supposed to do without complaining or arguing? Everything we ever do. Any time you utter a single word of complaint, you are sinning against God.

Now, is that a little sin, or a big sin?

1 Corinthians 10:1 Our forefathers ...all passed through the sea. ...5 Nevertheless God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

God rescued all of them from Egypt, but then ended up killing most of them in the desert.

9 We should not test the Lord, as some of them did-and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did-and were killed by the destroying angel.

God killed an entire generation of Israelites for the sin of complaining. "Yeah, but that was the Old Testament."

11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us ... 12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Complaining is a very serious matter.

Not Taken Seriously

But you would never know that from watching most people in the church today. You would never know these verses are even in the Bible. Verses 5-11 are some of the most famous verses in the whole Bible. Verses 12-13 are also very well known and often quoted. But when have you ever heard v.14 quoted? This passage is almost completely ignored, because complaining is one of the most accepted sins there is. What would you do if you found out I have been embezzling money from the offerings? Or what if I got up here and started using a bunch of 4 letter words from the pulpit? I'd be gone. But it's not uncommon at all for a church leader to get up on the platform and complain about the weather – the snow or the heat, or about some physical ailment or whatever. A lot of speakers do that just to gain a rapport with the audience.

This is one of those commands in the Bible where the church in our day has basically let it just go in one ear and out the other. No complaining? Yeah, whatever. You don't hear people confess this when they confess their sin. You don't hear people asking for prayer about it. There are no bestsellers on how to overcome the sin of complaining. We don't take it seriously, and as a result, it is an incredibly pervasive problem. Most people have no idea how much time they spend complaining. I heard about one study that found that 30 to 40% of all our conversations are made up of complaining. It's just the way we make conversation. And for some, it's a way of life. Maybe some of you in this room - if you tried to go cold turkey tomorrow with zero complaining, you wouldn't even know what to say. You wouldn't be able to carry on a conversation.

Most of us don't even realize how much we complain because we don't think of it as complaining. I remember when I was first confronted about my complaining problem – I thought the person was being ridiculous. “I don't complain. I'm just observing reality. I'm a realist.”

The Definition of Complaining

Is there a place for that? Is it always sinful to mention something that was painful? No. Jesus once said **My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow, even to the point of death.**¹ We know that wasn't complaining because Jesus never sinned. So what constitutes complaining?

Attitude

The Greek word is *gongusmos*. It's an onomatopoeic word. That's a word that sounds like what it is, like zip or buzz. That's what it sounds like when people grumble – *gongusmos*. It's a griping, muttering, negative attitude. Grumbling is an attitude. It's a bad attitude about hardship that can go in three possible directions: negativity, hostility, or self-pity.

The language that Paul uses in this passage points back to the complaining of the Israelites in the wilderness after God delivered them from Egypt. If I read you all the passages in Scripture that talk about the complaining of the Israelites in the desert, it would take up most of the sermon. The Israelites were world-class, professional complainers. And if you read all those passages, these are the attitudes that stand out: negativity, hostility, and self-pity.

And that's exactly what you see in those Twitter feeds – those same 3 attitudes. Sometimes it's just negativity. They are completely blind to all their blessings, and can only see the thing that didn't work the way they wanted. They miss the fact that they have a limousine, or a jet or a yacht or a Ferrari, and they complain about the driver or the pilot or whatever. People who complain because of negativity are people who think it's their job to spot everything that's wrong with this world, and rub all our faces in it. They rub their own face in it, and rub our faces in it for no good reason.

Other times it's all about pity. That's why they feel the need to let the world know they have a cough or they are hungry or tired or sick. We want people to know how hard we've got it so they will feel sorry for us. “Hey everybody, sore throat.” “I experienced a hardship, so everyone just stop what you're doing, and take a moment to feel sorry for me.”

And in other cases, it's not so much a desire for pity is much as it's just a hostile, angry reaction against this thing that they don't like. You set something on the counter and it drops on the floor: “Ughhh!!” Most of those celebrity complaints I couldn't even read to you because of all the 4-letter words. It's just bitter hostility.

Those are the attitudes of grumbling: negativity, hostility, or self-pity. There are some times when it's appropriate to talk about a hardship in your life. For example, if it's too much for you and you need some help. That's why Jesus made that comment about being overwhelmed with sorrow. He wanted his disciples to pray with him. Asking for help is not necessarily complaining.. – but it can be, if it's said with an attitude of negativity, hostility, or self-pity. But if it's just a sincere request for help, that's not necessarily complaining.

Another case where it's appropriate is if there is a problem that needs to be fixed, and fixing it requires talking about it. Doing that is not necessarily complaining – but again, it can be if it's said with the wrong attitude. The attitudes are really the key, so let's talk about what Scripture says about how to overcome these three sinful attitudes.

The Solution to Complaining

¹ Mt 26:38

Paul is Pointing to Deuteronomy 32

What's the remedy for a complaining heart? I think Paul is pointing us to Deuteronomy 32 for the remedy. And I say that because the language that Paul uses here in v.15 all comes out of Deuteronomy 32:5. It's unique terminology. You don't find it anywhere else in the Bible except for Deuteronomy 32:5, so there's no question in my mind that Paul is pointing us to that passage. So let's take a look.

Deuteronomy 32:5 They have acted corruptly toward him; to their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and crooked generation.

The Greek translation of that verse sounds like this:

Deuteronomy 32:5 They sinned and are not his children because of fault, a crooked and depraved generation.

So you can see that the language is the same.²

Deuteronomy 32:5 ... not his children because of fault...

Philippians 2:15 that you might become children ... without fault

Deuteronomy 32:5 ...[they are] a crooked and depraved generation.

Philippians 2:15 ...in the midst of a crooked and depraved generation.

So what Paul is saying is, "Don't complain, so that you might become the opposite of those people in Dt.32:5." They were non-children of God; you want to become children of God. They were full of fault; you want to become faultless. They were a crooked and depraved generation; you want to stand out in stark contrast to a crooked and depraved generation. Avoid complaining so you can be the opposite of them.

Okay, so how did the people in Deuteronomy 32:5 get to be that way? What did they do wrong that made them non-children, full of fault, and crooked and depraved? How did they end up in v.5? The way they ended up in verse 5 was by either rejecting or ignoring verse 4.

Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

They became crooked and depraved non-children full of fault by losing sight of the fact that God's works are all perfect, all his ways are just, he is upright and just, and he does zero wrong. Every time we complain, it's either because we don't believe God's works are good, or we refuse to submit to what he is doing, or we are ungrateful. Let's take those one at a time.

Solution to Negativity: Faith

Three attitudes that can cause complaining: negativity, hostility, or self-pity. Let's start with negativity. When someone is a negative Nelly, a pessimist, Eeyore – always talking about how lousy everything is, always going on about how corrupt the government is, how high prices are, how poor quality everything is. – people like that have that attitude because they don't really believe Dt.32:4. They have their eye on the evil that human beings are doing, but they are blind to the good that God says he is doing, which is far greater than the evil that people are doing. They lack faith. They either don't believe God is in control, or they don't believe God is good. But somewhere there is a breakdown in their understanding of Dt.32:4. Basically, they think God is doing it all wrong.

So what is the solution to that? Faith. Believe the truth about God that is described in Deuteronomy 32:4. Believe that God does no wrong. If you're a complainer, one of the best things you can do is memorize that verse. God is perfect. He is a faithful God who does *no* wrong. Every time a complaint

² Dt.32:5 ἡμάρτοσαν οὐκ αὐτῷ τέκνα μωμητά γενεὰ σκολιὰ καὶ διεστραμμένη
Phr.2:15 τέκνα θεοῦ ἄμωμια μέσον γενεᾶς σκολιᾶς καὶ διεστραμμένης

starts to come out of your mouth, let Deuteronomy 32:4 come out of your mouth instead. “Oh, I lost my wallet? Well, the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, but he is a faithful God who does *no wrong*. Then give your soul a little pop quiz. Okay soul, how much wrong does God do? None. Multiple-choice: is God perfect or imperfect? Perfect. How many of God’s ways are just? All of them. Ok, so evidently this is what’s best for me. My alarm didn’t go off? My toast is burnt? I have a blister on my toe? My flight is delayed? The guy at the counter is rude? Life is moving too fast and I’m overwhelmed? Life is moving too slow and I’m bored? Something cost me a bunch of money? The government passes a ridiculous law? All of that is the outworking of divine providence. It is all part of God’s brilliant, perfect, loving plan. He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.³ Every time you’re tempted to complain, preach that verse to your soul until you believe it, because complaining is a symptom of unbelief.

Numbers 11:1 Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD ... 11 The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?"

Complaining is not a harmless little verbal habit. It is something that arises out of a deep seated spiritual problem. When I complain, I’m accusing God of failing in his effort to do what is best. That’s why it’s so detestable to God. And that’s why rich people complain just as much if not more than poor people. Because grumbling has nothing to do with how hard your life is. Grumbling is the voice of unbelief.

If you read the accounts of the Israelites in the desert you see them, every time they face some hardship, assuming God won’t take care of them. It would have been fine for them to say, “God, we have a hardship – please take care of us.” “There’s no water. Please provide water.” That would have been fine. But instead of seeking God’s help, they just assumed God wasn’t going to take care of them – even though he had promised that he would.

So one attitude behind complaining is negativity, and the solution to that is faith – especially faith in Dt.32:4. A hardship comes into your life and you say, “This is a good thing sent by God to benefit me. I believe that. God is in full control of everything, and he only does good things.”

Solution to Hostility: Humility

The second attitude that can cause complaining is hostility. Some complainers are angry – angry at God, at people, or at circumstances.

Anger at God

If you’re angry at God, then you really don’t believe Dt.32:4. There are some in the Christian counseling world who would have you believe that it’s okay to be angry at God. It’s not. Being angry at God is evil and outrageous because the only way you can be angry at God is if you assume God has done something wrong. God is upright and perfect and does no wrong. If you’re mad at him, you obviously don’t believe that.

But what about anger at circumstances? You’re not angry at God, you’re just mad at that dumb thing you just stubbed your toe on, or that piece of junk copy machine that keep jamming, or at the bump in the road that made you spill your coffee into your lap. When things like that happen, and I get angry, what’s happening? What’s happening is very simple: I’m rejecting God’s providence.

³ Deuteronomy 32:4

Rejection of Providence

This is why all grumbling about circumstances is grumbling against God. You read about all the accounts of the Israelites grumbling in the desert, and it was always grumbling about their circumstances. But even though they didn't name God in their grumbling, God responded by saying, "Why are you grumbling against me?" All complaining is complaining against God – even if God is the farthest thing from your mind, because every time you complain, what you're doing is rejecting divine providence. Every single thing that ever happens, happens by God's providence.

Lamentations 3:38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come? 39 Why should any living man complain...

Both the pleasant things and the really hard things all come from God. In his perfect, providential plan, God allows the temperature to get just a little too hot or little too cold for my tastes, and so I have to open my mouth and voice my disapproval. What's happening there? My soul is rejecting this thing that's happening, and my mouth is letting everyone know that I'm rejecting it. When I do that, I am behaving like a spoiled only child who expects the world to bend to accommodate his desires. I expect everything to fall into line according to my expectations. And when God's plan goes off in another direction, I just reject it. I can't do anything about it because he's stronger than me, but I can badmouth it, and so that's what I do.

Every hardship that comes into your life is a test to expose your attitude about God's providence. My plan was to go camping and have a lot of fun, but now it's pouring rain and my tent is leaking. So what am I going to do? Do I look up at heaven and say, "Yes Lord. If this is what you have for me today – if this is the direction your wisdom is taking things in your marvelous providential plan, I'm happy to get off my train and climb aboard yours. Because I know yours is better than mine"? Am I going to say that, or is my soul going to reject the direction God is going and grumble against it? Complaining is an attitude of rebellion against what God is doing.

And the root of that is pride. "My way is better than God's way. My plan is more important than God's plan. I can't do anything about it because God is bigger than me, but I can stiffen my neck and make it known that I am not on board with what God is doing." 1 Peter 5:6 says **humble yourself under the mighty hand of God**. Picture a parent holding a toddler who doesn't want to be held. The toddler squirms and struggles, so you have to just grip even tighter. And so the more he squirms, the tighter you have to grip, and the more uncomfortable it is for him. But if he would just accept that he needs to be held right now, and relaxes in your arms, it can actually be a delightful experience for him. When we reject the hardships that come to us from God's hand, and squirm and resist, we just make things worse. We need to just submit to what God is doing, and humbly accept it from His hand with an attitude that says, "Yes Lord."

How Much Water Do You Deserve?

I had a good friend who confronted me once about my complaining. We were whitewater rafting guides. When you are a rafting guide, life is a lot of fun when there's high water. And life is a lot of work when there's low-water. And one summer we had especially low-water, and I was grumbling and complaining about it as usual. And my friend just asked me, "Darrell, how much water do you deserve?" That question stopped me in my tracks. It absolutely rattled me, because I realized what I deserved would be to be in hell forever. And instead of hell, I was in the middle of the wonders of God's creation, every day floating down a beautiful river surrounded by spectacular mountains. And I was complaining about it. How can that happen? It happens when I forget how much mercy I have received and I forget how much punishment I deserve. Thinking that God owes me anything good is just monumental pride. So the solution to negativity complaining is faith, and the solution to angry complaining is humility. Now the third attitude: self-pity.

Solution to Self-Pity: Gratitude

This one is probably present to some degree with all grumbling. You may or may not have a hostile attitude, but it's hard to imagine any complaining that doesn't involve an attitude of self-pity to some degree. And the insidious thing about self-pity is that it makes it impossible to enjoy God's gifts.

We looked at the verse before Deuteronomy 32:5, now let's look at the next verse.

Deuteronomy 32:6 Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?

Then he goes on to describe all the wonderful things God had done for them. God gave them all those wonderful gifts, and they were complaining. Why? Because self-pity blinds you to God's blessings. Self-pity is like a lawyer building a case for how hard you've got it, and so it rejects any counter-evidence. The more you allow the disease of self-pity into your heart, the more you will hold God's blessings at arm's length, so it won't even matter how much God blesses you, because you'll ignore it.

So what's the solution to self-pity? What is the proper response to a good God doing good things for you? Gratitude. If God has taken care of you and provided for you in the past, the proper response is gratitude, not grumbling. It is impossible to feel both gratitude and self-pity at the same time. And so it is impossible to be thankful and grumble at the same time.

Ask the people you are closest to what you complain about. And when you find out, don't try to solve the problem by keeping your mouth shut more. That won't do anything, because you can have a grumbling attitude without ever opening your mouth. Maybe you were told growing up, "If you can't think of anything good to say, don't say anything at all." But that's not good enough. If you can't think of anything good to say, think harder. There's plenty good to say, and if you can't think of anything, you're probably thinking in the wrong direction. You're thinking about what God hasn't given you instead of what he has given you. And as long as you're doing that, it will be impossible for you to ever be happy.

The level of ingratitude that has to be in our hearts for us to complain is just staggering if you think about it. Millions of people are helplessly watching their children cry as they die of starvation. Meanwhile, because of God's kindness to us, we feast like kings and queens every day, with an availability and variety and abundance of food that most people who ever lived could never even have imagined. And what happens? "This food is the WRONG TEMPERATURE! It's several degrees cooler than what I would prefer! My whole meal is ruined!" "Yes, I'm eating like a king, but the waiter took a little too long to serve it to me. Most people who have ever lived had to walk everywhere they went. And for a couple hours' wages you can fill the tank and drive in plush comfort for hundreds of miles wherever you want to go. God has been so generous to us. And what happens? Someone cuts us off, or drives a little slow, or we get into some heavy traffic and we're miserable. People in India are born on the sidewalk and die on the sidewalk, and God puts us in these beautiful, comfortable, lavish houses, and we grumble and complain because we don't have enough cabinet space in the kitchen. God has given us eternal life, and we complain about a stuck zipper. Jesus Christ suffered crucifixion for us, and we moan about the price of healthcare. While we were yet his enemies, He adopted us into his own family, and we bellyache about standing in a long line – or a short line – any line. We have been given the Holy Spirit to live inside us, and we grouse about having to shovel some snow. We have been given an inheritance that will never perish, spoil or fade, and we gripe about the fact that it takes us a few extra minutes to find our keys. All the guilt of all the sins of all your life has been completely wiped out and forgiven at great cost to God, and you whine about having to clean up someone else's mess. God has given us a calling in life, a meaningful task that has eternal impact on the Kingdom of God, and we complain about a barking dog, or some incompetent people around us. What is it that we think we deserve? Paradise? God has promised us paradise for all of eternity, but that's not enough either.

I can't even tell you how many thousands and thousands of times in my life I begged God to give me a position in a church where I could spend my full time in the ministry of the Word. I begged and pleaded with God to give me a situation exactly like what he has given me. In spite of terrible disobedience, negligence, incompetence, and ignorance on my part, God still gave me my dream job. And after all those

years of begging God for this, it makes me sick to my stomach when, in studying this passage, I realized how many times I have grumbled and complained about the very thing I begged God to give me.

So what's the solution to the attitude of self-pity? Gratitude. Is impossible to complain and be thankful at the same time. Ingratitude and self-pity make it impossible to enjoy God's love, because no matter how many gestures of love God gives you, you won't be able to enjoy them because all of your attention will be fixed on what he hasn't given you - even if what he has given you is far greater than the thing he hasn't given you.

And when I say "be thankful, I'm talking about more than just saying, "thank you" to God. We all understand that gratitude is more than words. Someone gives a gift to one of your kids and you say, "What do you say?" And they say, "Please? No, I'm sorry? Gesundheit? - oh yeah, thank you." Sometimes a kid will say, "thank you" and it's as obvious as can be that he's not one bit thankful. So what is thankfulness? How would you define it? Imagine a kid unwraps a present, mumbles "thank you," tosses it aside, and walks away. Now imagine you give him a gift and as soon as he sees what it is, he comes running to give you the tightest hug he can give you. The genuineness of his gratitude is measured not by the number of his words, but by the tightness of his hug. So what is gratitude? If you study the psalms of thanksgiving, here's what you'll find:

Gratitude is when you...

1. see the gift as valuable and undeserved
2. you consciously think of it as an indication of the giver's love
3. that makes you happy, and
4. you verbalize your delight in that gesture of love to the giver.

Or to put it more simply: Gratitude is emotional responsiveness to God's love.

Ingratitude is emotional deadness to God's love. It always results in grumbling because it shuts joy out. It pulls down the shades, blocking out all the rays of God's love into your life.

You will be amazed at the joy that will come into your life if you replace all of your grumbling with gratitude. Gratitude opens up the windows of your life to a whole world of blessing from God. And that's what God wants for you.

Now, we haven't even gotten to the complaining part, or how refraining from this will make us shine like stars in the universe. We'll have to save that for next time. But for this week, give this a try. Ask the people around you what you tend to complain about, and make an effort to replace negativity with faith in the goodness of God, replace hostility and anger with a humility that says, "Yes Lord - I accept this from your hand," and replace all attitudes of self-pity with genuine gratitude to God and emotional responsiveness to his love for you, and see if your life doesn't fill up with joy.

Benediction: Colossians 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) Where are the biggest gaps in your gratitude toward God (the things you are most prone to complain about)?
- 2) Of all of the attributes of God, which is the one your soul has the most trouble believing (e.g. - that he is in full control, that he only does good things, that he is to be feared, that he loves you and is for you, etc.)?

- 3) Most of the good things God is doing for us by sending suffering into our lives we will never know this side of heaven. But once in a while God does let us see it. Name a few wonderful things God gave you in your life through some suffering.
- 4) Can you think of any good reason not to work on memorizing Dt.32:4 this week?