

Gripe, gripe, gripe!

Numbers 11-14

THE ISRAELITES SHOULD HAVE been the most grateful people who ever lived. They had been miraculously delivered from slavery. They left with unexpected riches showered on them. They were following one of history's greatest leaders to a land flowing with milk and honey.

But instead of overflowing with thanksgiving, it seemed everyone in the caravan was griping about something. "The people complained about their hardships" (11:1). The rabble complained that they were tired of the same menu every day. "We have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna," they whined (11:6).

Even Moses complained about the pressures of leadership. "LORD, Why have you put the burden of all these people on me?" he moaned (11:11). Joshua complained that spiritual competitors were threatening Moses' position (11:29).

Ten of the 12 spies who checked out the Promised Land complained that the opposing armies were too numerous and powerful to be defeated. The Israelites' assignment was impossible! That night, all the people grumbled against Moses, Aaron, God, and anyone else who would listen. "If only we had died in Egypt!" they wailed (14:1, 2).

No wonder God's patience finally

ran out. He judged them severely for their incessant complaining. Many were killed with a plague. Most were sent into the wilderness to wander aimlessly for 40 years.

The New Testament warns, "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were . . . We should not commit sexual immorality as some of them did . . . And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel" (1 Corinthians 10:7-10). That's a sobering passage! Idolatry, adultery, and complaining are grouped together in this list of sins.

Are you a complainer? Do you find yourself griping about the two percent that's wrong with your church, job, children, mate, and neighbors, ignoring the 98 percent that's good? If you're saying to yourself, "You don't understand! My situation is different—you can't know what I'm dealing with," chances are you're a really gifted griper. You do it so well, so often, that you don't even think about it. It just comes naturally.

But no one likes to be around a constant complainer. You never hear someone say, "Let's go over to Tommy's tonight. I just love to hear him gripe!" No, just the opposite is true. Oh, sometimes you can get quick attention by complaining; but it doesn't wear well. People really don't want to hear it, so

the griper eventually leads a lonely life.

God doesn't want to hear it, either. Constant griping is an insult to his grace and generosity. What more could he do for you than what he has already done? When you ignore the 99 percent of life that's good and focus on the miniscule that's negative, it tries his patience and eventually incurs his wrath.

Learn a lesson from the Israelites. Don't be a "gripeaholic" any longer! Determine to break the addiction. Begin today. Stop griping and start praising God for his goodness. Ask the Lord to help you. A chorus says, "I get lifted up when I praise him." When you give thanks instead of griping, your spirit is lifted and people are attracted to Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:14 says, "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe." ■

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Day by Day With the Bible

Use this guide to read through the Bible in 12 months. Follow Bob Russell's comments on the highlighted text in every issue of THE LOOKOUT.

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Day 4 Matthew 23:1-12
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 Numbers 12-14

Day 6 Matthew 23:25-39
 Romans 6:1-14
 Psalm 55
 Numbers 18-20

What Do You Think?

1. What is the last thing you complained about?
2. What will you do this week to become more of a praiser and less of a complainer?