

Complaining is not a big deal, is it?

Scripture:

Read: Philippians 2:14-16

Introduction:

Living in a broken world can give us a lot of things to complain about. We can feel like “life isn’t fair,” we are under appreciated, or people can be too perfectionistic. We become cynical: “nothing is ever going to change” and we start to grumble and complain. But is this really a big deal? Everyone does it.

God takes it seriously. He understands what it does to our hearts and how it impacts a community. Pastor Paul mentioned a couple of examples of people complaining in the Old Testament. In Exodus 16, not long after God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, they complained that God was going to leave them to die in the desert. In Numbers 14, God had led the Israelites to the Promised Land. They saw that the land was filled with milk and honey, but they feared the people who lived there. The Israelites didn’t trust that God would deliver them from their enemies. They grumbled and complained. There were consequences to their grumbling and complaining – they wandered in the desert for 40 years.

Apparently, the church in Philippi had some divisions. This led people to grumble, complain, and argue. In Philippians 2:14-16, the apostle Paul is calling on the church to check their hearts. Though the world grumbles and argues, we are called to be different. We are called to lean on God and bring our complaints and struggles to the cross. Just as God was with the Israelites as they faced challenges, so he is with us. Unfortunately the Israelites chose not to trust God. Do we trust him? Do we really believe God has our best interests at heart?

When challenging times come, some of us just bury our feelings and try to act as if nothing is wrong. But those emotions build up and anger, grumbling, complaining, and arguing begin to seep out of our mouths. God isn’t calling us to bottle up our emotions. He wants us to deal with them. Ephesians 4:26-27 states, “Don’t let the sun go down on your anger, and don’t give the Devil an opportunity.” The Greek word that is translated anger means “*the source of your anger.*” When we feel like arguing, or complaining, God wants us to look at the source of these feelings and

thoughts and bring them to the cross. He wants to give us peace in the midst of challenges.

Reflection: Take personal inventory of your life, heart, and spiritual journey. Use these prompts as a way to prepare for group discussions or for personal times of prayer.

1. When do you find it easiest to complain?
2. How do you feel when you hear others complain?

Discuss

1. What’s the biggest takeaway from this message for you, and why?
2. Why is it so easy for us to complain and argue?
3. How does the Gospel address our complaining?
4. 1 Peter 2:21-23 states, *For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps. He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; when He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He was suffering, He did not threaten but entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly.*

What do you think it means to entrust ourselves to Christ when we feel like complaining?

Missional Living

Reread Philippians 2:14-16.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

Our attitudes and actions can bring light to this world.

Apply

Do your family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors see you as a person who complains and argues? Or do they see you as one who brings light to their lives?

When you struggle, do you bury it or bring the struggle to the cross? Life is challenging, and we are broken. What challenges are you facing today that tempt you to complain? Bring them to Jesus.

