

Our Addiction

Most of us, even us “faithful Christians,” are addicted. Our “drug of choice” isn’t Meth, Fentanyl, or even Alcohol- it’s **complaining**. Think about it: Can you go even one day without complaining about something?

The NT is clear about the need to detoxify ourselves from this very addictive, consuming, and destructive “habit”...

- Jas.5:9, “Do not **complain**, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.” The word translated as “complain” is the Greek term **stenazo**, and refers to a “sigh” or “to groan.”
- Jude 16, “These (“ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” from vv.4ff) are **grumblers**, finding fault, following after their own lusts, they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.” Here, “grumblers” comes from the word *goggustes*, which is a *murmurer*- one who discontentedly complains (especially against God).
- Phil.2:14-15, “Do all things without **grumbling** or disputing, that you may 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.” The word translated as *grumbling* is simply the verb form of the noun used in Jude 16, and means essentially the same.

Since they’re all interrelated and interconnected, let’s just lump **complaining, grumbling, murmuring, and groaning** altogether and deal with them as the same general “addiction.”

What causes this “addiction”? There are a few clues in the passages above, especially Jude 16. Note: 1) *fault-finding* in others usually stems from perceived inadequacies in self, so we “feel better” about ourselves by belittling others; 2) *lust* is inordinate or excessive desire(s) that are typically wrong in the first place, so to get our “fix” for these cravings we 3) speak *arrogantly* as if “we” aren’t guilty of the same faults we’re *complaining* about in others; and, 4) *flatter* the person to whom we’re *complaining* about a third party in order to *gain an advantage*. What’s the “root cause” of all these “signs” and “symptoms”? Primarily two things: a skewed and hypocritically entitled view of self, and a general disregard for and disdain of others. Simplified, **we care more for and about “self” than anyone and everyone else**. So we *complain* and *grumble* about everyone and everything that does suit “me.”

How do we “detox” from it? A few things come to mind that will help us (at least I’m going to give them a try!)...

- Remember that “**the Judge is standing right at the door**” (Jas.5:9) and hears and will “**render account**” for “**every careless word**” we speak, Matt.12:36. We may not think our constant *grumbling* and *complaining* is a “big deal” (addicts invariably downplay the seriousness and effects of their addiction!), but it’s obvious from 1Cor.10:10-11 that God sees things differently!

- **Check “Self” and the arrogant and entitled perspectives that distort a clear view of “me.”** Truly seek to emulate Christ by doing *“nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself”* and to *“not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others,”* Phil.2:3-4.
- **Truly strive “to be content in whatever circumstances I am,”** Phil.4:11. “Yes,” I realize Paul was speaking specifically of his *financial circumstances*, but if he learned to be *content “with humble means”* (next to nothing but the barest necessities of life, cf. 1Tim.6:7-8), surely I/we can do so when the simplest matters don’t go to suit me/us rather than resorting to our “drugs of choice”- complaining, grumbling, murmuring.

I don’t intend to minimize or downplay “drug addiction” or its devastating effects by this comparison. But I do see myself (and others) being badly “addicted” to constant *grumbling and complaining...* about virtually everything. *“With it (the tongue) we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men (or at least **complain** about them! PCS), who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing (or **complaining**, PCS). My brethren, **these things ought not to be this way.**”* Let’s kick the *grumbling and complaining* “habit”! (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)