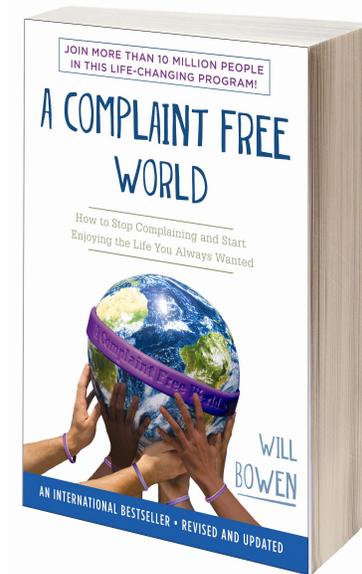


Complaint Free® Churches

Lesson Notes



A Program for Positive Transformation Based On



“If you don’t like something, change it; if you can’t change it, change your attitude. Don’t complain.”

Maya Angelo

Dear Fellow Spiritual Teacher,

My vision of A Complaint Free World began when I was minister of a small church. In July 2006, I was blessed to feel guided to deliver a Sunday message inviting my congregation to use purple rubber bracelets as a tool for giving up complaining. As a result of that message, my life changed forever and my ministry has grown bigger than I ever dreamed. But, I have never forgotten what it feels like to lead a spiritual community.

Ministry is rewarding, inspiring and exhilarating. Ministry can also be challenging, draining and frustrating. Day in and day out, the minister is responsible for everyone's spiritual needs and, more and more these days, their emotional needs as well. If there is a crisis occurring, a blessing needed, a meaning sought or divine guidance wanted, all eyes look to you. Plus, you are often the point person on boards, budgets and even the building where everything takes place. If a volunteer resigns, you're the one who has to find a replacement. On top of it all, you are keenly aware of being a role model for your community. You've got to do good while you look good doing it.

One frustration I had as a minister was how much my congregation complained. This negative soundtrack, which most people found to be perfectly normal, undermines their spiritual nature. "If there is a loving, giving God who desires the best for all, why are we carping and griping so much?" I wondered.

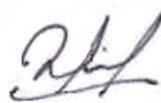
Over the last decade I've discovered that there are psychological reasons people complain that have more to do with community and status than they do with what's actually going on in someone's life. When you fully embrace this as a Spiritual Leader, you will cease to take complaints personally. And, which is far more important, you'll help people become more successful in their lives.

I truly believe that the reason the Complaint Free World movement has reached tens of millions of people around the world is because of churches, just like yours, seeking to grow closer to one another and to God by stopping their incessant griping. Churches, mosques, temples, synagogues and religious centers of every type, all over the world, have handed out millions of Complaint Free bracelets because they change people. The Complaint Free Challenge is inspiring to hear about, fun to apply and spiritually liberating. When we stop complaining about what's missing in our lives and use our words to praise what is present, we feel the transcendent splendor of oneness with God.

Thank you for helping to share this message with the world. You are blessed and you are a great blessing.



Enjoy Today,



Rev. Will Bowen
A Complaint Free World
Founder

Introduction: A Complaint Free World®

“Complaining is like bad breath. You notice it when it comes out of someone else’s mouth, but not when it comes out of your own.” – Will Bowen

Getting Started

We highly recommend you read *A Complaint Free World – How to Stop Complaining and Start Enjoying the Life You Always Wanted* by Will Bowen. This inspiring and easy-to-read book gives you a better grasp of the concepts and provides in-depth understanding of how to help yourself and others quit complaining—for good.

You can also watch speeches Will has given on the negative effects of complaining and how we can all stop at www.WillBowenVideo.com.

The key to success with this program is for the minister to commit to completing the 21-day challenge and stay with it no matter what. Then, for him or her to share honestly and from the heart what it’s like to slowly give up complaining. Spiritual Leaders who share their own feelings, struggles and successes give followers a model to follow. And they will follow!

To receive Complaint Free Bracelet at a 50% Discount, **prior to ordering**, email Contact@AComplaintFreeWorld to receive a promo code.

How The Complaint Free Challenge Works

Complaining is a habit and scientists believe it takes 21 days to change a habit. Here’s how to change the habit of complaining:

- 1. Put a Complaint Free purple bracelet on either wrist.**
- 2. When you catch yourself complaining, criticizing or gossiping (it’s ok, everyone does) move the bracelet to the other wrist and start your 21-day journey over again at Day 1--remember, “There’s no shame in Day 1!”**
- 4. Stay with it. The average person takes 4-8 months to go 21 consecutive days without complaining.**

Background

A Complaint Free World® began in July of 2006 when Rev. Will Bowen handed out 250 purple bracelets to the congregation at his small church in Kansas City, Missouri. Will's objective was to encourage everyone to think more positively. The idea was simple: put a purple rubber bracelet on either wrist and, when you catch yourself complaining, switch the bracelet to the other wrist.

Scientists believe that it takes 21 consecutive days of a new behavior for it to become habitual. So, by switching the bracelet from wrist-to-wrist with each complaint until one has gone 21 consecutive days without complaining, a person can establish the habit of being Complaint Free.

Inspired with their experience and results, the first participants began telling their friends, families and co-workers and the idea went viral even before social media. Within a month, requests for 9,000 Complaint Free bracelets had poured in. A reporter from the *Kansas City Star* wrote about a story about what it declaring it a genuine “a phenomenon.” The news spread and Bowen began getting calls and doing interviews around the world. In 2007, he wrote, *A Complaint Free World -- How to Stop Complaining and Start Enjoying the Life You Always Wanted* which became a #1 international best-seller.

A Complaint Free World has been featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show, NBC's Today Show, ABC World News Tonight, CBS Sunday Morning, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and in People, Newsweek and myriad magazines, newspapers and broadcasts worldwide. Thousands of schools, businesses and other organizations have used the purple bracelets to positively transform attitudes and life experiences.

More than 11 million Complaint Free bracelets have been distributed to people in 106 countries.

For more information visit www.AComplaintFreeWorld.org or send us an email at Contact@AComplaintFreeWorld.org.

Thought-Starter Questions

What is a complaint, anyway?

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines “complain” as “to express pain, grief or discontent.” It makes sense to express each of these sentiments on occasion but most people complain habitually 15 – 30 times each day and this “ear pollution” negatively impacts their lives, health, careers and relationships.

How does complaining effect our spiritual lives?

According to the Judeo Christian Bible, with every stage of creation God reviewed his handiwork and claimed it to be “good.” (Genesis 1:4, 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, 1:21, 1:25). In fact, in Genesis 1:25, God reviews all of creation and declares it to be “very good.” When we complain about our lives or anything in God’s world, we are denying the truth that all of God’s creation is inherently good.

What’s wrong with complaining?

Jesus Christ said, “Seek and ye shall find.” Whatever we are looking for, that is, whatever we’re putting the power of our attention on, continues to show up in our lives. When we gripe about problems at work those problems are more likely to endure. When we complain about our spouse, we’re more likely to notice his or her shortcomings. When we complain about people at church, our difficulties with those people increase. Conversely, when we cease to complain we begin to find more positive ways of interacting with another and the conversation becomes more positive.

What impact does complaining have on health?

Complaining weakens our immune system and diminishes our our ability to recover from illness. Doctors have found that people who complain about their illnesses actually worsen the symptoms of their disease. Our minds play a significant role in the health of our bodies. “Doctors estimate that as much as two thirds of their time is spent treating individuals whose underlying problem is psychological.”¹ A negative attitude as evidenced by a complaining nature increases the likelihood that a person will be sick more often and stay sick longer.

How does complaining effect relationships?

- Complainers lose friends: “People who complain too frequently are labeled as whiners risk being excluded from valued social groups or relationships.”²
- Complainers drag down conversations. “Complaining is often contagious. After one person has complained, the incidence of others also complaining seems to increase, resulting in a domino effect of complaining.”³
- Complaining hurts others and feeds on itself. “The complainer influences the behavior of the listener, and the listener’s response to the complaint subsequently affects the behavior of the complainer.”⁴ This creates a complaining loop whereby people feed off one another’s negativity which drains each of them emotionally.

¹ (Source: Kowalski, R. M. (1996). Complaints and complaining: Functions, antecedents, and consequences. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119, 179-196.)

²IBID

³ IBID

⁴ IBID

People Complain for one of five reasons as remembered by the acronym

G.R.I.P.E.

Get Attention

Connecting to other people is a basic human need. A person may complain to a stranger about the weather or a local sports team as a means of just starting a conversation.

“Man, that’s four darn days in a row when the temperature’s been over 95 degrees!”

TRANSLATION: *Hello, Please talk to me.*

“The traffic was lousy this morning.”

TRANSLATION: *Now, please complain to me about your commute so we’ll have something to talk about.*

Silence the Complaints: When someone complains to **Get attention**, ask them, “What’s going well with (whatever they’re complaining about). For example, if they’re griping about their job, keep asking, “What’s going well with your job?” Or, “What do you like about where you work?”

Remove Responsibility

When given a task, people complain about the conditions surrounding the task as a way not being responsible for completing the job satisfactorily.

“I don’t think I can fit that into my calendar. I’m so busy with all this extra work the boss keeps dumping on me. I’m overwhelmed as it is. It’s not fair.”

TRANSLATION: *I’m not going to do what you’re asking. And, I’m using my boss as an excuse.*

“Mom, Ashley just texted me. She says that our teacher Mr. Jones said the project has to be on yellow poster board and not blue! Mr. Jones is always changing his mind and he’s never clear. It’s not my fault—it’s his!”

TRANSLATION: *Mom, I wasn’t paying attention when the teacher gave out instructions for my project. Don’t expect me to receive a good grade on this school project.*

Silence the Complaints: When someone complains to **Remove Responsibility** they are building a case to prove that what is being asked of them is impossible—so they don’t have to do it; or, do it well. They are complaining to be let off the hook. Ask, “If it were possible, how might you do it? With every complaint about the assigned task, keep asking, “If it were possible, how might you do it?”

<p>Inspire Envy [Brag]</p> <p>People complain about people who are not like them as a way of making themselves look superior by comparison. And, they complain about things and events as a way of impressing people with their high standards.</p>	<p>“Yeah, Cheryl’s team did a good job on the project—well, more of an okay job—actually. They were two weeks behind on delivery and I can’t believe they let that computer bug slip through!” TRANSLATION: <i>My team would have done things on time and better. Why? Because I’m a better manager than Cheryl.</i></p> <p>“You thought that was a good movie? Seriously? You’ve got to be kidding. The acting was stiff, the story was weak and the music did nothing to move the plot along.” TRANSLATION: <i>I know a lot about movies. You should admire me and let me tell you more.</i></p>
--	--

Silence the Complaints: Someone complaining to **Inspire Envy** is actually wanting to be complimented and reassured. Therefore, compliment them for their underlying need. In the two examples, above, you might say, “You’re a great leader and your team produces what they promise on time, every time.” And, “You seem to know a lot about movies, what’s the coolest trend you’ve seen in films recently?”

<p>Power</p> <p>There is strength in numbers. People complain to build alliances with others to increase power.</p>	<p>“Jim is a good guy but he’s just not supervisor material. Half the time he’s late and I really don’t think he’s that smart.” TRANSLATION: <i>I want that supervisor job! So, help me spread negativity about Jim because he’s my competition.</i></p> <p>“Dad, Scott and Megan are playing and they won’t let me play. And, they’re using your hammer and you told us not to play with your tools.” TRANSLATION: <i>Dad, I feel left out. You’re bigger than all of us. Make my brother and sister play with me.</i></p>
--	---

Silence the Complaints: There is an old saying, “When two gorillas are fighting, stay out of the jungle.” When someone complains to get you on their side to gain power over someone else, refuse to get involved. Keep telling the complainer, “It sounds like you and he (or she) have a lot to talk about.” You might even offer to set up a meeting between the two--this will clearly show them that you choose not to get involved with their complaining power struggle.

<p>Excuse Poor Performance</p> <p>Excuse Poor Performance is the past tense version of a complaint to Remove Responsibility (the R in GRIPE, above).</p> <p>When someone complains to Remove Responsibility they are telling you in advance that they are going to fail at</p>	<p>“I know I said I’d bring home salad stuff but I got caught up at work in some of Carla’s last minute nonsense and it just made me forget.” TRANSLATION: <i>I’m blaming my forgetfulness on something totally unrelated but if you buy it, I’m off the hook.</i></p> <p>“I tried to get the report in on time but I didn’t get the numbers from the accounting department soon enough.” TRANSLATION: <i>I actually waited until the last minute to ask the people in</i></p>
--	--

something they should do in the future and they want to convince you that it's not going to be their fault. When someone complains to **Excuse Poor Performance**, they have already failed at something and are complaining because they, also, want you to believe that it's not their fault.

accounting for what I need. But, technically they didn't get it to me so it's their fault not mine.

Silence the Complaints: People complaining to **Excuse Poor Performance** have already fallen short on what they were assigned to do. To dig into a past mistake only invites them to complain more and create excuses. Instead, invite them to figure out what they will do differently in the future by asking, "How do you plan to make sure things go better next time?" Variations on, "What can you do to make sure this goes better in the future?" will get them focused on succeeding in the future.

Bible References

- Do everything without complaining or arguing. — Philippians 2:14
- Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." Proverbs 18:21
- Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. — Proverbs 16:24
- This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. —Psalm 118:24
- Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. — Philippians 4:11
- As you believe so shall it be done unto you. — Matthew 9:39
- Therefore do not associate with one who speaks foolishly. — Proverbs 20:19

Quotations

- Man invented language to satisfy his deep need to complain.—Lily Tomlin
- If you don't like something change it; if you can't change it, change your attitude. Don't complain. —Maya Angelou
- It Is a waste of time to be angry about my disability. One has to get on with life and I haven't done badly. People won't have time for you if you are always angry or complaining. — Stephen Hawking
- Criticism comes easier than craftsmanship. — Zeuxis
- Complaining lets a bully know there is a victim in the neighborhood. — Maya Angelou

- No price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself. — Friedrich Nietzsche
- Complaining is not to be confused with informing someone of a mistake or deficiency so that it can be put right. And to refrain from complaining doesn't necessarily mean putting up with bad quality or behavior. There is no ego in telling the waiter your soup is cold and needs to be heated up—if you stick to the facts, which are always neutral. 'How dare you serve me cold soup...?' That's complaining. — Eckhart Tolle

How Can We Encourage Positive Change Without Complaining?

Excerpted from “A Complaint Free World” by Will Bowen, © 2012, Crown Publishing

Were the great leaders of the United States also great complainers? I'd have to say, “No.” These important men and women allowed dissatisfaction to drive them to great visions and their passion for these visions inspired others to follow them. Their relentless focus on a bright future raced the collective heartbeat of this nation. Their method of transforming our consciousness as a country and, as a result, our future was best summarized by Robert Kennedy, “There are those that look at things the way they are, and ask why? I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?”

On August 28, 1963, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did not stand on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and say, “Isn't it terrible how we're being treated?” No. He spoke words that struck a chord with our nation and still bring tears to the eyes of those hearing them nearly a half-century later. He did not focus on the problem, he focused beyond the problem. He declared, “I have a dream!” Dr. King created in our minds a vivid picture of a world without racism. He had “been to the mountain top” and his words took us there as well

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson did clearly state the challenges the colonies were having under the governance of the British Empire. However, his document signed July 4, 1776 was not a litany of gripes. Had it been, it probably would have never caught the imagination of the world and unified the colonies.

The first paragraph of the U.S. Declaration of Independence reads:

“When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them...”

For a moment, imagine you are a colonist of one of the thirteen colonies and you try to take this in, “...*the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them.*” At the time Jefferson wrote this, England was the world's greatest superpower and Jefferson states without hyperbole that these fledgling and diverse colonies were “equal” to this political behemoth. You could have heard the collective gasp this inspired among the colonists followed by the resulting swell of pride and enthusiasm. How could they ever aspire to such a lofty ideal as to be equal to England? Because “*the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God*” entitle[d] them.” This was not complaining, this was a compelling vision for a bright future.



THIS AREA IS HEREBY DESIGNATED AN OFFICIAL

COMPLAINT FREE ZONE

.....
If you wish to *complain, criticize or gossip* please step away.
.....

————— **A Complaint Free World[™].org** —————

THE 5 REASONS PEOPLE COMPLAIN

Get Attention

Remove Responsibility

Inspire Envy

Power

Excuse Poor Performance

A Complaint Free World.org™