



## *Lesson 6: Purity In Our Attitudes*

One of the first Bible verses my children ever had to memorize was **Philippians 2:14** which says, “*Do all things without murmuring and complaining.*” Obedience to parents, teachers, or even God does not count for much when it is done with a bad attitude. God not only wants obedience with the right motives as we studied in our last lesson but with the right attitude as well.

### *The Example of Israel*

God's people, the Israelites, had lived in the land of Egypt as slaves for many years and begged for God's deliverance from their harsh life of bondage. God sent his servant Moses to bring the people out of Egyptian bondage and into the promised land of Canaan. The people saw the mighty miracles which God performed through the 10 plagues He brought upon Egypt: He turned water into blood, sent frogs, lice, and flies in swarms so numerous they infiltrated the houses and covered the people, He struck their cattle and livestock

with disease, covered the Egyptians and their animals with painful boils, sent fire and ice from heaven, covered the land with locusts and darkness, and finally He struck the firstborn of all the land of Egypt except for the faithful Hebrews who had the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. And if that were not enough, the Israelites saw the awesomeness of God at work again as He parted the Red Sea, allowing them to cross on dry land, yet drowning Pharaoh's entire army as they pursued them. Time and time again, God's power and might was demonstrated before His people and yet, they didn't believe Him capable of providing for them or protecting them on their journey to the promised land. They murmured and complained, not once, but numerous times. Read the following scriptures and write down what the Israelites were murmuring and complaining about in each instance:

- **Exodus 15:24** \_\_\_\_\_  
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- **Exodus 16:2-3** \_\_\_\_\_  
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- **Exodus 17:3** \_\_\_\_\_  
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- **Numbers 14:2-4** \_\_\_\_\_  
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- **Numbers 16:8-11** \_\_\_\_\_

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- **Numbers 16:41** \_\_\_\_\_
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- **Numbers 21:5** \_\_\_\_\_
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The Israelites complained about their physical needs such as food and water. Why? Was there any reason to doubt that God Almighty who brought the 10 plagues upon Egypt and parted the Red Sea was somehow unable to provide food and water for His people?

They also complained about the promised land of Canaan. They heard the report from 10 of the 12 spies that there were giants in the land and they instantly thought that they had been purposely brought there to be killed. They were so discontented and upset, they actually proposed all-out rebellion against God by wanting to appoint a new leader to take them right back to Egypt. Psalm 106:24-25 says, *“Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word. But **murmured** in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the Lord.”* They would rather have returned to a harsh life of slavery instead of trusting in God to give them what He had already promised.

Some of the Levites complained about the fact that they weren't priests like Aaron and his sons and it just wasn't fair in their eyes. They wanted to be

important like Moses and Aaron apparently were. After all, why shouldn't some of the others get to be leaders too? They complained when God punished and killed the rebels among them. They were actually upset that God's justice had been carried out against those who had boldly been disobedient and rebellious against Him. They didn't seem to think that their sin should carry any consequences.

And finally, they had the audacity to complain about the food God so mercifully provided for them by calling His manna, "*this worthless bread.*" How do you think God felt as He listened to complaint after complaint against Him?

### ***How Does God View Murmuring and Complaining?***

God had a response to every instance of murmuring and complaining by His people. Read each of the following scriptures and write down God's response:

- **Exodus 15:25-26** \_\_\_\_\_  
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- **Exodus 16:4** \_\_\_\_\_  
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- **Exodus 17:5-7** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **Numbers 14:11-12, 20-23** \_\_\_\_\_

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- **Numbers 16:30-35** \_\_\_\_\_
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- **Numbers 16:44-49** \_\_\_\_\_
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- **Numbers 21:6** \_\_\_\_\_
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Notice that a progression takes place in God's responses to His people's sin of murmuring and complaining. At first, God is merciful and provides the things which they feel are lacking although He does say He is testing them. Testing them how? He wants to see if they will be faithful to Him and walk in His ways. He wants them to have implicit trust in Him and know that He will do exactly what He says He will do. If the Israelites had had the proper attitude, they would have done just that. They would have thanked God and praised Him for His mercy and providential care. Instead they were not thankful for what He provided and refused to trust in Him. As the complaining continued, God's patience and long-suffering reached their limit and punishment occurred. The earth opening up to swallow men alive, fire coming down from heaven to consume, serpents biting the people, and a deadly plague which kills thousands for murmuring and complaining may seem extreme, harsh, and cruel, but they are not. When the Israelites

murmured and complained, it was not just a little whining every now and then about what they had to eat or how long the trip was taking. God saw their hearts and what He observed was not pretty and certainly not pure. He saw hearts that were filled with ingratitude, hearts that trusted in themselves and not in God, hard hearts that were stubborn and willful and rebellious, hearts that had no reverence, respect, or love for their Lord. The Israelites should have kept in mind that “grumbling leads to stumbling”.<sup>3</sup> Their murmuring and complaining led to serious sin on their part followed by severe consequences from the Lord God. They could have stopped all of this in its tracks if they had guarded their hearts against complaining by filling it with thankfulness instead.

### *An Attitude of Gratitude*

How can we guard ourselves against developing the habit of murmuring and complaining? A heart that is discontent and murmurs is one that is ungrateful. Developing an attitude of gratitude is a natural remedy for murmuring and complaining. A thankful person is a contented, happy person. She focuses on what she *does* have rather than what she does *not* have. She chooses to count her blessings rather than make a list of everything that's missing from her life. She chooses to see the glass half-full rather than half-empty and she chooses to see roses on thorns rather than thorns on roses. Did you notice how many times the word

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“choose” is used? Being thankful is a conscience choice that we must make until it becomes second nature to us. It is also a conscience decision to keep our focus on God rather than our circumstances. When we take our eyes off of God and start looking around us, we can very easily become discontented and the complaining will soon begin. When we take our eyes off of our own circumstances and look to God, our hearts will be overflowing with thankfulness for everything He has done for us and continues to do.

Read each of the following scriptures about thankfulness. Take note of how often we should be thankful, how we are to thank God and what we should thank Him for:

- **Colossians 3:15** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **Ephesians 5:20** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **Psalm 100:4** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **Psalm 106:1** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **Psalm 118:28-29** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

An attitude of gratitude consists of praising God for who He is and what He does for us, being thankful always for all things. It is an attitude that dispels discontent from our hearts and prevents murmuring and complaining.



### *Attitude Toward Others*

Not only is purity in our attitude toward God important, but we must also have a pure attitude toward others. This can be difficult, especially when we are faced with dealing with people who make it hard to get along with them. In **Luke 6:32-33**, Jesus challenges us to love others who are unlovable and to do good to those who may not seem deserving of being treated well. He does this by asking some rhetorical questions. He asks, *“But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.”* He knows how easy it is for anyone, sinner or believer, to love someone who loves you and is good to you. That doesn't require any real effort on our part, does it? But it is so much harder to show kindness and to actually love someone who mistreats us, hurts us, or is



downright hateful toward us. How do we accomplish this? It is certainly not through our own feelings. We will never automatically feel “warm fuzzies” for people like that. It is through choosing to love others and treating them the way God requires us to. He gives us guidelines for this in Romans 12. Take a few minutes and **read Romans chapter 12**. This chapter is a great reminder of how we should focus our full attention on God, offer ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice, and love and treat others in the way He would have us. In verse 9 we are told, *“Let love be without hypocrisy.”* In other words, we are not allowed to fake it! Our love for others must be pure and genuine, just as God's great love is toward us. In verse 14 we are told, *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”* God knows that the temptation for us to lash back at others in anger is strong, but He commands us to rise above those feelings. He wants us to utilize the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23) and instead of anger and cursing, blessing the one who persecutes and hurts you.

**Read Romans 12:17-21.** Write verse 21 here.

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We can never hope to achieve this through our own human nature. Peter tells us in II Peter 1:3-4 that we need to be partakers of the divine nature, that is, be

imitators of God. We need to move beyond what our flesh *wants* to do and reach higher. **Read II Peter 1:3-7.** Peter says we begin with a foundation of faith and then build up from there, adding a brick at a time. Write down, in order, each item we need to add to our faith:

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This is not simple nor a quick fix. Peter tells us in verse 5 that we need to “*give all diligence*” to adding these Christian graces to our lives. It will take hard work and effort, but we are promised in I Peter 1:10, “...*for if you do these things you will never stumble.*”

### ***Conclusion***

In order to be purer in heart, we must be pure in our attitudes both toward God and others. Do not murmur and complain, but develop an attitude of gratitude. Love others without hypocrisy and overcome evil with good.



### ***For Thought or Discussion:***

1. Why is purity in our attitudes so important?



nature according to II Peter 1:3-7?

7. Read Romans 12 every day for the next week and strive to apply its principles to your daily life.

Challenge:

#1 Do you murmur and complain? Be honest! Maybe you don't do it out loud, but do you find yourself doing it mentally? Are you fostering feelings of discontent in your heart? Make a conscience effort to stop this. Every time you catch yourself feeling unhappy about something, stop and think of five things (or more) that you are thankful for and praise God for them. Develop an attitude of gratitude.

#2 Do you have trouble getting along with certain people or loving them as you know you should? Take the time to pray for them each day. It may not change them, but it can help change your attitude toward them. Read Romans 12 when you need help with this.

*Prayer Request:*

Praise the Lord and thank Him for who He is and for what He does for you. Ask Him to help you develop a thankful heart and to put away any complaining and murmuring. Ask the Lord for strength, patience, and love in dealing with others in the proper way, a way that is pleasing to Him.

*Commit to Memory:*

*“Do all things without murmuring and complaining.” ~Philippians 2:14*