

This Commonplace Sin Can Destroy Your Relationship With God

Complaining is dangerous business. It can damage or even destroy your relationship with God, your relationships with other people and even your relationship with yourself.

It's easy to complain. We likely don't realize how much we do it, and I believe it's one of the most challenging things to overcome.

Philippians 2:14 (NKJV) says, "Do all things without complaining and disputing." That's a pretty clear command. And not something anyone can do in their own strength.

Think about what you're talking about.

It's important to understand that every word you speak has some kind of effect. Proverbs 18:21 says that our words have the power of life or death in them. In other words, the way we speak really does matter. So it makes sense that we should avoid complaining at all cost.

I think of complaining as the enemy's language. When we do it, we open the door for him to come into a situation and cause trouble. On the other hand, praise and thanksgiving is God's language.

Like I said before, it's easy to complain. There are many things that happen every day that we could murmur about if we let ourselves go there. But they really aren't worth the effort it takes to get upset and gripe about it.

For example, we travel a lot and stay in a lot of hotels. I like to take a hot bath to relax before speaking at our conferences. Once when I went to fix my bath, I discovered

there was no hot water. So I called the front desk to see about getting hot water, but they weren't able to fix the problem when I needed them to. And later, I learned that my room was the only room in the hotel that didn't have hot water!

Now, I could have gotten all upset about this at the time. But God helped me to relax and resist the temptation to get upset. And the truth is, complaining wouldn't have changed anything—it would have just made the situation harder.

Check the attitude of your heart.

Complaining comes from an ungrateful, prideful attitude of the heart. It causes us to feel that we shouldn't be inconvenienced or have bad things happen to us.

It's easy for us to think, *Why are you making such a big deal out of it?* when someone else is inconvenienced or struggling. But when we have to deal with the pain ourselves, it's a different story. That's when we say, "Why is this happening to me?"

Many people in the Western world are spoiled by the conveniences of our culture. We're used to instant gratification, getting what we want when we want it. We don't like discomfort or sacrifice. We don't want anything to be hard. This causes us to have an immature, selfish perspective of difficult situations and say things we shouldn't say.

I've learned that there's a better approach: Look for the treasure in every trial.

The truth is, I've done most of my spiritual growing during the hardest and most painful times of my life. The trials of life have caused me to press in to God. And as I've done that, He's changed me. He's helped me to develop an attitude of gratitude and humility, which has brought real freedom into my life.

What's real freedom? Real freedom is being able to not have my way and still be just as happy as if I did.

Trust God throughout the process.

It's a difficult process getting to the point of having real freedom. But whatever it takes to get there, it's worth it! We just need to accept that gaining spiritual maturity is going to hurt. Growing up in God is not comfortable, and there are times that sacrifice is required. There will be times when God will ask you to do things and you'll feel that you just don't have the strength to do them—but whatever God tells us to do, He always gives us the grace to do it!

Something else that helps me is meditating on Scriptures about watching the words of my mouth. I like to pray Psalm 19:14a (NKJV): "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord." There are many more, and I encourage you to find them and pray them over yourself often. Daily is a good idea!

Make it your goal to have a constant attitude of gratitude. Resist the temptation to complain and instead praise and thank God for who He is and all He's done for you. By God's grace and through His strength, you can overcome complaining and live each day with a thankful heart!