

# Melva's Corner

## COMPLAINING AGAIN?

October 17, 2005

**Bible Text: Lamentations 3:14-26**

**Central Truth: Complaining is always unacceptable. Lamenting or praying is acceptable.**

**“Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the LORD; and when the LORD heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp.” (Numbers 11:1-3)**

**”Then David chanted with this lament ...” (II Samuel 1:17)**

In the Old Testament, complaining or grumbling is obviously not pleasing to God. Yet, lamenting or praying is acceptable. In fact there is a book called Lamentations and a very significant number of the Psalms are laments. At first glance, complaining and lamenting look and sound very similar. So what's the difference? Is there even a difference between the two?

I was in the front yard yesterday when my neighbor came over to chat. I walked her up to the porch as we talked and before I knew it I became an innocent bysitter. That's right, instead of a bystander, I was a bysitter. Well, my neighbor shared with me the fact that she was changing jobs. The conversation began cordially enough but in a few moments she mentioned why she was leaving her old job. The company had hired an outsider to come in and manage her department. As she spoke about it, she became angrier and more animated by the minute. Soon, she was a red-faced fountain of all past hurts, of every slight, and of all the many ways life had failed to live up to her expectations. Like most of us at one time or another, she had personally absolved herself of any shortcomings. All of her problems were the fault of everyone else in the known universe. When she finally left, I sat there with a mixture of both compassion and exhaustion for her personal anguish. Her conversation was one long, bitter complaint.

Soon we will be celebrating our National Thanksgiving Holiday, so let's talk turkey about complaining.

Do most of us complain at one time or another? Yes

Does it help? Not much

Do people feel our personal outrage? Not often

Do bad things happen to good people? Yes

Do we all have issues during some point in our lives? Yes

Do we need to share our pain with someone? Yes

So why is complaining bad?

First, it only focuses on the problem and not on the solution. Second, it runs people off who might be able to help us. Third, it doesn't honor the way God may be working in our struggles and crises. Finally, complaining only keeps the complainer stuck in the hurt.

**SO HOW CAN WE SHARE OUR STRUGGLES WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER IN A GOOD WAY? We can LAMENT or PRAY!**

The lament is a biblical way to express our feelings to God. Lamenting does two beautiful things. First, it gives God the Glory. Second, lamenting honors our truest deepest feelings honestly before God. The lament is a way to express our hurt to others in a way that helps everyone. The lament honors God, honors our hurts, and allows God and others to help us.

Here are two examples that show the difference:

**Complaint:** I never get any appreciation around here, and nobody ever helps me!

**Lament:** I feel really tired and neglected, and I'm doing the best I can for everyone, so how about working with me on this?

**Complaint:** I have so many problems, and God isn't helping me a bit.

**Lament: Lord, I know you are working in my life, but right now I am overwhelmed. Please help me!**

**With a little practice, you and I can learn to lament instead of complain. I challenge you to give it a try. It may even be a way for you to genuinely participate in Thanksgiving not just only on a special day, but everyday!**

**Remember, lamenting always carries with it an element of hope—here is what I mean: “I have become the laughingstock of all peoples, the burden of their songs all day long. He has filled me with bitterness, he has sated me with wormwood. He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; my soul is bereft of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, “Gone is my glory, and my expectation from the LORD.” Remember my affliction and my bitterness, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me. **But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:** The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.” (Lamentations 3:14-26)**

### **Memory Text**

**I believe this memory text is worth repeating this week:**

**“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” (Romans 8:28 NLT)**