

Complaining: Its Foundation (Discontent)

A beggar standing on a street corner said to his friends, "If only I had a hundred dollars, I would never complain again." A businessman walking by overheard his statement and interrupted the conversation. "Excuse me," the man said. "Did you say if you had a hundred dollars, you would never complain again?" The beggar replied, "You heard right, mister." The man pulled out his wallet, handed him a hundred dollars, and said, "I'm glad I can have a small part in bringing happiness to the world." After the man walked away, the beggar turned to his friends and remarked, "I wish I had asked for two hundred dollars!"

Thought: When we become discontented, we're not satisfied by what we receive because our problem is internal.

America is cursed with an increasingly virulent, dangerous, potent, and extremely communicable virus called discontent, And it finds wings for flight into society and yes, the church, through our complaining. It is so potent that you do not even need to have bodily contact. You can actually get it from just looking at other people.

Here is what a description of the disease sounds like

If we're young, we want to be older. If we're old, we wish we were younger. If it's old, we want something new. If it's new, we want something newer. If it's small, we want something bigger. If it's big, we want something really big. If we have a hundred dollars, we want two hundred. If we have two hundred, we want five hundred. If we have an apartment, we want a condo. If we have a condo, we want a house. If we have a house, we want a bigger house. Or a new house. Or a nicer house. Or maybe we want to scale down and live in an apartment again. If we have a job, we dream of a better job, a bigger job, a closer job, with a bigger office, a better boss, better benefits, more challenge, bigger opportunity, nicer people to work for, and more vacation time. If we're single, we dream of being married. And the list could go on and on.

The fact is, We were born discontented We start out as babies crying for more, and for our desires to be met. It is their way of complaining, grumbling, nagging, or protesting and it can lead to a discounted life.

Thought: We are born discontented and sadly some people stay that way forever.

Discontent is defined as a restless desire or craving for something one does not have. As with one's condition or lot in life. Note though, A certain amount of discontentment can be good for the soul.

It's not wrong to have dreams about what the future might hold. The hope of something better, drives us forward and keeps us working, inventing, striving, creating and innovating. But there is a kind of discontentment that leads in a wrong direction.

I. Here are five signs that discontentment is dragging us down spiritually:

Thought: If you can see yourself in any of these ways or, if others see you like this and have the courage to tell you, you might want to pay attention. The first is

A. Envy.

The inability to rejoice at the success of others. If you are an envious person you will be a complaining person.

Example: Someone got all the breaks and you didn't get anything or any chances and you had to get it the hard way,

B. Uncontrolled Ambition

The desire to win at all costs, no matter what it takes or who gets trampled in the process. If this is you, you will never be happy and will always have something to complain about, because someone got the break you should have you.

C. Critical Spirit

The tendency to make negative, hurtful, cutting remarks about others. If this is you, you will always be criticizing or complaining about how someone does this or that.

D. Complaining Spirit. The temperament to make excuses and to blame others, or bad circumstances, for our problems. It is the inability to be thankful for what we already have. Someone suggested that if you can't be thankful what you don't have, you can be thankful for what you possibly avoided

E. Outbursts of Anger.

Angry words spoken because our expectations were not met. The discontented person looks around and complains saying, "I deserve something better than this."

Because he is never happy and never satisfied, he drags others into the swamp of complaining with him. No wonder Benjamin Franklin declared, "Contentment makes a poor man rich, discontent makes a rich man poor."

Yes discontentment is cancer of the soul. It eats away our joy, corrodes our happiness, destroys our outlook on life, and produces a terminal jaundice of the soul so that everything looks negative to us.

We cannot be happy because, we choose not be happy. We cannot be satisfied because, we choose not be satisfied. We can't stop complaining because, we choose not to stop it.

Vivian Greene sums it up this way: "It is not our circumstances that create our discontent or contentment. It is us."

Because we live in an increasingly complaining and discontented crisis, both as a country and also individuals, I want to spend some time looking at it today. I want to do this in hopes that some of us might be spared the pain and suffering that accompany this disease and in turn keep us from complaining even more.

II. Discontentment and Complaining Unmasked

A. Three misconceptions about happiness:

1) I must have what others have to be happy. That's the myth behind all fads and fashions. It's just not true.

2) I must be liked by everyone in order to be happy. The truth is however, You don't. Yet many people spend so much time trying to win the approval of others.

The fact is, you cannot go through life without some disapproval -- if you do anything at all, somebody is not going to like it. Even Jesus couldn't please everybody. Only a fool would try to do what Jesus couldn't do. Note though that Jesus did not complain because not everyone like him. Again the truth is, you don't need everybody's approval to be happy.

3) Having more will make me more happy. Howard Hughes was asked, "How much money does it take to make a man happy?" He said, "Just a little more." Remember, As your income goes up, so does your expenses.

I Timothy 6:6-8 "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."

All possessions are temporary. They're just loaned to us. We use them while we're here on earth, have a good time with them, enjoy them, and use them for God's glory, but they're not going to last so what is the use of complaining about any of our circumstances when it comes to money?

Thought: Don't get an obsession with possessions.

B. Various types of discontent which lead to complaining

There is discontent concerning our jobs. We will never have the perfect job. Every job has its stuff we won't like. There is discontent concerning our churches. Little churches cannot compete with the big city churches. We cannot have the all the programs they do, but if you look beneath the surface you will find discontent and complaining in those big churches too, as they always want more. There is discontent concerning our communities and our leaders.

Thought: We will never have the perfect leaders always doing the very best for our communities. Yet we complain about what they do, what they don't do, and what we think they should do, but we won't run for office Yes, There is discontent and complaining swirling all around us

C. What discontent has led us to

a. Damaged priorities.

When we want something more than we want anything else, including God that is a problem. Our priorities are out of whack and when our priorities get rearranged we fall into many traps. We run after the wrong things and stop pursuing God and his promises for our good and a happy life. Stuff becomes the most important things in our lives. Our priorities get rearranged and we complain if our desires are not met

b. Damaged relationships.

James 4:1 says, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Do they not come from your own desires that battle within you? You want something, but don't get it, so you kill and you covet. You can't have what you want so you quarrel and fight."

I read where homicide is now the second leading cause of death in the workplace. How many murders are committed by employees exacting revenge after being passed over for a promotion?

In 1 Kings 21 we read of king Ahab who wanted a piece of land adjoining his property. Here he had this huge palace, but he wanted this little garden plot that belonged to his neighbor Naboth. So Ahab offered to buy the land but Naboth refused and 1 Kings 21:4 says that Ahab became gloomy and angry. His wife Jezebel saw him like this and arranged for Naboth to be put to death. Once Naboth was dead, Ahab took the land he wanted.

And that's an extreme, but the drive for more and more stuff can damage our relationships. It's the preoccupation with other people's things that is at the root of much of the crime in our society and we complain when we can't get it.

c. Damaged finances.

We buy more than we can afford because we want more than we need. Someone once said that Credit cards let you start at the bottom and then dig yourself a hole.

The average American adult receives 32 credit card offers per year, regardless of their credit history. The average American has four major credit cards with an average total credit card debt of \$9,000.00. Now, add to that those that are sucked into the minimum payment plan scheme and you have a recipe for financial disaster.

Did you know that if you have a balance of \$3,900 and you pay the 3% minimum it will take you nearly 42 years to pay off the debt, and those monthly payments would total \$14,530.44.

People are so focused on getting what they want that it leads to unhappiness and un-fulfillment and complain because they can't have more. The more we have the more we want, the more unhappy we become and the more prone we are to complaining!

d. All of these lead to gross impatience.

We get impatient with our bosses, with the store people, with our church leaders and with all sorts of other folks

D. Causes that promote the spread of Discontent, this basis of complaining

Question: Why do we have this unhealthy drive for more or different stuff.

1) One reason is advertising.

We are constantly bombarded with schemes to get more stuff. You turn on the television and there are commercials. You log on to the internet and it's full of ads. You drive down the highway, nothing but billboards. You open the mail and it's a catalog. You answer the phone and it's a telemarketer. And then we complain about them and their tactics

The average American is exposed to 3,000 advertisements a day that promise happiness. "If you just had that new exercise machine, you'd be built like the guy in the commercial. But you get the machine, try it a week or two and then complain because you are still chunky

If you just had those new clubs, you'd hit a golf ball like Tiger Woods. But you get the clubs, hit them at the driving range for a week or two but you still continually put them into the rough and

then complain that it was the clubs. And slowly but surely we're eaten by the monster of more and complain when we can't have it.

2) The promotion of and availability of get rich quick opportunities.

It's a desire to get that which we don't earn and we complain because we can't get enough, fast enough

E. How to find contentment which will in turn help to close the door on complaining

How do we become a more content people and put an end to this obsession for more and complaining if we don't get it?

1) Change our perspective

We need to realize that stuff is not going to fulfill us. Happiness is not found in the accumulation of things. Of bigger house, bigger cars, better stuff.

In our souls, we know that things can't bring happiness so how come we still look for fulfillment in those areas and complain about not finding it?

Luke 12:15 says, "A man's life does not consist of the abundance of things he has."

Possessions do not make us happy and we need to wake up to that.

2) Quit comparing our situation with others

Have you ever noticed that when we are comparing what we have, against what others have, we always pick out someone who has more not someone who has less.

If we are feeling sorry for ourselves, complaining and believing that we are deprived, we always pick out the family that has more.

We say, "The Smiths have two cars, and they are both Lexus's and their house is a $\frac{1}{2}$ million dollar mansion."

Fact: We fail to consider how many in this world have less than we do. Do you hear us complaining about them?

One of the surest ways I know of to make yourself miserable, discontent, and full of complaints is to start comparing yourself with others because you can always find someone who....

- Has a better income than you do
- Has a bigger house in a nicer sub-division.
- Gets better grades or more promotions
- Is better looking, or taller or thinner.

You need to stop the comparison game!

3) Share with others.

We are attached to our stuff and the best way to wean us away from stuff is to let go of some of it. When that rich young ruler came to Jesus, Jesus told him sell his possessions and give to the poor.

Jesus' advice the rich young ruler was very practical. V 21 of Luke 18 And when Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Do you know, one of the by-products of giving some of it away? It teaches us that we can get by on less. It teaches us that we don't need those things to be happy.

By letting go of our money and some of our conveniences we find that we don't need all that junk to be happy. We can get by on less. Contentment comes when you are willing to give.

4) God knows the difference between our wants and our needs, and has promised to provide all of our needs

Yet he loves us enough to give us many wants. Just not as many as we may want

In Conclusion remember as Burton Hills observes Happiness is not a destination. It is a method of life. A life free of complaining and grumbling.

So lets follow Bill Copeland's admonition "Try to be like the turtle -- at ease in your own shell."

I want to end with a little story from farm life about a cow and end our time with this lesson

There was an old cow who gave good milk, but she was rather dumb. She had a whole field in which to feed, yet no grass seems quite as tasty as those patches outside her own pasture. She often stretched her head through the barb wire fence, while right behind her is everything that she needed - excellent grazing land, beautiful shade trees, a cool, refreshing stream of water, and even a big chunk of salt; What more could she want?"

Thought: It's not just cows who pull that stunt. Sometimes we act like that old cow.

We think that the "grass is always greener on the other side of the fence." and complain because the barbed wire cuts our necks. We are constantly coveting and seeking to obtain what we don't need. We confuse our needs with our wants. How absolutely miserable we have become! What folly there is in discontentment!

If you are a Christian, the greatest blessings in life are already yours. No need to complain because

Heaven is Your home, and God is your Father.

He has promised never to leave you (Hebrews 13:5)

He will supply your every need (Philippians 4: 19).

So thank Him for all that He has given you and be content. When we have such an attitude; we will learn to appreciate how green the grass is on our side of the fence. It's a lesson we all need to learn!

The Lord made us FREE so that we can CHOOSE our own attitude what ever our circumstances happens to be.

And our best choice would be not to complain

As a rule, man's a fool

When it's hot, he wants it cool.

And when it's cool, he wants it hot,

Always wanting what is not.