

“Letter From M.O.M.”

The **Monthly** newsletter of **Moving On Ministry**

WWW.MovingOnMinistry.com

www.PrisonMinistry.net/movingon

Volume 61 – Sept. 2010 (Published since Oct. 2003)

“I Can Only Imagine”

As you receive this volume of **Letter From M.O.M.**, we have many new writers of articles, we are putting some more of the testimonies of “How God Changes Lives” as well as some of our own written articles. We can truly say that the “high” that many of our inmates have been trying to get through the wrong methods, is being surpassed by those putting God in control of their lives.

Watch our website

www.MovingOnMinistry.com

We are affiliated with International Prison Fellowship

<http://PrisonMinistry.net/movingon>

and Good News Jail & Prison Ministry Volunteer

www.GoodNewsJail.com



Branscombe Richmond and Linda

The intentions of this newsletter are to allow an understanding of jail & prison ministries. It is our intentions to get input from those incarcerated as well as those “free” to visit. Life experiences of the faith and fellowship from those locked up in the facilities are always desired to let others know of the value of “visitation”. I am certain that each of us have many stories of the miracles God has done in our lives.

Our wishes are that we would have a list of supportive churches that individuals might look forward to attending once released.

A list of services, such as housing, employment, and counseling services, as well as some individuals available for friendly fellowship are also much needed items.

God’s Word says if a man stumbles, how can he continue lest there be another to help him up. **Ecc. 4:10**

“For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him [that is] alone when he falleth; for [he hath] not another to help him up.” **Proverbs 24:17**

“Rejoice not when thy enemy falleth, and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth:” **John 11:10** “But if a man walketh in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.”

Please help us with input for this newsletter as we strive to serve God. We appreciate any articles or input.

Addresses to contact Ministry Volunteers

**Moving On Ministry
Chaplain Bob & Linda
P.O. Box 6667
Visalia, CA. 93290**

**Moving On Ministry
Spanish Ministry
P.O. Box 6667
Visalia, CA. 93290**

**Jesus Prayer Ministry
Pas Denise
P.O. Box 7925
Chula Vista, CA 91912**

**Andrea Shannon
P.O. Box 553
Dover, NH 03821**

**God Cares We Care
Christian Pen Friend
P.O. Box 7331
Halcyon, CA 93421**

**Ask for a copy of our complete
“Resource Supplemental Letter”**

For 2010, Bob is doing Bible study at BWDF on Mondays, and Thursdays.

The Sunday after the 2nd Saturday of each month is Chaplain Bob, Chaplain John and Linda’s assigned day for 3 to 5 chapel Services at Corcoran State Prison (“Old” Corcoran). Chaplain John has been cleared and did his first Corcoran services with M.O.M. on 12/13/09, 3/14/10, by himself on 6/13/10, and on 8/14/10.

Linda tries to go every other Monday to the ladies unit 12 at BWDF.

We are still looking at doing some services at C.M.C. San Luis Obispo, Avenal State Prison, and SATF, Corcoran, CA.

M.O.M. Needs

- Finishing tractor repairs
- Pen-pals to write inmates
- Finances & stability
- Testimonies
- Possible sale of Squaw Valley Property (Camp Clarius)
- Development of Tollhouse property (Camp Cripple Creek)
- Development of Nevada property
- Development of Arizona property
- Volunteers for ministry
- Drawings to publish and share

Awaken

Our church, ‘Awaken,’ has started supporting M.O.M. with the providing of stamps for postage. Currently the church provides 200 stamps a month, and we were using about 500, so we are better able to write inmates and send out the newsletters. **PLEASE write a note to Awaken Church to express your thanks for them caring enough to get involved.**

**Awaken Church, Pastor Jarrod
c/o M.O.M.
P.O. Box 6667
Visalia, CA. 93290**

Letters that Express it All

We like to post real life situations, because God works in real lives and He is the one that gives “Eternal Life.” Every week we get many letters that state “I love hearing the testimonies.” There are so many, we cannot publish them all, and the sad part is – people not involved in jail / prison ministry do not get to read the many letters we receive daily (average 2 to 11 each day) and we try to keep up with and answer them.

Read the following letters and “**See Why We Do What We Do.**”

Nowhere to Run; Now Family Healing

Dear Linda and Chaplain Bob,
I’m so happy, I want to scream. Our God is so great. I’m so happy to serve a God that loves me so much. That keeps every promise. A God that takes care of our needs. He even will take care of our wants. My God promised to restore my family. He did just that. I always knew I loved my husband. I just didn’t know how to show my husband. The more I allowed God to work in and through me, the more I fell in love with God. The more I fell in love with God, the more I realize how much in love I am with my husband. I have been so into the Word and God has been teaching me how to show my love. Without the love of God in your life, a person cannot really love cuz the love of God is the only true way to love. I hope this is coming out right on this paper. It took me being nothing but faithful to God. I didn’t say perfect, I said faithful. It’s been 102 long days. My husband told me that he **LOVES ME**. That is something so big to me. I didn’t think that I would ever hear that come from my husband again. As a matter of fact, if it wasn’t for our God, I wouldn’t even have my husband. Linda, thank you for loving God enough to teach me how to stay strong and NEVER give up on our LOVING GOD. You have told me how much you love your husband. You probably thought God gave you the last good man on Earth. He kept one hid back for me. Mine’s the

best ever. Praise God for good Godly men. **Aleisha C.**

NOTE: Remember Alice’s “*Nowhere to Run*” article last month.

Follow-up Challenge

Dear Chaplain Bob & Linda,
As I was reading my monthly newsletter, God put something on my heart. The hours that you put into putting this monthly newsletter together for us inmates to have to read and be **BLESSED** is such an amazing act of **GODLY LOVE**. It does cost, not just your time, but money as well. So here is what I would like to do. I, Alice from unit 12 BWDF, am challenging every inmate in every jail & prison, to donate a book of stamps this month to this ministry, to help them bless us and others. I know for some that might be asking too much. So whatever you can. One time only or 1 stamp only. Even a prayer, if that’s all you can do. Stop and think about this: a 44 cent stamp or a prayer that costs only a little free time, to maybe save a life and bring someone to know **OUR LOVING GOD**. I remember going and spending money to get high just for a little while, and it cost a lot more than 44 cents or a FREE PRAYER. May God bless you all. **Aleisha C.**

NOTE: Alice sent 2 books, so leading the way to the challenge. Last month we had a Corcoran inmate send \$20.00 for “Cripple Creek.”

Giving What I can, to Explain What I Can't

I drew this (see page 16) because its how I feel. I sing the song "Amazing Grace" my chains are gone because its true, although I am sitting behind brick walls, "my chains are gone, I've been set free, my God, my Savior has ransomed me. Like a flood His mercy reigns unending love, Amazing Grace." I know this drawing isn't much, but I'm hoping it can bless others who feel the same way. When you lay it all at His feet, the chains fall off and Satan has no control because "He that is in me is greater than he that is in the world." Thank you for the time, and money, and effort you put into blessing those of us whom you minister to. Sending blessings from BWDF unit 12. **Melinda S.**

p.s. God has saved me and even in the darkest of times, I still see the beauty of life. Thank you again for blessing us.

The Surviving Angel

One night I had a dream. I saw an angel and he lived to tell a tale. I dreamed I saw this angel, but poor thing, he wasn't feeling well. His body bruised and battered like someone just beat him with a baseball bat. His wings were ripped and torn. So I walked right up and asked him how come he looks so worn. He paused with the weirdest look on his face, before saying to me, "I am your guardian angel. Look what you've done to me. These bruises are from shielding you in times that you were ill. The drugs you took so dangerously, I often paid the bill. You see my wings are ripped and torn, a noble badge I wear, shielding and protecting you from evil everywhere. Try to keep in mind, I'm getting old and frail. Each mark has its own story. A deadly destruction . . . destroyed often times. My only wish would be . . . unemployed." Now that you know that, you can't make it totally on your own, never fret or worry, cause you're never left alone.

Juan Rivera

DEAR M.O.M.

I wanted to drop a line to tell you what greatness God is doing through you! You are truly appreciated for being a golden vessel! I know that sending out your newsletter takes resources so I read mine and pass them on to other inmates in the segregation unit of this prison. You've provided an inspiration to the girls and women in this place and we wanted to thank you! God bless you for blessing us.

Love Jessica M., Wetumpka AL

(Just a note from Linda.... how Great is our God!. We never know whos life is being transformed when you do God's will. He already had His plan in motion all along!!! All you have to do is trust and follow.)

THANK YOU JESSICA!!!

M. O. M - **Response to Jerrey B. article** in Volume 58 June 2010

Wow! After reading this passage of God's Word many times and seeing the damage we all do because we think we have the edge on knowledge, I weep for you and those you may hurt by your view on Matt. 18:1-11. Somehow you have tied the unforgivable sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit into Jesus' teaching on sin and its terrible effects.

The warning is for a person whose sin stumbles a child or believer. How that sin or what that sin could or may be has volumes of possibilities. Just as sin has many forms of manifesting itself. To stand in judgment and condemn anyone is to put oneself in place of our Master, Lord and Savior, Jesus. If you or anyone reading this can bear to see this truth, we have hope. If not, we're not really understanding who Jesus is.

Before I speak on the unforgivable sin, please hear this. *Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord! I detest anyone that may practice sin* – the key word here is 'practice'. I have babies, I love them, too. Yet it's not about me or you. We all have Bibles. Let's talk about the unpardonable – unforgivable sin. Let's speak the TRUTH for this seems to be very important to us all.

Read Mark 3:28-30. Here is Jesus saying there is only one unforgivable sin. Do you all believe Jesus? If you do, to teach or use Matthew 18:1-11 and say that this makes an opening for more sins that are unforgivable is ludicrous and says our Lord Jesus is a liar. I'm sure we don't believe that, do we?

Ok, go to Hebrew 10:26-31. Please focus on vs. 26. Sin only becomes unforgivable when one rejects the Holy Spirit and His Testimony of Jesus the CHRIST. Please don't make the blood of our Lord common or cheap by pride or hurt feelings, or even turning your back on the truth to prove a point. Remember, you said you have unshakeable faith. Praise God for that my brother.

So before I close, let's flip back to the gospel of Mark 3:20-27. You have to back up to get the meaning of what Jesus is saying. See, Jesus is coming out of big time miracle working and healing and teaching. If you have time, read Mark 1, 2, & 3. You will see this will clear the air on what Jesus leads to.

Here are some language tips to get more out of your Bibles. Mark 3:30 because they said, he has an unclean spirit. They said is a continual action. Every time Jesus said or did a miracle the scribes would say *He has a devil*. Call a heavenly thing a hellish thing.

Please, brother, there is only one unforgivable sin. That is rejection of Jesus.

I am so pleased to have another (many) soldiers of Christ with me. Join me in prayer for all the children who ever were hurt, for all the people who hurt them. Join with me to seek peace, endure hardship. Join with me in truth and let the angels reap the tares at the end. Matthew 13:36-43.

Everyone who doesn't hate me must see Matthew 13:41 – We never take this place of judgment to condemnation. Don't get it twisted. This is a challenging life. Make a righteous judgment. Love someone today that you never thought you could. That's the good news.

GOOD NEWS is the Lord DIED for the sin of the world, not just mine!

May you find peace and rest and amazing Grace,

Brother Al N. Avenal State Prison, Avenal CA

Subject: God vs. Science

Let me explain the problem science has with religion.

The atheist professor of philosophy pauses before his class and then asks one of his new students to stand.

You're a Christian, aren't you, son?

Yes sir,' the student says.

So you believe in God?

Absolutely.

Is God good?'

Sure! God's good.'

Is God all-powerful? Can God do anything?'

Yes

Are you good or evil?

The Bible says I'm evil.

The professor grins knowingly. 'Aha! The Bible! He considers for a moment. 'Here's one for you. Let's say there's a sick person over here and you can cure him. You can do it.. Would you help him? Would you try?'

Yes sir, I would.

So you're good.....!

I wouldn't say that.

But why not say that? You'd help a sick and maimed person if you could. Most of us would if we could.

But God doesn't.

The student does not answer, so the professor continues. 'He doesn't, does he? My brother was a Christian who died of cancer, even though he prayed to Jesus to heal him. How is this Jesus good? Can you answer that one?'

The student remains silent. 'No, you can't, can you?' the professor says. He takes a sip of water from a glass on his desk to give the student time to relax 'Let's start again, young fella. Is God good?'

Er..yes,' the student says.

Is Satan good?

The student doesn't hesitate on this one. 'No.'

'Then where does Satan come from?'

The student falters. 'From God'

'That's right.. God made Satan, didn't he? Tell me, son. Is there evil in this world?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Evil's everywhere, isn't it? And God did make everything, correct?'

'Yes'

'So who created evil?' The professor continued, 'If God created everything, then God created evil, since evil exists, and according to the principle that our works define who we are, then God is evil.'

Again, the student has no answer. 'Is there sickness? Immorality? Hatred? Ugliness? All these terrible things, do they exist in this world?'

The student squirms on his feet. 'Yes.'

'So who created them?'

The student does not answer again, so the professor repeats his question. 'Who created them?' There is still no answer. Suddenly the lecturer breaks away to pace in front of the classroom. The class is mesmerized. 'Tell me,' he continues onto another student. 'Do you believe in Jesus Christ, son?'

The student's voice betrays him and cracks. 'Yes, professor, I do.'

The old man stops pacing. 'Science says you have five senses you use to identify and observe the world around you. Have you ever seen Jesus? No sir. I've never seen Him.'

Then tell us if you've ever heard your Jesus?

No, sir, I have not.

Have you ever felt your Jesus, tasted your Jesus or smelt your Jesus? Have you ever had any sensory perception of Jesus Christ, or God for that matter?

No, sir, I'm afraid I haven't.

Yet you still believe in him?

Yes

According to the rules of empirical, testable, demonstrable protocol, science says your God doesn't exist... What do you say to that, son?

Nothing,' the student replies.. 'I only have my faith.

Yes, faith,' the professor repeats. 'And that is the problem science has with God. There is no evidence, only faith.

The student stands quietly for a moment, before asking a question of His own. Professor, is there such thing as heat?

Yes.

And is there such a thing as cold?

Yes, son, there's cold too.

No sir, there isn't.

The professor turns to face the student, obviously interested. The room suddenly becomes very quiet. The student begins to explain. 'You can have lots of heat, even more heat, super-heat, mega-heat, unlimited heat, white heat, a little heat or no heat, but we don't have anything called 'cold'. We can hit down to 458 degrees below zero, which is no heat, but we can't go any further after that. There is no such thing as cold; otherwise we would be able to go colder than the lowest -458 degrees. Every body or object is susceptible to study when it has or transmits energy, and heat is what makes a body or matter

have or transmit energy. Absolute zero (-458 F) is the total absence of heat. You see, sir, cold is only a word we use to describe the absence of heat. We cannot measure cold. Heat we can measure in thermal units because heat is energy. Cold is not the opposite of heat, sir, just the absence of it.

Silence across the room. A pen drops somewhere in the classroom, sounding like a hammer.

What about darkness, professor. Is there such a thing as darkness?

Yes,' the professor replies without hesitation.. 'What is night if it isn't darkness?

You're wrong again, sir.

Darkness is not something; it is the absence of something. You can have low light, normal light, bright light, flashing light, but if you have no light constantly you have nothing and it's called darkness, isn't it? That's the meaning we use to define the word. In reality, darkness isn't. If it were, you would be able to make darkness darker, wouldn't you?

The professor begins to smile at the student in front of him. This will be a good semester. 'So what point are you making, young man?

Yes, professor. My point is, your philosophical premise is flawed to start with, and so your conclusion must also be flawed.'

The professor's face cannot hide his surprise this time. 'Flawed? Can you explain how?

You are working on the premise of duality,' the student explains.. 'You argue that there is life and then there's death; a good God and a bad God. You are viewing the concept of God as something finite, something we can measure. Sir, science can't even explain a thought.' 'It uses electricity and

magnetism, but has never seen, much less fully understood either one. To view death as the opposite of life is to be ignorant of the fact that death cannot exist as a substantive thing. Death is not the opposite of life, just the absence of it.' 'Now tell me, professor.. Do you teach your students that they evolved from a monkey?

If you are referring to the natural evolutionary process, young man, yes, of course I do.

Have you ever observed evolution with your own eyes, sir?'

The professor begins to shake his head, still smiling, as he realizes where the argument is going. A very good semester, indeed.

'Since no one has ever observed the process of evolution at work and cannot even prove that this process is an on-going endeavor, are you not teaching your opinion, sir? Are you now not a scientist, but a preacher?'

The class is in uproar. The student remains silent until the commotion has subsided. 'To continue the point you were making earlier to the other student, let me give you an example of what I mean.' The student looks around the room. 'Is there anyone in the class who has ever seen the professor's brain?' The class breaks out into laughter. 'Is there anyone here who has ever heard the professor's brain, felt the professor's brain, touched or smelt the professor's brain? No one appears to have done so. So, according to the established rules of empirical, stable, demonstrable protocol, science says that you have no brain, with all due respect, sir.' 'So if science says you have no

brain, how can we trust your lectures, sir?'

Now the room is silent. The professor just stares at the student, his face unreadable. Finally, after what seems an eternity, the old man answers. 'I Guess you'll have to take them on faith.'

'Now, you accept that there is faith, and, in fact, faith exists with life,' the student continues. 'Now, sir, is there such a thing as evil?' Now uncertain, the professor responds, 'Of course, there is. We see it Everyday. It is in the daily example of man's inhumanity to man. It is in The multitude of crime and violence everywhere in the world. These manifestations are nothing else but evil.'

To this the student replied, 'Evil does not exist sir, or at least it does not exist unto itself... Evil is simply the absence of God. It is just like darkness and cold, a word that man has created to describe the absence of God. God did not create evil. Evil is the result of what happens when man does not have God's love present in his heart. It's like the cold that comes when there is no heat or the darkness that comes when there is no light.'

The professor sat down.

If you read it all the way through and had a smile on your face when you finished, share it with your friends and family

Poetry Section

It's Not Easy

By
Calvin Hart

It's not easy being a Christian
In a world so full of sin.
When lust and greed and hatefulness
Are worse than they've ever been.

It's not easy being a child of God
In a world where he is scorned.
Where the Bible is considered fiction,
And children are killed before they are
born.

It's not easy to walk the Christian way
And turn the other cheek.
It's not easy to stand and be laughed at
While remaining quiet, docile, and
meek.

It's not easy to forgive someone
For injuries done to you
To keep the bitterness at bay
And remain a Christian true.

It's not easy to keep your faith intact
When troubles plague your soul.
But we must keep our eyes on God,
When heartaches take their toll.

It's not easy to hold Christian love in
your heart
For each person that you see
But remember that Jesus died on the
cross
Because He loved both you and me.

No, it's not easy being a Christian
In a world where we're tumbled and
tossed.
But at the end of the day when Christ
takes us away,
The rewards will far outweigh the cost.

Just Never Lose Sight

By
Ruthie Knight

The Lord will be with you,
So never lose faith.
We will all meet again
In a much better place.

We will walk in a garden
Of glorious light,
That's God's faithful promise,
Just never lose sight.

The pain will be over,
The world made anew,

You'll join there together,
Your loved ones and you.

Stand close to the savior,
He's your dearest friend.
He'll ease all your sorrows,
Just lean upon Him.

His book is a promise,
His word a delight.
Just cling to your Savior,
Just never lose sight.

CONQUERING COMPLAINING

Philippians 2:12-13

By

Pastor Jarrod McClintick

Complaining is a kill-joy. It makes you unhappy, everybody else around you unhappy. The problem is that it is a hard habit to break. We are naturally negative. We tend to look at the bad things in life. We are conditioned by society. Bad news makes the headlines. We are bombarded continuously with what's wrong with everything. By our own nature and by our conditioning we tend to develop the habit of complaining.

The Bible says God wants Christians to be different. Philippians 2:14-15 "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe."

What does God's word have to say about dealing with this habit of complaining?

I. FOUR COMMON TYPES OF COMPLAINERS

1. THE "WHINER" -- David

These people wake up negative. They rise and whine. David whines all through the Psalms. Psalm 73:13 "Have I been wasting my time? Why take all the trouble to be pure? All I get out of it is trouble and woe."

The tell-tale sign of the whiner is: "It's not fair. I don't deserve this. Everybody else gets all the breaks."

"They took their money and started grumbling against the employer ... `We put up with a whole day's work in the hot sun -- yet you paid them the same as you paid us.'" Matt. 20:11-12

Life is not fair. God never said it is going to be fair. It will be fair in Heaven. He will settle the score in Heaven and hell. As long as you complain about the fact that life is not fair it only makes you more miserable. But it will never change the fact that life is not always fair. Complaining does not work.

2. THE "MARTYR" -- Moses

Favorite phrase: "No one appreciates me."

Numbers 11:11-15 "Moses said to the Lord, `Why pick on me, to give the burden of a people like this? I can't carry this nation by myself! If you're going to treat me like this, please kill me right now -- it will be a kindness! Let me out of this impossible situation!"

These people are pros at having pity parties. When they are sick or under pressure they want everybody to know about it. How do you react when you don't get your way? Do you mount a complaining campaign?

3. THE "CYNIC" -- Solomon

Favorite phrase: "Nothing will ever change."

Eccl. 1:2-4, 9 "Life is useless. You spend your life working and what do you have to show for it?"

The world stays just the same ... what has been done before will be done again." Actually, this last phrase probably refers to picking up after children. What's the use?

4. THE "PERFECTIONIST"

Nothing is ever right for this person. It is never good enough.

Favorite phrase: "Is that the best you can do?"

Proverbs 27:15 "A nagging wife is like water going drip, drip, drip on a rainy day."

Proverbs 21:19 "Better to live out in the desert than with a nagging, complaining wife."

This refers to husbands, too! Nagging perfectionists. Nothing is ever right. Always arguing. Nothing destroys the warmth of a home faster than complaining. Nothing destroys the harmony of a marriage faster than complaining. Nagging doesn't work. It just makes everybody upset.

If your kids are complaining continuously, ask yourself if you are setting the example.

HOW DO YOU CONQUER COMPLAINING?

The Bible says "Do everything without complaining and arguing." How do you do that?

1. ADMIT IT IS A PROBLEM

Admit it is a problem for you, not for other people, but for you. Proverbs 28:13 "A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if

he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance."

Often the most difficult part in learning how to handle complaining is recognizing it in yourself. If someone recorded you for a week, what would it reveal about your speech. How much time do you spend griping, grumping, complaining, arguing, and saying "life stinks." You've got to admit it's a problem for me.

Circle the word "admit" and "confess". Complaining isn't just a bad habit; it's a sin. We need to confess it. It's a sin; it's serious. Complaining was the sin that kept the Israelites out of the promised land. God destroyed them in the desert because they grumbled. Seven times, Scripture says, "they murmured." The reason the children of Israel never got into the promised land was because they were complainers. That's how serious God says what we're talking about is. Admit it!

2. ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY OWN LIFE

Many times complaining is just an attempt to blame other people for the problems I've created. Or excuse myself and put the focus on somebody else. I brought the problem into my life, I'm the cause of it, but if I complain maybe I can shift the focus onto somebody else and it will make me feel just a little bit better. We like to pass the buck and it makes us feel better.

Proverbs 19:3 "Some people ruin themselves by their own stupid mistakes and then blame the Lord."

Do not complain how the ball bounces if you drop it! When I bring problems into my life, I have no legitimate right to complain. Many times complaining is just an excuse to be

irresponsible and to not accept the fact that I caused this situation. We reap what we sow. When I reap what I sow I have no legitimate right to complain about the results. You are free to choose what you want to do in life. God has given you the freedom of choice. But once you have made the choice, you are no longer free. You're free to make the choice, but you're never free from the consequences of that choice

I hear so many people complaining about being in debt. Is it possible you were irresponsible about spending and saving? That you made a purchase you really shouldn't have made? I hear people saying, "I'm just not appreciated at home." Maybe you don't appreciate the others at home. We reap what we sow. Whatever you want in life, you've got to give it out. That is inviolable rule of God. If you want friends you've got to be friendly. If you want appreciation at home you've got to give appreciation. If you want to be put first in your marriage, you need to put your partner first in your marriage. We reap what we sow.

Accept responsibility for my own life and the choices that I make. The changes that are going to take place are because I choose to change.

There are three kinds of people in life: accusers, excusers, and choosers.

Accusers are always going around saying "It's your fault." When Adam sinned he took it like a man and blamed his wife, "Eve did it," and then he blamed God, "You gave me that woman."

Excusers say "I'm a product of my environment. It's not really my fault."

The people that are really successful in life are neither accusers nor excusers. They are choosers. They

accept responsibility for their own decisions. When they reap what they sow they take it and move ahead.

3. DEVELOP THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

I Thes. 5:18 "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Circle "all". God says "I want you to be thankful in all circumstances." By the way, it does not say "for all circumstances". You cannot always be thankful for the circumstances, but you can be thankful in the situation. I know that God is working all things for good. He has a pattern and He fits even the bad things in our lives into that pattern for good. God's purpose for my life is greater than my problems, so in everything I can give thanks. Not for but in.

I develop the attitude of gratitude and I learn to be grateful for what I have. It's a tremendous antidote for complaining. Whenever we are complaining, we are usually being ungrateful. You can focus on either the negative or the positive. Is the cup half empty or half full? It all depends on how you look at it. Why is it that we often don't value what we have in life until it's gone?

We, in America, have so much to be grateful for. Yet we take it so much for granted. Overseas, American tourists are known for their complaining.

Of course there are things in your life that you are not satisfied with. There are some things in your marriage that you don't like, things in your business, habits in yourself, your mate, your children, your boss. But I believe there are also some things in those situations and people that you could learn to be thankful for. The Bible says that

Christians are to be different. We are to do everything without complaining and arguing that we may be the sons of God, blameless and harmless in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation in which we shine as lights of the world. We stand out in a crowd. We shine like lights because we're different.

Phil. 4:11 "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." Circle "content". When Paul wrote this he was in prison at Rome. The situations do not determine happiness.

When you learn to be happy and joyful in spite of the circumstance, that is maturity. That I am not determined or controlled by the circumstances around me. Boredom is actually a complaint -- a complaint against God. You're basically saying, "God, you gave me a raw deal. I can do nothing with the circumstances that you dealt me. If I were God I could do a better job. I am bored, God, because You did not give me what I really need in life and therefore life is lousy." Develop the attitude of gratitude.

4. LOOK FOR GOD'S HAND IN CIRCUMSTANCES

If you want to get victory over complaining, look for God's hand in your circumstances. II Cor. 4:17-18 "This small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble. So we fix our attention, not on the things that are seen, but on the things that are unseen. What is seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts forever."

Paul is saying there are problems that come into our lives, no doubt. But the way you look at them determines your attitude. Because God is working

these things for good in your life and the good that you're going to get out of them will be much more long lasting than the problem. The problem is temporary in light of how long you're going to live in eternity. So look for God's hand in the circumstances. Positive people realize that God is controlling circumstances. God is fitting everything into a pattern and His purpose is greater than your problem.

The reason why over and over in the Bible we are told not to complain is this, complaining is, in essence, rebellion against God. When I complain about my circumstances that are beyond my control I'm really saying "If I were God things would be different. If I were in charge the whole human race would be much better." That's rebellion and that's why it's so serious. God says don't do it. We're challenging three things:

1. I'm questioning God's wisdom. "Do You really know what You're doing? Do You see what's going on? Is this really wise?"

2. I'm doubting God's care. "Do You really love me? Really care for me?"

3. I'm forgetting God's goodness. I'm focusing on what I don't have rather than focusing on what I do have. I'm being ungrateful.

Often the things that I personally complain about the most, are often the very things God knows I need the most in order to become all that He wants me to be. It is a warning light of God. He's saying, "There's something wrong here. Let's change it. Stop complaining. Start changing!" The only way you change other people is by changing yourself. Then they have to react to you differently.

5. PRACTICE SPEAKING POSITIVELY

Complaining is a habit. Habits are only broken by replacement with something else. Take out the negative complaining and replace it with positive speaking. Ephesians 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

The Bible says we're going to give an account of every idle word. Paul is saying don't let any junk come out of your mouths but only that which helps people with their needs, that benefits them. If you can't say something good, don't say anything at all. Replace your criticisms and complaints with compliments.

This is a crucial factor in parenting. Affirmation always gets better results than nagging. Ephesians 6:4 "Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather, bring them up with loving discipline and godly advice." Parents, do your words help your kids? Or do they hinder your kids? Are you building your kids up or tearing them down? Be positive in your speaking.

What are the results of complaining?

"Do everything without complaining or arguing..." and then he gives us three results. "so that you may become blameless ..." This means that when you don't complain, nobody can find fault with you. Nobody can point a finger at you.

"... and pure..." The Greek word here means "having integrity". Non complainers are people of integrity.

"Children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe." Our culture is so negative. When you find a person who is genuinely positive they stick out like a sore thumb. The contrast is obvious. They shine like a star in the middle of a dark night. It is so different to be positive in this world, to not be a complainer, not be critical, not be a put-down person, that when you become that in your own life, you will shine like a star.

The point of the passage is Paul is saying that Christians are to react differently to the circumstances in life. A complaining Christian is a bad witness. A positive attitude is a great witness; it has impact.

How do you make an impact in the world so that the world takes notice? Check your attitude. Be positive in a negative world.

Wouldn't it be great that our church had the reputation of "That's where all the positive people go. You never hear a complaint or grumble over there. That's the church where there is love, unity, harmony." Where there is harmony, love, unity you would have to lock the doors to keep people out. The church would grow automatically because people are looking for love. Every time you say a smile, shake somebody's hand, say "Hi", greet somebody, give a hug, you are spreading love in this body. You're making a difference. You're making an impact. You're shining like a star in a dark world.

What would happen in your business if all of a sudden all of the

complaining stopped? What would happen in your home if your family made a pact that they wouldn't complain, be critical, tear each other down? Kids, what would happen in your family if all of a sudden you stopped griping? Maybe you would get your way a little more often.

"For God is at work in you to will and to act according to His purpose." The first thing he talks about after he talks about God working in us is

complaining. How do you know when God is working in your life? The first clue: check your attitude.

You need a power beyond yourself, Jesus Christ. He is the antidote to our culture and our nature. He makes us new people inside. Maybe the complaining is an imbedded habit. The only way that will be broken is by an external power in your life who will begin changing you from the inside out.



Branscombe Richmond is a truly legendary Hollywood entertainer. He is best known for his portrayal of Bobby Six Killer in the recent hit television show *Renegade* with Lorenzo Lamas and Kathleen Kinmont. Portraying a Native American Indian bounty hunter, Richmond brought action, humor and style to the part. Six Killer's pastel

blazers, Hummer and laughing outbursts quickly became mainstays of the long running series. Branscombe himself even directed several episodes of *Renegade*, one of the few non-network shows to exceed 100 episodes in syndication.

Inmate Art
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