**Don’t Sin by Grumbling**

1. In Ex 14:10-12 all it is recorded that the Israelites did was ask three questions and make an observation. Was that really grumbling?

2. In Ex 15:24 was that grumbling?

3. In Exodus 16:3 how does this grumbling differ from Ex 15:24?

4. In Ex 15:8b-9,11, was their grumbling excusable?

5. In Ex 16:13-15, what could this manna be?

6. In Ex 17:2-4,7 what had the people learned about God’s provision?

7. In Ex 17:7 and 1 Cor 10:9-10, what is “testing the Lord”, and how is that different from just grumbling?

8. What do Ex 14:10-12, 16:3; 16:20,27 show about the people’s following of God?

9. In Ex 23:20-23,27 what did God promise the Israelites? However, what was the condition in Ex 23:21 and 24:8b?

10. In Ex 32:1,9 what is the relationship between grumbling and being stiff-necked?

11. In Num 14:1-4 the people gave the same grumble again after the spies returned. What was the result in Num 14:22-23,29?

12. In Num 16:1-3, how does grumbling lead to revolt against God?

13. What are at least nine things that can keep us from grumbling?

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Some verses on thanksgiving: Leviticus 7:12-15; 7:12; 22:29; 2 Chronicles 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; 23:30; 32:2; Psalm 50:14,23; 56;12; 95:2; 100:4-5; 107:22; 110:4; 116:17; Daniel 2:23; Matthew 14:19; 15:36; 26:26-27; Mark 6:41; 8:6; 14:22-23; Luke 9:16; 22:17,19; 24:30; John 6:11,23; Acts 27:35; Romans 1:21; 14:6; 16:4; 1 Corinthians 10:30; 11:24; 15:57; 16:4-8,34-41; 1 Corinthians 11:24; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 9:15; Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 1:3; 4:6; Colossians 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:9; 5:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Timothy 4:3-4; Hebrews 12:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:18

**Applications on Grumbling**

The Israelites were skilled and experienced grumblers. Sometimes we might be skilled and experienced in sinful things too. While different people might be skilled in different things, let’s look at grumbling today. It is said that “practice makes perfect”. If we are skilled with that, then God’s wants us to stop practicing it, and lose our skill.

Perhaps the Israelites not only saw nothing wrong with grumbling, they were not even sure what they should have done instead of grumbling. The world often has an answer for us: always be positive. Sometimes being positive is good, but sometimes we do need to not sweep the negative under the rug, but bring up the negative so that it can be addressed. There is a place for correction and rebuke, as well as encouragement (2 Timothy 4:2). God asks us to come to Him with our needs, not pretending that we don’t have needs.

For each of these situations, come up with three responses. First an “always positive” response, then a grumbling response, and finally a more biblical response of petition, correction, or rebuke.

1. Your family might die soon of thirst and starvation.

2. An evil leader, Hitler, conquered peaceful Czechoslovakia and Poland.

3. You lost your job that you had for many years. You think it is unfair.

4. Everyone is being robbed by a gang on a train.

5. The Jewish holocaust.

6. ISIS and violent Muslims

7. People who call themselves Christians let you down.

8. On your job, an ally, who claims to be a Christian, you felt betrayed you at work.

9. Somebody who owes you money will not pay you. You are thinking of suing them, but they think they are a Christ, though you have grave doubts.

**Don’t Sin by Grumbling – some brief answers**

(July 23, 2017 version)

**1. In Ex 14:10-12 all it is recorded that the Israelites did was ask three questions and make an observation. Was that really grumbling?**

A: Yes, according to Deuteronomy 1:26-28. Asking questions and making observations is not necessarily good or bad; it depends on the way you ask the question and make your statements. As for the Israelites’ true attitude, they talked about stoning Moses and Aaron in Numbers 14:10.

**2. In Ex 15:24 was that grumbling?**

A: The question itself was OK, but apparently the way it was asked was grumbling and lack of faith.

Grumbling can be about something non-existent or trivial. But grumbling can also be about a real need. This was using grumbling instead of a petition, about a real need.

**3. In Exodus 16:3 how does this grumbling differ from Ex 15:24?**

A: Unlike Exodus 15:24, the statements themselves were bad because they were meant to discourage and dishearten, and question Moses’ leadership.

**4. In Ex 15:8b-9,11, was their grumbling excusable?**

A: No, though by their continued grumbling they might have thought so. I have a theory about their grumbling. My theory is that, in the eyes of the Israelites, their grumbling was not sin but was normal and appropriate. Of course God saw it otherwise. The Israelites were apparently well-practiced as grumbling. Perhaps after being in slavery for 400 years, they could grumble privately, in their language, out of their despair that the Egyptians would do anything to help them.

**5. In Ex 16:13-15, what could this manna be?**

A: This was a miraculous provision from God. There are two other theories, but they have shortcomings.

Some have thought that manna was simply the honeydew excretion of two types of aphids that live they are feed on tamarisk trees. It was sweet, provided carbohydrates, but not any protein or nitrogen (which meat would provide.) However, it is only present in July or August for three to six weeks, and they could not save it.

Lichens which grow on the rock is a second theory. However, like the aphid honeydew, there would be no where near enough lichens to feed all of the people.

So this was a supernatural, not just a natural, provision from God. Furthermore, the manna would get rotten after a day or two. Yet the manna they put in a jar as a memorial was put in the ark in Exodus 16:32-36.

See *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* vol.2 p.402-403 for more info.

**6. In Ex 17:2-4,7 what had the people learned about God’s provision?**

A: After the ten plagues, after the Passover, after crossing the Red Sea, after the water, and manna and quail, after all of that, they pretty much learned nothing.

**7. In Ex 17:7 and 1 Cor 10:9-10, what is “testing the Lord”, and how is that different from just grumbling?**

A: Testing the Lord springs from not trusting God’s provision or trying to put God in a position where you force Him to do something. In 1 Corinthians 10:9-10, God killed some of the people because they tested God and grumbled against Him.

**8. What do Ex 14:10-12, 16:3; 16:20,27 show about the people’s following of God?**

A: They were willing to follow God, but their following God was conditional, not unconditional. If things were not looking well for them, they were willing to turn back to Egypt. Today many want to follow God, but when the going gets tough, they forget the previous oppression and want to go back to Egypt.

**9. In Ex 23:20-23,27 what did God promise the Israelites? However, what was the condition in Ex 23:21 and 24:8b?**

A: God promised that He would drive out the Canaanites before them. Of course if God promised that, then they did not have to worry about that anymore. However, there was a condition: they had to obey, no matter what. God gave a strict warning: in other words, obey God “angel”, He is not going to mess around with your grumbling and conditional obedience anymore.

**10. In Ex 32:1,9 what is the relationship between grumbling and being stiff-necked?**

A: People often grumble because of despair that anything will be done. God did not say anything against the Israelites’ grumbling initially. But even after the plagues, even after crossing the Red Sea, even after the water, and even after the manna they still would not change and believe in their hearts that God would take care of them. They would not believe that God’s way was the best way. They were willing to follow God, as long as they could see that it was best for them to do so. But that is not following God in faith. One might call it “following God in unbelief”.

**11. In Num 14:1-4 the people gave the same grumble again after the spies returned. What was the result in Num 14:22-23,29?**

A: God said that the people treated Him with contempt in Numbers 14:11. So all of their effort and patience wandering so far, would be worthless in their lifetimes. While their children would see the promised land, they would only go down in history as a bad example of grumbling.

They responded to that by having a change of heart, and going up to fight the Amalekites anyway, without God’s help. The Israelites were defeated.

**12. In Num 16:1-3, how does grumbling lead to revolt against God?**

A: We can observe two different things. First, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram revolted, and God destroyed them and their followers. Second, the other people who did not follow them grumbled against Moses and Aaron in Numbers 16:41 for killing the LORD’s people. God was prepared to deal with it by killing all of the Israelites in Numbers 16:45-48. As it was, 14,700 died by plague right then.

**13. What are at least nine things that can keep us from grumbling?**

A: Here are nine things we need to do to reduce our sin of grumbling.

**Have Faith:** The Israelites had a lack of faith: But it was not lack of faith in God’s power. They saw God’s power, but they did not believe God would always care for them; even after He had showed them time and again that He did.

**Trust in God’s provision:** 1 Peter 5:7. But don’t just be passive, pray as Philippians 4:6-7.

**Keeping your eyes on Jesus** Hebrews 12:2-3

**Constantly Praising God, even in the midst of opposition** Jehoshaphat and the army did so, and God won the victory for them. 2 Chronicles 20:1-30.

**Choose to obey God no matter what**, rather than obeying God conditionally

**Obey:** 1 Peter 4:9 says not to grumble. Jesus told the Jews in John 6:43 to “stop grumbling among yourselves”.

**Resolve not to complain:** Philippians 2:14 says to do everything without complaining or arguing.

**Take a jar of manna** (Exodus 16:33-35), in other words, keep a memorial of how God has cared for us.

**Respect for their political leaders:** Proverbs 24:21; 1 Peter 2:17; Romans 13:1-4; Proverbs 24:21

**Respect for God, or fear of the Lord:** Proverbs 1:7,29; 3:7; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:27; 15:16,33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; 24:21; Ecclesiastes 8:13; 12:13; Isaiah 11:2-3; 33:6; Jeremiah 5:22,24; Micah 6:9; 7:17; Zephaniah 3:7; ; Luke 12:5; Acts 9:31

**Be thankful to God:** many verses

Some verses on thanksgiving: Leviticus 7:12-15; 7:12; 22:29; 2 Chronicles 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; 23:30; 32:2; Psalm 50:14,23; 56;12; 95:2; 100:4-5; 107:22; 110:4; 116:17; Daniel 2:23; Matthew 14:19; 15:36; 26:26-27; Mark 6:41; 8:6; 14:22-23; Luke 9:16; 22:17,19; 24:30; John 6:11,23; Acts 27:35; Romans 1:21; 14:6; 16:4; 1 Corinthians 10:30; 11:24; 15:57; 16:4-8,34-41; 1 Corinthians 11:24; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 9:15; Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 1:3; 4:6; Colossians 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:9; 5:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Timothy 4:3-4; Hebrews 12:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:18

**Application**

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For each of these situations, come up with three responses. First an “always positive” response, then a grumbling response, and finally a more biblical response of petition, correction, or rebuke.

**1. Your family might die soon of thirst and starvation**

**Positive:** God is sovereign over all. I am sure whatever happens is for the best.

**Grumbling:** God does not care about this world.

**Appropriate:** Pray: God, please help us. Go to a ministry or relief agency and get food and water. Publicize your need to others. After that, stand against others who cause starvation, such as Stalin, Mao, and Churchill.

**2. An evil leader, Hitler, conquered peaceful Czechoslovakia and Poland.**

**Positive:** “I do not consider Hitler to be as bad as he is depicted. He is showing an ability that is amazing and he seem to be gaining his victories without much bloodshed.” Mojandras [Mahatma] K. Gandhi remark to Rajkumari Amrit, May 1945(1)

**Grumbling:** The allies really messed things up after World War I. Hitler is evil, but there is nothing we can do now.

**Appropriate:** Pray for the oppressed and against the oppressors. If your country is unprepared to respond, start building up your military. Get rid of “positive” leaders such as Neville chamberlain of Great Britain.

**3. You lost your job that you had for many years. You think it is unfair.**

**Positive:** God, if you want me to work, I will just sit and wait for whatever you bring my way.

**Grumbling:** Life treats me unfairly. God allows it to be unfair. I am just not worthy.

**Appropriate:** Ask for a reasons; perhaps it is something you can learn from. Consider that God is having me turn the page to a new chapter in my life. I need to learn whatever I should have learned, pray to God, and find the job God has for me.

**4. Everyone is being robbed by a gang on a train.**

**Positive:** Oh well, we are probably too materialistic anyway, and since it is hard for a rich man to get to heaven this will help people.

**Grumbling:** God doesn’t love me, because He let this happen.

**One response:** On September 2, 2010, the then 35-year-old Bishnu Shrestha after retiring from his Gurkha soldier military service, when he had returned to his homeland Nepal was on his way to Gorakhpur and was travelling in Maurya Express (Hatia-Gorakhpur), when 35 – 40 armed robbers attacked the train near Chittaranjan, West Bengal and robbed the passengers of their valuables (money, jewellery, cellular phones and laptops). According to some reports, when the bandits reached Shrestha, he was ready to give up his valuables, but then the 18 year old girl sitting next to him was grabbed by the robbers, who wanted to rape her. The girl, who knew Shrestha was a retired soldier, appealed to him for help. So he pulled out the large, curved khukuri (knife that all Gurkha soldiers and many Gurkha civilians) carry, and went after the bandits.  
In the narrow aisle of the train, a trained fighter like Shrestha had the advantage. Although some of the bandits had pistols, they were either fake, or mishandled by the frightened robbers. After about ten minutes of fighting in the train aisles, three bandits were dead and many were wounded, and the rest of them decided to drop their loot (200 cell phones, 40 laptops, lots of jewelry, and nearly Rs6.5 lakhs in cash) and flee. The train resumed its journey promptly, in case the bandits came back, and to get medical aid for the eight bandits who had been injured by Shrestha. Shrestha suffered a severe injury to his left arm and required two months of medical treatment to recover his injured hand. …

When the intended rape victim's family offered him a large cash reward, he refused it with the following comment: "Fighting the enemy in battle is my duty as a soldier. Taking on the thugs on the train was my duty as a human being" From <https://www.quora.com/What-makes-Gurkhas-regiment-so-special> 7/1/2017

**5. The Jewish holocaust**

**Positive:** “Looking back on the Holocaust Gandhi stated, “Hitler killed five million Jews. It is the greatest crime of our time. But the Jews should have offered themselves to the butcher’s knife. They should have thrown themselves into the sea from cliffs. As it is, they succumbed anyway in their millions.” He also said that had the Jews committed collective suicide, that would have been “heroism.”” (2)

**Grumbling:** God does not care about the world anymore. Until God does something, we are going to use chicken in the Passover, not lamb.

**Appropriate:** Pray for the oppressed. Don’t be neutral but stand up for the oppressed, which means standing against aggressors, and fighting with your ability. Don’t just turn a blind eye when this happens, but raise awareness, such as in Rwanda, Armenia (before World War II), Nanjing and Manchuria (in World War II), the Khmer Rouge, North Korea today, Christian persecution today in India, Indonesia, etc. and persecution of the 1.1-1.3 million Muslim Rohingya people in Myanmar (Burma).

**6. ISIS and violent Muslims**

**Positive:** All faiths are a gift of God, but partake of human imperfection, as they pass through the medium of humanity. God-given religion is beyond all speech. Imperfect men put it into such language as they can command, and their words are interpreted by other men equally imperfect. Whose interpretation must be held to be the right one ? Every one is right from his own standpoint, but it is not impossible that every one is wrong. Hence the necessity for tolerance, which does not mean indifference towards one’s own faith, but a more intelligent and purer love for it. Tolerance gives us spiritual insight, which is as far from fanaticism as the north pole is from the south. True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith and gives rise to tolerance. Cultivation of tolerance for other faiths will impart to us a truer understanding of our own. (3)

For me the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree. Therefore they are equally true, though being received and interpreted through human instruments equally imperfect.(4)

**Grumbling:** The world is all good except for Muslims, who are all bad. Do not allow any Muslims in the country, like Japan, or persecute them because they persecute others (like Myanmar).

Appropriate:

(1) Cerf, Christopher and Victor Navasky. *The Experts Speak* p.283

(2) http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Repudiating-Gandhian-pacifism-in-the-face-of-mass-murder-449885

*The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (1950) by Louis Fischer. The quote is in the context of Gandhi's argument to his biographer that collective suicide would have been a heroic response that would have "aroused the world and the people of Germany to Hitler's violence".

(3) <https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi>. Young India, (Bulletin), 2-10-1930, p. 2 In: *My God* (1962), [Chapter 13. Pathways of God](http://www.mkgandhi.org/god/mygod/pathwaystogod.html), Printed and Published by: Jitendra T. Desai, Navajivan Mudranalaya, Ahemadabad-380014 India

(4) <https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi>. Harijan, 30-1-1937, p. 407; In: *My God* (1962), [Chapter 13. Pathways of God](http://www.mkgandhi.org/god/mygod/pathwaystogod.html), Printed and Published by: Jitendra T. Desai, Navajivan Mudranalaya, Ahemadabad-380014 India

by Steven M. Morrison, PhD.