

# Chapter 8



## **The Bitter Roots of a Complaining Spirit**

**Bible Character – Miriam – Number 15  
Symptoms – Effects – Causes – Biblical Cures**

# Summary of a Complaining Spirit

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. It's true. *Sesame Street* has personified the complaining spirit in the Muppet character Oscar the Grouch, who appropriately lives in a garbage can. The Bible also gives us snapshots of people who got caught up in a complaining, grumbling, and criticizing spirit.

## A Bitter and Cheated Heart

A bitter and cheated heart causes a critical spirit. It's an inside job. It's a heart issue, first and foremost. There's a darkness inside you that is dissatisfied with life in general. The Bible says a fountain cannot flow sweet water and bitter. If a little bitterness is in your well, the fountain will be polluted. A little sewage in your water will spoil the whole tank.

- You complain about the weather.
- You complain about your wife.
- You complain about your husband.
- You complain about the music.
- You complain about the preacher.
- You complain about your appliances.
- You complain about your car.
- You complain about the mechanic.
- You complain about the price of gas.
- You complain about taxes.
- You complain about the government.
- You complain about your kids.
- You complain about your mother-in-law.
- You complain about your job.
- You complain about your health.

Is there anything we don't complain about?

Grumbling and complaining are chronic problems for God's people throughout the world in every generation. Complaining comes from our thought life. The words we speak come from simmering discontent deep inside. God wants to change our bitter water to sweet flowing springs. Are you a grumbler?

## The Situation (biblical character)

We want to examine a couple of passages that address this Stinkin' Thinkin.' The first passage is from the Old Testament.

Let's look at the example in Numbers 12:1-15. We will print the entire chapter because it is about grumbling and complaining.

*Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. <sup>2</sup> "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this.*

<sup>3</sup> *(Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)*

<sup>4</sup> *At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "Come out to the tent of meeting, all three of you." So the three of them went out. <sup>5</sup> Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them stepped forward, <sup>6</sup> he said, "Listen to my words:*

*"When there is a prophet among you,  
I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions,  
I speak to them in dreams.*

<sup>7</sup> *But this is not true of my servant Moses;  
he is faithful in all my house.*

<sup>8</sup> *With him I speak face to face,  
clearly and not in riddles;  
he sees the form of the LORD.*

*Why then were you not afraid  
to speak against my servant Moses?"*

<sup>9</sup> *The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he left them.*

<sup>10</sup> *When the cloud lifted from above the tent, Miriam's skin was leprous—it became as white as snow. Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had a defiling skin disease, <sup>11</sup> and he said to Moses, "Please, my lord, I ask you not to hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed. <sup>12</sup> Do not let her be like a stillborn infant coming from its mother's womb with its flesh half eaten away."*

<sup>13</sup> *So Moses cried out to the LORD, "Please, God, heal her!"*

<sup>14</sup> *The LORD replied to Moses, "If her father had spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace for seven days? Confine her outside the camp for seven days; after that she can be brought back." <sup>15</sup> So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on till she was brought back.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## The Symptoms (hers and ours)

Miriam and Aaron were brother and sister. They began to talk against Moses because he had married a Cushite. If you're not familiar with the Scriptures, you have no idea what a Cushite is. A Cushite is a black woman. Moses married a black woman, and they took issue with that. They began to complain and they asked, "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Hasn't He also spoken through us?" There was a bit of jealousy going on, wasn't there?

The Lord heard this! If you mark your Bibles, please mark that "**The Lord heard this.**" That's the key to understanding all of this. The Lord hears every complaint that we make. He's listening, and recording it every moment of every day, at every family meal, and at every church gathering.

Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth. So Moses didn't defend himself. God defended him. The Lord said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "Come out to the tent of meeting all three of you."

I remember when my mother would do that. When one of us did something wrong, she would call us all out to line up in front of her. I hated that. We knew we were in trouble. Someone was going to get a licking.

So, all three of them came out. Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and he stood at the entrance of the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. Can you imagine? Here's these two arrogant siblings filled up with pride, thinking God had spoken through them as well as Moses. They thought, "We are as good as Moses every day of the week and twice on Sunday. We can criticize him. He's not so great. He's not so perfect. He's done some things wrong too." The Lord called them out on this issue of complaining.

When both of them stepped forward, He said, "*Listen to my words. When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions. I speak to him in dreams, but with Moses I speak face to face clearly and not in riddles. He sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*"

I want you to underline that. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? Why are you not afraid to speak evil about your pastor?

*"Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant? The anger of the Lord burned against them and he left them. He withdrew from them."*

Then His presence was gone. When the cloud lifted from above the tent there stood Miriam, her skin white as snow from leprosy. Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had leprosy. He said to Moses, "*Please my Lord do not hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed, do not let her be like a stillborn infant coming out of its mother's womb with its flesh half eaten away.*"

So Moses, humble as he was, cried out to the Lord. "*Oh God, please heal her.*" The Lord replied to Moses. "*If her father had spit in her face, would not she have been in disgrace for seven days? Confine her outside the camp for seven days and after that she can be brought back.*" So, Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days and the people did not move on until she was brought back.

**I can't think of a better illustration of Stinkin' Thinkin' than complaining. It affected Aaron and Miriam and was a characteristic of the nation of Israel throughout the Old Testament. It is not just an Old Testament problem. It's our problem too.**

**The second passage is in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 10:6-13**

*<sup>6</sup> Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. <sup>7</sup> Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." <sup>8</sup> We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. <sup>9</sup> We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. <sup>10</sup> And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.*

*<sup>11</sup> These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup> So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*

Do you grumble, mumble, gripe, and complain about everything? Are you a critic? Do you judge other people by your own standards? Are you discontent with your life-situations? Are you an Oscar the Grouch at home?

1 Corinthians 10:6-13 tells us these things that happened to the Old Testament characters were examples for us, that we should not follow in their footsteps. In fact, the sin that God addresses here is the sin of complaining, grumbling, and criticizing.

Grumbling is the tail end of perfectionism. It tags along on a perfectionist like a piece of lint on a new suit. It is a natural outgrowth of a discontented heart.

Grumbling is a heart issue. "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*" Even if your complaining doesn't come out of your mouth, it can be seen in your demeanor. Your facial expressions betray you. Your attitude toward life can be perceived by others. God sees the heart, hears your thoughts, and grades your life based on what is on the inside.

One of the greatest problems that plagued Israel and the early church was grumbling, murmuring, complaining and criticizing. Hebrews 12 instructs us to be aware of the weights and besetting sins in our lives. They are likened to bitter roots that start out small, but grow into big weeds. He says they "*trouble you, and because of it many are defiled.*"

That is certainly true of grumbling and complaining. It's an infection. I would say it's an epidemic. It's a worldwide pandemic. It has spread all over the world in every culture and it's in every church. There are no churches that are not affected by this complaining spirit. It is a spirit of discontentment. It is not limited to Christianity. It's human nature. We are all infected with it to some degree. It was a chronic issue

with Israel in the past. God hates it. God does not honor the church or the individual that has a complaining spirit. We need to get rid of those things that cause this Stinkin' Thinkin'.

We need to get rid of the thoughts that create a complaining spirit. We need to admit it by bringing it to God and saying, "God, this is my problem. I'm full of all this bitterness, all this anger, all this discontent and discouragement. I lay it at your feet." As Hebrews 12 says, "*Let it be healed,*" because it troubles you and defiles those around you. It is Stinkin' Thinkin' at its worst.

**Paul is talking about the issues of the church** and he said, "*Do not grumble.*" Another translation says, "Do not murmur." We might use synonyms and say, "Do not complain." "Do not gripe." "Do not criticize." "Do not bad-mouth others." I'm sure you get the idea. In another place, Paul says, "Do not bite and devour one another."

*"Do not complain, as some of them did and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall."*

Things are not right. People aren't right. Decisions of others aren't right. The food is too hot, or too cold. The room is too bright, or too dark. The church pews are too hard, or the chairs aren't appropriate for a church. The preacher is too loud, or too soft. The sound system is way off. The musicians can't hold a tune. The janitor missed something in the church's foyer. The choruses are too flippant and the repetition of the same phrase is annoying.

You see, the word of the Lord from the New Testament is saying you need to look to the Old Testament, see those examples and realize that this is a problem. This is an example for you that you might inherit promises and avoid the problems they had, but the warning is to avoid the pride of thinking you don't have the same problems that Israel had.

We've talked about great men and women of God. Every one of the chapters of this book focuses on a great man or woman of God. Every one of them had a problem with the root of bitterness. Every one of them battled Stinkin' Thinkin'. The suggestion from God is that maybe you do too. It is with that reminder that God says these examples are there for us, that we look at the bitter root of a complaining spirit.

By the way, it is not the only passage about grumbling. Grumbling was the first step in Israel's backsliding. Sin didn't start with idolatry and adultery, it never does. It starts insidiously, slyly, innocently. We consider it a minor sin, a sin nobody pays any attention to. From there, its seeds take root and grow.

### **Did you know every adultery begins with grumbling?**

It begins with discontentment with what you have. It begins with complaining. It begins with nit-picking. It begins with griping, nagging, complaining, criticizing, and grumbling. Before adultery, there is discontentment. **You'll learn more about that in Chapter 10 when we talk about dysfunctional thoughts of lust.**

**In the New Testament, God addressed the same problem of grumbling as Miriam had in the Old Testament.**

As we look at these truths, there are some things that need to be pointed out. Throughout the word of God there is the recurring phrase, “*murmuring and complaining.*”

Israel was addicted to murmuring and complaining from the beginning to the end of the Bible. There was murmuring and complaining about the Lord, about the food, about God's provision, or His lack of provision for their wants. There was grumble, grumble, grumble, all the time. Everywhere you turn in the Old Testament somebody was grumbling about something. It seems like it was in the heart of man.

**Jeremiah 17:9** says it well, “*The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?*” Our hearts are deceitful. Our hearts are wicked. Our hearts are self-centered. When we start to grumble and complain we get ourselves in trouble. Then when trouble comes, we act like we're innocent.

God addresses grumbling, mumbling, complaining, nit-picking, and criticizing throughout the Bible. He says it is a heinous crime. It is ungodly. It is unhealthy. It is a sickness. It is a highly contagious infection in the body of Christ. But many Christians think it's okay. It's normal. It's expected. Everyone does it. So, it must be all right. I'm here to tell you it is not all right! How do I know Christians think it is okay? Because it is epidemic in the church! Any church! Every church! Where you have people with mouths and ears, there will be complaining.

God does not like it. Jesus Christ does not condone it. The Holy Spirit is grieved by it. It is like mold that gets on bread. It contaminates it. It spoils it. No one wants to swallow mold. It is unacceptable to God. He sees it. He hears it, and He records it! And we will not be rewarded with blessings because of it.

**Complaining spoils joy. It ruins marriages. It infects our children. It invades the church and ruins fellowship.**

Let's be honest with ourselves and admit it. We are not pleasing the Lord when we have a complaining spirit. Complaining is not a gift of the Holy Spirit. Criticizing is also not a spiritual gift.

Let me give you a few words that I've just pulled from Scripture that can be included in this idea of murmuring and complaining:

***Grumbling, complaining, criticizing, griping, cutting remarks, put-downs, condemning, cursing, evil speaking, evil reports, tale bearing, gossip, backbiting, slander, whispering behind the back, and the list goes and on.***

All of these words have to do with our mouths. All of these have to do with our hearts. “*As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.*” (Proverbs 23:7)

The Lord said it clearly in **Matthew 12:34**, “*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*” You see, our words are a window to our soul. What we say is what we are. If you are critical, then you are a critical person. When we complain, it shows our heart. It is a mirror into the soul.

We need to look at this seriously because all through the Scriptures God says He doesn't reward the evil spirit of grumbling.

We are going to look at those things God says are unacceptable, that God condemns. These are the murmurings and complainings that God looks at and says they need to be removed from our lives. He says, these are the mouth-evidence of a bitter heart and a bitter spirit. When we see these things in our lives, we cannot sit still and say, "It's okay. God understands. I'm just the way I am." I hear that all the time. There's somebody in the church that's a grumbler, a complainer, or a grouch and nobody can get near them. But the people justify it and say "That's just the way he is." Well, that's just not the way it's supposed to be!

It's about time for the church to start addressing the Stinkin' Thinkin' of complaining and grumbling. It is not pleasing to God. You will be judged for it. If it is allowed to proliferate in the congregation, it will infect everyone. You know when one person starts criticizing, soon others will join in. Soon everyone in the room begins to criticize and complain.



# Sayings (self-talk)

## The Thoughts of a Complaining Spirit

A complaining spirit is perfectionism gone wrong. It is perfectionism on steroids. It's perfectionism on over drive. It's wanting everything to be right by your standards. You're a nitpicker. You're a know-it-all. You're a fault-finder. You say you are just analytical, but your analysis is always negative. Nobody measures up. You can find fault with everything and anything, and you don't mind saying so.

A counselor listened patiently to me complaining about everything that was wrong in my life. Then he said something that shocked me into reality. He said, "Dick, even a jackass can find a hole in a fence." It doesn't take intelligence to find what's wrong. It takes intelligence to fix the hole in the fence, not just point it out. A negative spirit comes from a cheated heart. How's your heart?

- I never win
- I never...get my way
- I never...have any luck
- I'll never amount to anything
- I'll never succeed
- I'll never get married
- I'll never be happy
- I'll never ...
- No one ever...
- Nobody ever...
- It Never...
- Everybody always...
- All the time...
- Everywhere I go...
- Everything I do...
- Every time I try...
- It always happens to me
- I hate life...because...
- I hate people...because...
- I hate church...because...
- If only \_\_ ...I'd be happy
- If I were \_\_ ...I'd be happy
- If only people would ...I'd be happier
- If only I were rich...I'd be happy
- If only I were married...I'd be happy
- If only I weren't married-I'd be happy
- If only I had no kids'

**There are many more than we can list here. Go to the Appendix and review *The Lies We Tell Ourselves* and check off those thoughts you have when you are feeling critical of others or dissatisfied with life.**

## **Ten Distorted Thought Patterns**

Untruthful Thoughts (lies of Satan)

1. All-or-Nothing (expecting perfection)
2. Overgeneralization (Murphy's law, pessimism)
3. Mental Filter (gloom and doom)
4. Disqualifying Positives (minimizing good things)
5. Mind Reading (reading people's thoughts, motives)
6. Fortune Telling (predicting disaster)
7. Magnification (dwelling on small things, blowing them up)
8. Should-itis (demanding fairness, blame and shame)
9. Name Calling / Labeling (derogatory name calling)
10. Personalizing Everything (feeling responsible, pity party)

**Counteract your negative thoughts with God's thoughts.**

**If you have a critical, complaining spirit, God is speaking to you today as part of his family. He's asking, "Will you let it be healed?" It's that bitter root inside you that you can't seem to get a handle on. He can handle it for you. Give it to him. Tell him your feelings, frustrations, anger, and sorrows. Will you let the Lord touch it?**

**You're not going to change by mere will power. You will not change by going home and saying, "I'll never do that again." The Lord says He came to do this for you by exchanging the bitter roots, the ashes, the sadness and everything bitter inside with a heart of peace and praise.**

# Solutions for Complaining (God's truth)

What Cures a Critical Spirit?

Only God can cure your bitter spirit. If there is bitter water in your thinking, there will be bitter words coming out of your mouth. If your heart is sweet, so will the words of your mouth be sweet. In Isaiah 61 and Luke 4 Jesus promises to give us the crown of beauty, the oil of gladness, and a garment of praise.

*“The spirit of the sovereign Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to bestow on you the **crown of beauty** instead of ashes, the **oil of gladness**, instead of mourning **the garment of praise**, instead of a spirit of despair, they will be called, you will be called Oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, the display of his splendor.”*

You see, God wants to do all of this in us, but He can't do it as long as there is bitterness deep inside your thought life. Jesus said, “I came to exchange the bitterness for sweetness.” He does that by the RENEWING OF THE MIND (Romans 12:1-2) That can only be done when we willingly recognize the dysfunctional thought patterns that drive us and exchange them for God's thoughts. Correct your thoughts and you will correct your feelings. Your emotions only reflect what's really inside.

## 1. Praise Counteracts Complaining

Praise filled worship can change a dark gloomy day into the joy of springtime. Praise is comely. Praise is good. Praise is always appropriate. Praise is always welcome sunshine on a cloudy day. But, you say, “I don't feel like praising the Lord. There's nothing to praise Him for.” There's the problem. Your negative heart cannot ever give the Lord a round of applause while you are focused on your miserable circumstance. Your mind blocks out all other light. You sit and sulk in the darkness of your gloom and refuse to climb out. You'd rather complain than praise.

You feel cheated, so why should you praise? You don't want to give God the glory due his name because He hasn't yet solved your issues. You'd rather wait in the dark prison of your thoughts with rats, mildewed walls and sewage than to praise the God who is above all the universe. Your myopic mindset can only see your own miserable situation. So you sulk. That's a great plan!

Albert Einstein reportedly said, “Only two things are infinite, the universe and the stupidity of man, and I'm not sure about the former.” Man's stupidity is limitless. To think that sulking in your stupor of stupidity is somehow going to change anything for the better is sheer foolishness. Even in your darkest hour, God is still on the throne and in control.

God is worthy of praise. In the book of Habakkuk, things were looking pretty bad. God was judging His people, announcing bad days of captivity. Habakkuk had to deliver that somber message to Israel, but he didn't lose heart.

*“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, <sup>18</sup> yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. <sup>19</sup> The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.”*

David said,

*“I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall be continually in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord, the humble shall hear it and be glad.”* (Psalm 34:1-2)

Psalm 150 gives us the where, why, how and who of praise:

*“Praise the Lord, Praise God in his sanctuary. Praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power. Praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him for the sounding of the trumpet. Praise him with the harp and lyre. Praise him with tambourine and dancing. Praise him with the strings and flute. Praise him with the clash of cymbals. Praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.”*

## **2. Thanksgiving Always Defeats a Complaining Spirit**

Throughout the Bible, God instructs his people to be thankful for everything—the good, the bad, and the ugly. In every circumstance, there is reason to be thankful. Good things are happening. You just can't see them because you are blinded in your dungeon of despair. You are focusing on the darkness instead of the light. Even in a dungeon, tiny beams of light can penetrate the darkest room. Give thanks.

Charles Wesley has written powerful hymns of truth and light. One of my favorites is, “*And Can It Be That I Should Gain.*” I love the fourth verse.

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*

Consider your grumbling heart a prison dark and dreary. As John Bunyan did in his immortal Pilgrim's Progress. A giant captured the two pilgrims and put them in the prison of despair. It was there after days of pining, groaning, and thinking of all the evil that befell them that one of them suddenly remembered a key that the Master had given him. That key unlocked the prison door. It was the key of thanksgiving and hope. Where's your key?

## **3. Songs of Joy Erase Complaining**

Singing is a heritage of believers. No other religion has so many joyful and encouraging songs to sing. Whether you love contemporary music or traditional hymns your brain can remember and sing hundreds of songs. The problem is many of us don't sing. We hang our harps on the willows like the Israelites in captivity and say, “How can I sing songs of Zion in a strange land? (Psalms 137:4-6) Psalm 84 tells the Israelites that they were commanded by a decree and an ordinance of God to sing songs of joy.

*Sing for joy to God our strength; shout aloud to the God of Jacob! <sup>2</sup> Begin the music, strike the timbrel, play the melodious harp and lyre. <sup>3</sup> Sound the ram's horn at the New Moon, and when the moon is full, on the day of our festival; <sup>4</sup> this is a decree for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob. <sup>5</sup> When God went out against Egypt, he established it as a statute for Joseph" ... then ... "I removed the burden from their shoulders; their hands were set free from the basket."<sup>7</sup> In your distress you called and I rescued you."*

If you want your burdens, complaints, criticisms, griping, and your grumblings to cease, then sing the songs of Zion despite being in an unpleasant land. God says he will hear and remove the burden from your shoulder and your hands from weaving baskets. In other words, God will either change your situation, or change your attitude toward it.

Paul and Silas had just been beaten with 40 lashes. Their backs were torn and raw. They were mistreated, accused falsely, and thrown into a miserable dungeon. That dungeon was filthy. Rats dominated the room. They probably licked the blood from the prisoners' backs. The floor was covered with human waste. Their feet were fastened with iron shackles. It stank to high heaven. What did Paul and Silas do? They sang songs of praise. What are they, crazy? (Acts 16:25-31) About midnight they were praying and singing hymns to God. That's amazing. Suddenly, the prison was shaken with a violent earthquake, and the foundations of the prison were shaken. The doors flew open, and they were set free.

God desires to shake you to the core with a heaven-quake when you sing praises to God. He who moves mountains can move your heart of stone and turn it into joyous praise. Just open your mouth and sing. It doesn't matter whether you have a good voice or not. God loves to hear us praising and singing.

A young lady in a church where I was teaching on praise reported that she often took quiet walks in the morning or evening. She used earbuds and listened to praise music. But a neighborhood boy who had Down Syndrome surprised her by walking the same sidewalk and passing her by singing. She heard him singing praise hymns, off-key, but joyful to the Lord. She said she was ashamed that she wasn't bold enough to sing out loud on the streets.

Whether you sing in the shower, in the kitchen, or out on the street, sing out loud. Let praise ring out.

#### **4. Blessing Thwarts a Complaining Spirit**

Let blessings, not curses, flow out of your mouth. It takes time to learn to unlearn you critical complaining. Learn to bless people. Learn to compliment. Learn to thank people. Learn positive Scriptures to quote to encourage others. A little lady in my church told me she used to be an awful complainer. Then the Lord convicted her of her critical and bitter words. Now as I talk to her, in every conversation she flows with quoted Scriptures that encourage and bless.

That change doesn't happen overnight. It helps to have a spouse or a friend to work on this together. Laugh every time you hear a critical or complaining comment. Try barking softly whenever a critical, negative, or complaining comment comes from either of you. Write it down. Which of the 10 Lies of Satan was it? How can you reverse it to speak the truth?

As a pastoral counselor, I have my clients keep a chart of their critical thoughts or comments. One side of the chart is the negative feeling, then the thought that caused the negativity, then which of the 10

Cognitive Distortions were they practicing, then the final column is what the truth is, usually using a Scripture is more helpful than just your opinion of truth. The Appendix of this book gives you that chart. You can start tracking your thoughts today.

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**So, track your negative emotions. Every time you feel discouraged, depressed, angry, sad, insecure, worried, anxious, unloved, worthless, hopeless, or alone, track down the thought or thoughts that brought you to that feeling. Check that thought with God's thoughts, God's truth, and God's promises.**

# Stop Here!

**Don't read any further until you have digested, applied, and used what you've just read.**

**Avoid overload. Read only one chapter a week.**

## Personal Response to Complaining

1. How did this subject make you feel? Sad, confused, upset, depressed, guilty, condemned, enlightened, happy, hopeful, etc.?
2. Was this chapter helpful in identifying some of your own Stinkin' Thinkin'? If so what specifically?
3. What 3 negative thoughts do you need to change? What are they and why are they distortions of truth?
4. What 3 or more biblical truths, verses, or promises do you need to digest and make a firm part of your thoughts and beliefs?

## Group Discussion Questions

1. Are you a grumbler or complainer? Do you ever complain? What about?
2. What do you hear others in your family complain about?
3. Is complaining ever justified? Does it help? When does it help?
4. What is your biggest complaint in life? Do you know anyone who is a chronic complainer? Describe them.
5. What do you most often complain about? Why?

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Download our helps and tools at go to [www.PrayerToday.org/Stinkin.htm](http://www.PrayerToday.org/Stinkin.htm)

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