

Complain, Complain | Linda Manes

What I miss in life when I focus on criticizing.

"The tests prove you have myasthenia gravis," the doctor said. I'd never heard of the disease, a rare, autoimmune disorder that causes weakening of the muscles. It had been less than two years since my diagnosis of hyperthyroidism and my marital separation. I felt overwhelmed, disappointed, and thought, *Where is God?*

I blamed God for all my problems and felt he was withholding prosperity from me. I complained about everything from not having enough time to the cost of gas. Criticism became part of my everyday language.

No one seemed to have the same challenges as me, which added to my crankiness. One day I phoned a friend and grumbled about the latest things I thought were wrong in my life. After I rambled on for several minutes in pity, she said, "You need to learn how to keep your mouth shut."

How could she say this to me? I thought. *She obviously doesn't understand what I'm going through. If she had the same problems as me, she'd complain too.*

Those Grumbling Israelites

My anger and complaints toward my friend grew, until one day when I was studying the Israelites' journey through the desert. And it hit me. They complained for 40 years and never saw the Promised Land. Although God had performed many miracles in the wilderness, they refused to trust him.

As I pondered the Israelites' experience, I realized my complaints weren't only negative words, they were grumbings against God. He's much bigger than any problem I face, and in his strength I can overcome anything. When we complain, it lets God know we don't trust him. As with the manna and quail, I was graciously given the necessities in life. After all, I had a job, food, and clothing, but I was too busy looking at the bigger problems.

So I decided to give up complaining. Now I carefully check my words to see if they're grumbings. I renew my mind daily by giving thanks. If the weather is bad, at least I'm able to see another day. If my boss gives me a project at the end of the day, at least I have a job. If my home is in need of repairs, at least I have a house. Recently, I joined a church 45 minutes from my home. As I noticed myself beginning to grumble over the distance, I shifted my words to say, "If the Lord wants me there, then I know my spiritual needs will be met." The more confidence I have in God, the less dissatisfied I feel.

The Scriptures declare, "True godliness with contentment is itself great wealth" (1 Timothy 6:6). I was wrong to think I had reasons to complain. I thought about how ungrateful my children seemed whenever they moaned about the things they didn't have or couldn't do when they had so much to be thankful for. If my situation had been different—health, a successful marriage, and lots of money—I still would have complaints.

God's promises in his Word can be mine if I have the right attitude. When complaining is present, faith is not, and the Bible declares it is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6). Whatever I'm faced with, God is Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord who provides.