

The No Complaining Rule

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

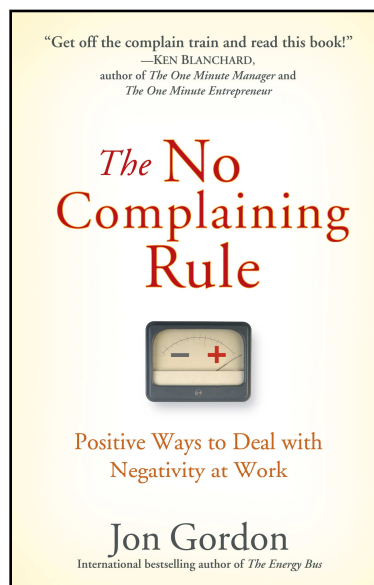
"Do everything without complaining or arguing"
- Philippians 2:14

About This Study Guide

This study guide can be done individually or with a group. We encourage group participation, in a small group of 8-12, to maximize the impact and best utilize the discussion questions throughout the study. You can move through the study guide at a pace that best suits you and/or your group. Each lesson contains leading questions and challenging insights to help you and/or your group dive deeper into the thought, the scripture and its application in your life.

Before you begin, we encourage you to read through the introduction below to allow yourself to understand the basis for which this study was created. We also suggest you have a pen and paper handy as well as a copy of the Bible. Each lesson begins with Key Scriptures to Read that will help you reinforce the Biblical aspect of the forthcoming information and questions for that lesson.

This study was written by Jim Van Allan as an accompaniment to *The No Complaining Rule* book by Jon Gordon. For questions, contact info@jongordon.com or call 904.285.6842.



www.NoComplainingRule.com

Introduction

When studying the Bible it quickly becomes apparent that complaining ways are littered throughout. The story of Moses and the Israelites and their exodus from Egypt and into the desert for 40 years is a classic example. God makes it a point many times to show his dislike toward complaining.

Here is a list of the complaints Moses and God had to hear while in the desert:

- Lacking to trust God at crossing of Red Sea (Exodus 14:11, 12)
- Complaining over bitter water at Marah (Exodus 15:24)
- Complaining in the Sinai Desert (Exodus 16:3)
- Complaining over lack of water at Rephidim (Exodus 17:2, 3)
- Complaining at Taberah (Numbers 11:1, 2)
- More complaining over lack of delicious food (Numbers 11:4)
- Failure to trust God and enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14:1-4)

So here we have the Israelites who have spent 300-400 years as captive slaves and within a short time of being freed they start complaining. They complained about being hungry. They complained about not having enough water. They complained about living in the wilderness. They even said it would be better to be back in Egypt as slaves rather than be free in the desert. Four hundred years of slavery, and they don't appreciate the freedom and blessing they have been given. Finally, God became so frustrated with all the complaining that He threatened their very existence. Turns out God is a big proponent of the No Complaining Rule! I would even venture to say that God originated it.

Fast forward over a thousand years, and yet complaining still exists, as it does today. In John 6:60-63 the disciples begin complaining about the complexity of what Christ is telling them.

Many of his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?" Jesus was aware that his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, "Does this offend you? Then what will you think if you see the Son of Man ascend to heaven again? The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life."

We see evidence of complaining throughout the Bible, and more evidence of how God has dealt with it. In the Old Testament, He may have sent fireballs to Earth as what happened in the Sinai Desert. In the New Testament, He may have openly addressed the complaining to His disciples' faces and called it a lack of

faith. Whatever the case may be, if God doesn't like it then we must find it within ourselves to stop doing it.

Paul even makes it a point to address complaining in his letter to the Philippians. This is a verse I consider as a central piece of this study.

Philippians 2: 14-15 reads:

Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.

It's important to study this verse because we believe what is in the Bible is the word of God. It is there for a distinct purpose, and we need to be working everyday to obey God's commands. Paul is making a separate point to tell other churches not to engage in complaining and negative behavior. Children of God should be celebrating His creation and glory and not complaining and gossiping over things in which they have little control.

Another example of the Lord's view on complaining can be found in *Proverbs 6: 16-19*

There are seven things the LORD detests: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent, a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong, a false witness who pours out lies, a person who sows discord in a family.

Take note especially of the last thing in the list: *person who sows discord in a family*. Let these statements, and especially that last one be a warning to us of what NOT to be like. God is making it a point once again that he does not want His children engaging in this behavior.

This study will help you to do just that. I urge you to use prayer throughout your time with this study to fully ready yourself to begin this process. You'll learn that complaining and negativity are huge reasons why people fall away from Christ.

However, you'll also learn that Jesus loves you so much that he has put in place many verses that will remind us to change our ways and become closer to Him. In doing so, we can serve Jesus better with the fullness of our hearts and help others do the same.

The No Complaining Rule

As mentioned above, this bible study is meant to serve as a companion to Jon Gordon's book *The No Complaining Rule*, which is a fable about a woman named Hope who has a lot to complain about in her life. Her company is struggling; she's having problems at home and health issues as well. It is at the hospital where she meets a nurse who teaches her *The No Complaining Rule*. Hope learns that every complaint represents an opportunity to turn something negative into a positive. She learns to use complaints as a catalyst to identify problems and create solutions. And she discovers a powerful way to better lead her company, her family and her own life. It is recommended that you and your small group complete the book before beginning these lessons.

To summarize *The No Complaining Rule* consider this summary from page 96-97

Employees are not allowed to mindlessly complain to their co-workers. If they have a problem or complaint about their job, their company, their customer or anything else, they are encouraged to bring the issue to their manager or someone who is in a position to address the complaint. However, the employee must also share one or two possible solutions to their complaint as well.

Lesson 1: Why Do We Complain? What is the Cost?

Lesson 2: Dealing With Our Own Complaining

Lesson 3: Surrender

Lesson 4: How To Deal With Complainers

Lesson 5: The Roadblocks to Positive Ways

Lesson 6: Positive Ripple Effects

In this Bible study we will explore how to apply these lessons into our life. Pray to God to ready yourself for this journey with your small group, church, family, or whomever this is being conducted with. It is imperative to realize that when making life changes we cannot do it alone.

Lesson 1

Why Do We Complain? What is the Cost?

Key Scriptures to Read:

John 5:22

1 Timothy 6:17

1 Peter 1:18

Romans 6:23

Why We Complain: Feeling Powerless

Fear. Uncertainty. Habit. Hopelessness. These are all reasons why the average person complains. Ultimately they lead us to feeling completely powerless, and that can be quite draining. But before the power runs out, remember our true strength comes from the One who gave us life. It comes from God. In those helpless and trying times when it feels like we have no power to do anything, the only action that will help the process is to turn to God. Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:13 that “I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.”

When We Complain and Gossip, We Judge Others in the Process

First, let's break down the verb: *To Complain*

According to Dictionary.com:

To express feelings of pain, dissatisfaction, or resentment

To make a formal accusation or bring a formal charge

This sounds a lot like the verb *To Judge*- to decide or settle authoritatively; adjudge. If we are judging people when we complain then there is a conflict with what the Bible says about passing judgment.

John 5:22-23 reads:

In addition, the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge, so that everyone will honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.

The Bible says The Son will pronounce all judgment. If Jesus is the only one to pronounce judgment, we are not even in the same realm to do so. It can be derived that Jesus is a pretty positive person. If not, the opposite is negative, and we know Jesus is not negative. Complaining spreads negativity; which in turn is not spreading the love of Christ.

- **Think of a time you were unfairly criticized or judged. How did it make you feel?**
- **Why do you think God doesn't want complaining?**
- **What is wrong with complaining?**

Uncertainty

1-Timothy 6:17 reads:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

In uncertain times, we want to protect our family and ourselves and money is usually one of the first things we think about. Complaining arises over a lack of money instead of a prayer to Jesus to watch over, protect, and provide for our families. Paul said it best when he urged Timothy to tell others to put their hope in God who will provide for us.

- **Name a few things you are uncertain about in your life right now.**
- **Paul was acting as a mentor to a young pastor named Timothy. Describe the relationship that the two brothers in Christ shared.**

Habit

1 Peter 1:18 reads:

For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver.

We cannot break the habit of complaining by ourselves especially if it's been ingrained in our DNA. A lot of times with habits, we barely realize when we are doing something and it can become part of our life. This requires a lot of self-awareness to realize on a daily basis how you are acting. Enter Jesus. We need Him to help us through this struggle.

- **List a few things you have complained about in the past week.**
- **Peter reminds us that Jesus gave his life to save us from our sins. What does that mean to you?**
- **What do you think are some reasons why people complain? What are some examples of complaints you've heard from others recently?**

The Cost of Negativity

Negativity costs the U.S. economy between \$250 billion and \$300 billion every year in lost productivity according to the Gallup Organization. This is a conservative number because it doesn't take into account the ripple effect of complaining and negativity. That is staggering number for companies and businesses to have to deal with. However, stop and think about the spiritual side of things.

- **How do complaining and negativity affect people's relationship with Jesus Christ?**
- **How about our relationships with the people around us?**

As Christians, we believe in our one true God and savior Jesus Christ. He brings hope to the hopeless and healing to the suffering. The separation between God and us is sin. Jesus is the bridge. As we pursue that relationship with Him, we begin to be transformed and identify the sin in our lives.

Romans 6:23 reads:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul makes it a point to say it is a 'free' gift, so who are we to complain about that? We should accept this gift with gratitude and appreciation.

Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that ninety percent of doctor visits are stress related. Stress will eventually wear you down physically. But do we ever stop and think that by being negative we're being worn down spiritually as well? It should be reiterated that negative behavior is going against Christ because John 14:6 reminds us that: *He is all things positive and bright in this world.*

We need to recognize that complaining is a form of sin especially since we are speaking and thinking ill-will toward others around us. But remember it is written in Acts 13:38: *Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.*

- **Paul tells the Romans that a new life with Christ is a free gift. Discuss with the group ways everyone can start to identify the negativity in their lives.**



Lesson 2

Dealing With Our Own Complaining

Key Scriptures to Read:

Proverbs 1:15

Mark 2: 15-17

Mark 4: 30-32

Positive Techniques

God will always provide us with a way to overcome negativity. We just have to look for it. The Bible says to Ask, Seek and Knock and it will be given. In every moment we have a choice to focus on our complaint or focus on God and the solution. Here are a few ways we can overcome our own negativity and turn a complaining voice into a praising voice.

1. Focus on 'Get To Instead of Have To'

Too often in life we complain that we have to go work, we have to study, we have to sit in traffic, and so on. But we forget that in all of those situations we have been given an opportunity that a lot of other people do not have. Turn these complaints into appreciation to God. We get to go to work when so many people are unemployed, we get to study when a lot of students don't have proper education, and we get to sit in traffic when a lot of people can't drive. Two words change a complaining voice to an appreciative heart.

Identify some of your "have to's." What do you often say you "have to" do? Then turn it into a "get to." Say them out loud.

2. Turning Complaints Into Solutions

God wants us to take initiative. Remember God does feed the birds but the bird has to fly down and find its food. The key is to realize that every complaint represents an opportunity to turn something negative into a positive. Here is an activity to resolve some complaints in your life and take action.

As the chart below shows, list a few of your complaints on the left side of a piece of paper. On the right, list a possible solution or positive action to each complaint. If there is truly nothing that can be done, write surrender in the solution area. Surrender it to God and lift it up in prayer.

<u>Complaint</u>	<u>Solution</u>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

- **Discuss your complaints and possible solutions with your group. See if someone in the group has a solution for your complaint that you have not thought of yet.**

3. Monitoring Our Thoughts and Words

Psalm 104:34 reads:

May all my thoughts be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD.

Another way to continue the No Complaining Rule successfully is to monitor your thoughts and words. Here is where a lot of discipline comes into play. Remember to think first, pray and surrender, and practice self-control. Our thoughts are extremely difficult to control but with Jesus we can do it. Jealousy, rudeness, and pride are very negative qualities that can spread like a wildfire. Instead of touching people's lives for the better, we will only turn them away with those types of negative personality traits. If we want to fully serve God, we need to learn to control what we think about. Our thoughts are often the foundation from which for our actions spring. Aim for a concrete foundation in Jesus rather than a muddy foundation in something else.

- **A large part of the No Complaining Rule is to guard against improper thoughts and saying the wrong thing. Do you believe that thoughts can lead to rash decisions and statements we may later regret? Write down an example of a rash decision or statement you've recently made (share as a group).**

We Have a Choice:
To Be Positive and Free or Be Imprisoned By Our Own Negativity

Romans 8:2 reads:

And because you belong to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

Complaining and negativity truly do imprison us. But like everything God has granted to us, we have a choice in our lives. After the choice is made, we then have to completely turn ourselves over to Jesus to help us break our habit of complaining and negativity in order to be closer to Him.

- **Paul writes that Jesus has the power to free us from sin. What were some instances where you've felt trapped by a past sin?**
- **Recall a time when you felt yourself at a crossroads in the decision making process. What feelings surfaced? Do you see a change in your decisions now? Are you making choices that are more in alignment with what the Bible says?**
- **Discuss some difficult choices that key people had to make during Biblical times. Are those choices similar to the choices we face today? Why? Why not?**
- **Do you ever feel like you don't have a choice? That your circumstances dictate your current reality? Do you ever find yourself suggesting that others just don't understand your situation?**

Lesson 3

Surrendering to God

Key Scriptures to Read:

Philippians 4:6-7

Matthew 11:28

Letting Go

Philippians 4:6-7 reads:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

We have to learn that there are things in this world that are out of our control. That's just the way it is. There's no understanding it to a point. The No Complaining Rule, as adopted from the Bible, teaches us to use a solution-oriented approach when experiencing difficult situations. Before we can even approach a situation, we need to surrender that situation and all the problems along with it to God. He's ultimately in control and when we seek His will and let the final outcome reside in Him, we can remove the anxiety and stress that creates the negativity in our lives. This can't be done overnight, and it's important to remember that. There's a huge differences between knowing and doing.

Surrender involves an immense amount of thought, self-control, and prayer. When you surrender something that burden and fear is released from you and put in God's hands; which is how He wants it. Matthew 11:28 explains- "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" Surrender allows your mind to think clearer so we can hear God's voice to help us to find those solutions. Bear in mind that the solution may not appear on our timeline. True surrender is letting go and trusting God to handle it, in His perfect timing, not necessarily our own. We can tent to want an answer, a solution NOW but often God is calling us to be patient, to learn and grow as he matures us or guides us into the next phase. Trusting God and letting go means doing it completely.

- **Why do we hold on to our problems so much?**

- **Do you have trouble letting go?**

- **Paul's words aim to bring comfort to the Christians in Philippi. What do you feel were the initial reactions to what Paul had to say?**

Going back to Exodus, we saw how the Israelites were so full of complaints and so empty on faith while wandering through the desert even though God was providing for them directly. They were so connected to their old lives that it didn't allow them to fully trust God. Dr. Chuck Missler of the Koinonia Institute said, "it took a few hours to get them out of Egypt but it took them 40 years to get Egypt out of them."

Stepping Out of Our Comfort Zones

Exodus also demonstrates how many of the Israelites would have chosen to go back to Egypt where they were comfortable but full of complaints instead of venture toward the Promise Land. God removed His people from their comfort zones and promised them deliverance. However, their complaining showed a symptom of their attachment to Egypt and the status quo. They were more willing to return to their negativity than pursue God and His positive spirit because it was uncertain to them.

God will take each of us out of comfort zone in order to do something new and mold us into the kind of person He can use to impact the world. Instead of running back to where you came from, trust that God has delivered you here for a reason.

- **Why is it so difficult to step outside of our comfort zones? What can we do to make the process a better experience?**
- **Have you ever felt connected to an old memory, experience, or regret you once had? Give an example.**
- **What is it that is holding you back? Fear? Uncertainty?**
- **Do you feel like God is calling you to move towards something great but you find yourself hesitant to respond?**

Some complaints are valid. As we read Numbers 11:11, we see that the Israelites murmured and complained so much that it wearied Moses ***“and Moses said to the LORD, ‘Why are you treating me, your servant, so harshly? Have mercy on me! What did I do to deserve the burden of all these people?’”***

The Israelites complained, and then Moses complained. But God responded positively to Moses and negatively to the rest of the people. Why? The people complained to one another, and nothing was accomplished. Moses took his complaint to God, who could solve any problem. Many of us are good at complaining to each other, but we need to learn to take our problems to the One who can do something about them.

- **Do you ever find yourself complaining to those who have no ability to change the situation?**
- **What about God? Do you take your complaints to God? If not, why not?**



Lesson 4

A Few Ways to Deal with Complainers

Key Scriptures to Read:

Mark 2: 15-17

Proverbs 1:15

Numbers 20: 2-12

5 Mark 2: 15-17 reads:

Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. When the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, “Why does he eat with such scum?”

When Jesus heard this, he told them, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”

Jesus has a different take on sinners than Solomon did in the Old Testament. He feels time needs to be spent with these individuals to show them that care and love is given toward them. This is eventually the landing point for all Christians. Once we are strong enough in our faith, we can turn to others and lend a helping hand. However, to get to that point we need to be totally focused on changing our own ways first.

- **Solomon warns us to stay away from those who will entice us. Do you view this as a contradiction to what Christ said? Why? Why not?**

Proverbs 1:15 reads:

My child, don’t go along with them! Stay far away from their paths.

There will be times in our journey where people will attempt to sidetrack us or bring us down. Becoming more positive and avoiding complaining can sometimes isolate those who feel their negativity and complaining is just. It’s important that, as we grow in Christ and strengthen our own positive response, we guard ourselves against the negativity of others. We must be on constant guard to not let the naysayers and negative voices lead us astray. That’s not to suggest we shouldn’t extend the love of Christ to these individuals and try to help them when we can but we have to be mindful of when to move on. This especially true when we are breaking the negative habit ourselves.

- **Name some complainers in your life, and list some ways you can positively deal with them.**
- **Discuss the importance of surrounding yourself with a positive people and positive environments.**

In Numbers 20: 2-12, the people were once again complaining to Moses about a lack of water. God appeared to Moses and told him to speak to the rock and water will appear. Moses went and struck the rock twice with his staff as water poured out. God told him he would not be allowed passage into Israel because Moses did not trust God enough to demonstrate His holiness.

- **It's apparent that the constant complaining of the Israelites caused Moses to become disgruntled and angry. Name a few times when you've felt pulled down by other's complaining and negativity?**

Practice Gratitude

Colossians 3:16 reads:

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom He gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

Once the No Complaining Rule is in full effect, it is our job to continue down the positive road. Practicing gratitude and counseling others with Christ's wisdom as Paul writes is one way you can deal with other people's negativity. Paul is perhaps one of the great examples on how to lead a Christ-like life with his undying faith toward God. Paul kept going through all the negativity to promote the Good News. We can take a strong lesson from Paul's life on how to treat people. We have the ability to become nurturer's and encouragers for our friends, families, co-workers, and more. By using Jesus' words and wisdom, we can help anybody through anything...without complaining about it. We can help others to see the drawbacks of complaining and the upsides of surrender, prayer, and finding solutions through God.

- **When we counsel other people during their time of need, why do we do this? For them? For God? A Combination?**

Make Sure The Frequency of Positive Interactions Outweigh Negative Ones

1 Peter 3:8 reads:

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

One way to avoid negativity and complaining is by merely following Peter's words. We are on this planet to serve God in every capacity especially when dealing with people around us. A harmonious neighborhood will breathe nothing but positive energy and will flush out the negativity. Like-minded groups tend to stick together. When treating others with respect and love, the frequency of positive interactions should increase. Think to yourself, what would Jesus do in this situation? Would He yell at someone in traffic? Would He talk bad about someone behind his or her back? The answer is No and No. He spent His precious time on Earth making positive interactions with people, forming relationships, helping others, and dedicating his efforts to the Father. We know we can't become Jesus, but we should aim to be more like Him.

- **Part of the No Complaining Rule is using a positive demeanor when caught in various situations. Focusing in on it intentionally to a point where it becomes a habit and a natural response. Name a few times when this would be most effective.**



Lesson 5

The Roadblocks to Positive Ways

Key Scriptures to Read:

Mark 4: 35-40

Matthew 14:25-32

Staying Positive when facing Negativity

Mark 4: 35-40 reads:

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

It's inevitable. Our old ways make it a point from time-to-time to sneak up on us and try to impede our progress as we change. Even though we may sit in the company of God, doubt and fear will still try and creep in. No one goes through life untested, but this is where our faith comes into play. When these roadblocks appear, our faith needs to trump the other feelings that try and steer us away. There are many forces in this world that do not want us becoming closer to Jesus. Will you give in? Or will you fight back with the love God has given us?

- **What was the first mistake the disciples made when the squall hit their boat?**
- **Why did Jesus still choose to help these men even though their faith was not strong?**

Matthew 14:25-32 reads:

During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

In a very similar incident as Mark 4, this time the disciples see Jesus walking on the water. As Peter approaches Him, he senses the wind, becomes afraid, and begins to sink as he looks away.

Look at this from your life. We become stronger in our faith but as soon as problems arise in our families, jobs, etc, we immediately become afraid and distance ourselves from God as we try to deal with the issues on our own. We take our eyes off of Christ and begin to sink. Jesus might be saying to us, 'You of little faith.'

As it pertains to the No Complaining Rule, even right in the middle of watching what you say and think, each time a complaint might arise you have a choice: to attend to it or to dismiss it. There are reactions to every action we make, and it can be very easy to slip back into our old ways.

- **Even though it may seem so simple to choice life and faith, why do so many people struggle with it?**
- **Have you ever been in a situation where you took your eyes off Jesus and began to sink? What happened?**
- **The No Complaining Rule is about cutting through our own and other's negativity to become stronger, wiser and better. List some roadblocks you might experience as you begin the No Complaining Rule.**

Lesson 6

Positive Ripple Effects

Key Scriptures to Read:

Matthew 5: 14-16
Romans 12: 1-2
Deuteronomy 31: 8
1 Peter 2: 11-12

Be a Light to the World

Matthew 5: 14-16 reads:

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

God wants us to be a positive influence on everyone we come in contact with. As a whole, the Church must be a body that does good deeds, cares for the needy, and acts as role models to other people. In difficult situations, we must rise above the complaining and show others how to do the same by our actions. We must show other people that it is possible to stay positive and faithful in negative times and that there is one true God that is with us.

- **Can you think of some times when you have been called to be a role model to others?**
- **Often being a positive example is easier said than done. It starts by realizing that you are an example of Christ to those who do not yet know Him. Thinking of it that way, does that impact how you think of being an example?**
- **Do you think being a role model means “fake it till you make it” or being open and honest with others about your struggles, all the while helping them overcome their own?**

Romans 12: 1-2 reads:

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

God wants our bodies and actions to be a living sacrifice to Him. If we act appropriately and in good faith, those around us will feel a positive ripple effect. Have you ever walked past someone and saw them smile at you? What was your immediate reaction? To smile back I hope. Those around us can feel our energy and so on forth. Jesus encompasses everything that is good and pure in this world, so why not spread that side of life. Church on Sundays should not be the only time we worship and honor God. By not complaining, and influencing others to do the same we are worshipping him in that process.

- **What are some other ways we can worship God in our day-to-day lives?**
- **Who are some people in our lives we can be living role models to?**

1 Peter 2:11-12 reads:

Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

Staying away from sin will ultimately help the process of being a role model to others. It's sometimes difficult to remember that we actually are “temporary resident,” on Earth as Peter put it. We have such a short amount of time in life compared to our lives in eternity. Why not spend that short amount of time doing good with it, spreading joy and love, and appreciating the gift of life that God has given you.

- **Why is it often hard to avoid the “worldly desires” that Peter speaks of above?**

Deuteronomy 31:8 reads:

Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.

It's really that simple. It may be unpopular at times to stand up in the middle of a negative environment and be the only source of positive energy. However, remember what Moses teaches in the above scripture. Remember what he went through in the desert for 40 years. He had to stand up in the middle of negative criticism and evil thoughts constantly to be a role model and a leader. He had to start a positive ripple effect every chance he got. No matter if one person, twenty people, or no persons listen to you, that is what God wants. For you to remember He is there, and stand up when He calls you to. Will you be ready?

- **Have you ever stood up for what was right in the midst of others who didn't? Explain.**
- **Are you willing to start a Positive Ripple Effect today in your own lives?**
- **How will you begin?**

Pulling It All Together

We discussed many important topics in this Bible study and now it is up to you to take the next step. Remember the reasons why complaining arises (uncertainty, fear, powerlessness) and start to monitor them in your own life. When starting your own personal No Complaining Rule, remember to turn complaints into solutions and focus on the positive aspects of life ("get to" instead of "have to"). We also need to start surrendering our problems and worries to God, on a daily basis, so we may live out our purpose of being role models in life and bringing honor to Him. We will encounter many complainers, and it is up to us to make sure we are strong enough in our own faith that we can help show these people the way. Ultimately though, it's important to surround yourself with a positive and loving environment to strengthen your faith. Jesus teaches us to stay positive and turn to Him in negative times. When the storms rise, don't panic but call on Him. In the end, He wants us to start a positive ripple effect on others around us. Being a living sacrifice to others is a great task in God's eyes.

Prayer will be your biggest asset as you move through the world and make decisions. It is a direct line of communication to God and should not be taken for granted. God listens when we pray, but the response comes in His perfect timing.

Luke 9:10-11 reads:

Jesus said: “And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.”

So keep knocking, keep asking, keep seeking. Jesus told us from His lips alone that ‘everyone who seeks, finds.’ Persistence goes a long way with God, and He will recognize and bless you for it. If you seek out the positive versus the negative, that is what you will find. If it means a lot to you then rest assured it means a lot to God. Remember when you are complaining you are separate from God. When you are praising and praying, you are one with God.

Think about any relationship you may have had. If you meet someone, form an instant connection, become friends, all is well right? You chit chat about life and get to know each other a little bit, see a movie, watch a game, go shopping. But then things get busy. Life gets busy with work, a boyfriend or girlfriend, family, school, job, etc. You keep in touch sparingly and maybe meet for a quick lunch every now and then. Rarely do you visit with each other on the weekends though or make plans anymore. Life goes on normally and now you hardly talk to the person. Not because they did anything mean or hurtful to you but you just got too busy to be with them. They leave you phone messages every now and then asking to catch up and you always tell yourself you’ll call them back but you don’t. Eventually the relationship will drift away.

This is what happens with God sometimes. We hit it off with Him right away but then life gets busy. We start to consume ourselves with our daily affairs instead of with HIM. So when the problems pile up on us, we are not giving them to the Lord to deal with. We are trying to deal with them ourselves and hence they pile up.

God Will Take You Places That Will Shock You

Exodus 14:10-18 shows how God told Moses to bring the Israelites to the Red Sea for escape. They complained and murmured that they would surely die here. However, God had other plans as the Red Sea split into two allowing safe passage across and swallowing the pursuing Egyptians.

It may surprise you at first what God wants you to do and where he will take you when dealing with problems. Don’t complain. Trust that He has a plan. We can only take ourselves so far but God can take us the entire way. Moses and the Israelites raced to the Red Sea by foot but without faith the sea would have never parted. Moses had to reassure them with his faith that it would work. Trust in God.

Jesus loves you and He will be with you every step of the way. Call on Him to help guide you through every situation and watch as your relationship will grow like you've never imagined. Spend time with Him regularly in prayer and in His word, the Bible. He has something to say, every day.

From *The No Complaining Rule*, p.117:

She knew that she could never stop bad things from happening but decided that from now on she would turn her complaints into solutions and her misfortune into fortune; and she would teach her employees and family to do the same. She pulled a notepad out of her glove compartment as her car was waiting at a red light to make the left turn into the hospital and wrote down some notes to share with her daughter Lauren:

- 1) Trust in a bigger plan
- 2) Find strength
- 3) Failure today leads to success tomorrow
- 4) The worst event in life is often a catalyst for the best
- 5) Positive or negative. The choice is ours.

Share this Bible Study Guide with Others!

You can freely forward this document in printed or electronic (PDF) form or invite others to download their own copy at:

www.jongordon.com/ncrbiblestudy.html

The No Complaining Rule by Jon Gordon is available anywhere books are sold and online at www.NoComplainingRule.com

