

The Danger of Grumbling

By Doug Hamilton

Opening Story

“The Grumbling Monk”

Many years ago, there was a monk that joined a monastery and took a vow of silence. After the first 10 years his superior called him in and asked, "Do you have anything to say?" The monk replied, "Food bad." After another 10 years the monk again had opportunity to voice his thoughts. He said, "Bed hard." Another 10 years went by and again he was called in before his superior. When asked if he had anything to say, he responded, "I quit." His superior replied "It doesn't surprise me a bit. You've done nothing but complain ever since you got here."



Whenever the people of God are about to make great strides forward, there is the risk of the catastrophe of grumbling. Israel was no different.

They grumbled about leaving Egypt on the Day of Crossing.

- Exodus 14:11-12 Then they said to Moses, “Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² “Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”
- It was less than 48 hours after departing Egypt and they had already started their grumbling. They hadn't even reached the Red Sea and their negative attitude showed. God delivered them and they passed through the Red Sea, witnessing the destruction of the Egyptian army. They were a nation on the move that was the path to the Promised Land.

They grumbled about a lack of water.

- Exodus 15:22-25 Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. ²³ When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah. ²⁴ So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” ²⁵ Then he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw *it* into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them.
- This was only three days after the crossing, yet they forgot what God had done for them. Understandably they were thirsty, but they failed the test. Instead of crying out in trust, they grumbled against Him.

They grumble about a lack of food.

- Exodus 16:1-3 Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. ² The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ The sons of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the LORD’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

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- In only a matter of weeks the people were grumbling about their food. They reminisced about how “great” they had it in Egypt, for they were fed slaves.

They grumbled about the type of food.

- Numbers 11:4-6 The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, “Who will give us meat to eat?”⁵ “We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic,⁶ but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna.”
- God gave them manna to eat. All they had to do was simply gather and prepare it, but that was not good enough for them. They missed the food of their past and wanted it back.

They grumbled about the inhabitants of the Promised Land.

- Numbers 14:2-4 All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!”³ “Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?”⁴ So they said to one another, “Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.”
- They sent spies into the Promised Land to scope out the land for conquering. When they came back with the report, it was filled with grumbling about how they could not take it. This would cost the forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

They grumbled against their leaders.

- Exodus 17:3-4 But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, “Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”⁴ So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me.”
- They lashed out against God’s chosen leader to the point that he feared for his life.

They grumbled against God.

- Exodus 16:8 Moses said, “*This will happen* when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for the LORD hears your grumblings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD.”
- Numbers 14:27 “How long *shall I bear* with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me.
- Psalm 106:24-25 Then they despised the pleasant land; They did not believe in His word,²⁵ But grumbled in their tents; They did not listen to the voice of the LORD.
- Ultimately the grumblings against the blessings from God, the circumstances of God, plans of God and the leaders of God are AGAINST GOD.

Their grumbling was so bad that that generation of grumblers were not going to be permitted to come into the Promised Land. Israel was a people on the move for God and headed toward the

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Promised Land. They had great prospects, but was side-tracked by their constant grumbling. *Numbers 14:23* They “...shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it.”

The Dangers of Grumbling

1) Grumbling leads to Stumbling

John 6:60-61 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?”⁶¹ But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, “Does this cause you to stumble?”

- Jesus was proclaiming to be the “Bread of Life” and comparing Himself to the manna that God sent from heaven. This caused many of His disciples to grumble about the complexity of that teaching, for it was quite difficult to digest. Interestingly Jesus made the connection of their grumbling of the mouth to their stumbling of their soul. Before it was over, many that followed Jesus would pull back and leave. *John 6:66* As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.
- One might think that grumbling does not hurt anyone, but it always does. It spreads from person to person, from house to house. Often there are many that end up not in the kingdom of God because of the grumbler. The grumbling leads to STUMBLING with God’s people.

Grumbling leads to Crumbling.

- *Philippians 2:14-16* Do all things without grumbling or disputing;¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.
- This is being written in conjunction of putting others ahead of you, for that is the nature of fellowship, the building up of one another. When we are grumbling, the core relationships that we have in and out of the church are eroded. Like a foundation crumbles under an unmaintained home, the foundation of fellowship and friendships are crumbled under the neglect of that foundation. Grumbling leads to CRUMBLING of core relationships in the church. Positive reinforcement always trumps negative griping.

Positive Always Works Better

A city in the Netherlands had a problem with litter. The sanitation department tried doubling the littering fine and even increasing the number of litter agents who patrolled the area, but to no avail. Then someone suggested that instead of punishing those who littered, they could reward people who put garbage in trash cans. A plan to devise a trash can that could dispense coins when litter was inserted was rejected as too expensive. But it led to another idea: the sanitation department developed a trash can that played a recording of a joke when refuse was deposited! Different cans played different kinds of jokes, and the recordings were changed every two weeks. Citizens went out of their way to put garbage in trash cans, and the streets were clean again.

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Grumbling leads to Mumbling.

- John 7:11-12 So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, “Where is He?”¹² There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, “He is a good man”; others were saying, “No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray.”
- They were saying varying things to others about the Christ. Some things were true and some were not. One thing for sure, the grumbling fueled the mumbling of the people.
- We are a church family on the move for Christ. If a couple of people choose to take the path of grumbling, it will lead to mumbling and division. Christ designed the church and the Christians thereof to interact with one another and not against each other. Grumbling leads to MUMBLING of words that are ever so difficult to take back.

Grumbling leads to Bumbling

- Luke 5:29-32 And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other *people* who were reclining *at the table* with them.³⁰ The Pharisees and their scribes *began* grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?”³¹ And Jesus answered and said to them, “*It is* not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.”³² “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”
- Jesus was trying to lead tax gatherers and sinners to Him, but the Pharisees and scribes had to grumble about it. You think they would have been thrilled for people to seek to make their lives better, but they did not. They were acting like BUMBLING fools.
- When we allow grumbling to enter into a thriving church, we also will begin to act like BUMBLING fools. Our job is to focus on converting souls for the kingdom of God. Satan will try anything possible to make sure that does not occur. His number one lesson of choice tends to be grumbling. Often this occurs because of not focusing on what we are to be doing, hence inactivity breeds grumbling and brings forth BUMBLING.
- Charles Spurgeon once wrote: A heavy wagon was being dragged along a country lane by a team of oxen. The axles groaned and creaked terribly, when the oxen turning around thus addressed the wheels, "Hey there, why do you make so much noise? We bear all the labor, and we -- not you -- ought to cry out!" Those complain first in our churches who have the least to do. The gift of grumbling is largely dispensed among those who have no other talents, or who keep what they have wrapped up in a napkin.

Grumbling leads to Humbling

- Numbers 11:1 Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the LORD; and when the LORD heard *it*, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed *some* of the outskirts of the camp.
- Numbers 14:36-37 As for the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land and who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing out a bad report concerning the land,³⁷ even those men who brought out the very bad report of the land died by a plague before the LORD.
- 1 Corinthians 10:7-10 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY.”⁸ Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.⁹ Nor let us

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try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.¹⁰ Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

- Rest assured that grumbling leads to HUMBLING. The children of Israel knew this better than anyone because they were constantly grumbling and constantly being humbled.
- We as a church have an opportunity to be blessed or cursed by our behavior. If we ever choose the path of a grumbler, God will humble those souls with natural and applied consequences. If you want a miserable life, grumble and watch your joy fly out the door.

There is no room for stinkin' thinkin' in the kingdom of God.

The Recipe for Grumblers

1) Reprove them

- 2 Timothy 4:2 “preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.
- The Grumbler's grumbling must be met with disapproval!

2) Reject them

- *Titus 3:10-11 Reject a factious man after a first and second warning,¹¹ knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.*
- If they continue in that path it should lead to discipline on a church level.

3) Restore them

- Galatians 6:1 “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness...”
- Once they are willing to admit and put away their grumbling, then warmly bring them back into the fold.