

Complaining OR Contentment

(Exodus: Israel in the Wilderness)



*“There, too, the whole community of Israel **complained** about Moses and Aaron.” Exodus 16:2 “Yet true godliness with **contentment** is itself great wealth.” 1 Timothy 6:6
“**11** Not that I was ever in need, for I **have learned how to be content** with whatever I have. **12** I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.” Philippians 4:11-12 NLT*

Exodus 16 describes Israel's journey through the wilderness as they left Egypt and headed to the Promised Land. It was an amazing journey. Israel repeatedly saw the miraculous power of God. First, God sent ten plagues on Egypt that forced Pharaoh to free His people (Ex. 7-11). He divided the Red Sea and allowed Israel to walk across on dry land (Ex.14). He collapsed the divided water back on the Egyptian army, drowning all of them (Ex.14). He turned polluted water into pure drinking water (Ex. 15). He caused bread to appear on the ground every morning and quail to appear every evening for food (Ex.16). He caused drinking water to flow out of a rock (Ex. 17).

Regardless of all that God did for Israel - **they complained**. Israel was constantly complaining. In chapter 16, the word “complain” is mentioned **seven times**. It is also mentioned repeatedly in other books of the Old Testament describing Israel.

Central Lesson

Complain Less and Choose to Be More Content.

1. Complaining is natural; Contentment is **LEARNED**.

Complaining Is Natural

*“There, too, the whole community of Israel **complained** about Moses and Aaron.” (16:2) “*

*“These people are grumblers and **complainers**, living only to satisfy their desires. They brag loudly about themselves, and they flatter others to get what they want.” Jude 1:16 NLT*

Notice the words “*There, too.*” Israel complained everywhere they went.

Contentment Is Learned

*“**11** Not that I was ever in need, for I **have learned how to be content** with whatever I have. **12** I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.” Philippians 4:11-12 NLT*

2. God may **TEST** us to see if we complain or learn to be content and obedient.

*“**4** Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Look, I’m going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food*

*as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. **5** On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual.” (16:4-5)*

Israel failed God's tests regularly. Sometimes God uses hardship to test us to see if we are growing in character and perseverance. God is more concerned about our character than our comfort. He wants us to become like Christ in character. He wants us to be content in Him, not a complainer.

3. Complaining can be **BOTH** negative and positive.

*“**11** Then the Lord said to Moses, **12** ‘I have heard the Israelites’ complaints. Now tell them, “In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.” **13** That evening vast numbers of quail flew in and covered the camp. And the next morning the area around the camp was wet with dew.” (16:11-13)*

Israel's complaints were negative but God made them positive. Because of His love for Israel, He provided for their need (which He was planning to do anyway). **Negative criticism** can make people feel rejected and worthless. It feels like an attack on their character and self-worth. In contrast, **positive criticism** is focused on helpful evaluation and suggestions for solutions. We must ask ourselves, "Do I complain to strike out from anger or frustration or because I am trying to improve a situation?"

4. Complaining can lead to impatience and a lack of **FAITH** in God.

*“**19** Then Moses told them, ‘Do not keep any of it until morning.’ **20** But **some of them didn’t listen and kept some of it until morning. But by then it was full of maggots and had a terrible smell. Moses was very angry with them.**” (16:19-20).*

5. Complaining is **HARMFUL** to personal relationships.

*“**27** Some of the people went out anyway on the seventh day, but they found no food. **28** The Lord asked Moses, ‘How long will these people refuse to obey my commands and instructions?’ **29** They must realize that the Sabbath is the Lord’s gift to you. That is why he gives you a two-day supply on the sixth day, so there will be enough for two days. On the Sabbath day you must each stay in your place. Do not go out to pick up food on the seventh day.’ **30** So the people did not gather any food on the seventh day.” (16:27-30)*

6. The Holy Spirit provides us the **POWER** to overcome excessive and improper complaining. Will you seek his help?

*“So I say, let the **Holy Spirit** guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves.” Galatians 5:16*

*“Do everything without **complaining** and arguing,” Philippians 2:14*

Central Lesson: **Complain Less and Choose to Be More Content.**

- ▶ Accept Christ as your Savior. ▶ As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ▶ Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ▶ Attend a small group.
- ▶ Read the Bible this week ▶ Pray for friends that need Jesus.