



"Therefore I do my best always to have a clear conscience toward God and all people."

(Acts of the Apostles 24:16)

Spiritual healthiness affects the way we live our lives and how we relate to others. Positive spiritual health improves the way we pray, meditate, have hope, practice our faith, and grow within it. Spiritual healthiness can determine how the Christian is affected by a major health crisis or death, anxiety or fear.

Spiritually healthy is a person who believes their ultimate welfare and peace is in the Hands of God. They are aware of their limitations as human beings. They recognize that life will be filled with many struggles and in this recognition and growth in their spiritual life anticipate and appreciate fully the Eternal Life to come. An Eternal Life promised to be without struggles. The Christian's attitudes and speech regarding themselves and others can demonstrate the degree of spiritual growth they have obtained.

A person's speech may be one of the first indicators in gauging one's spiritual health. This inner voice that a person hears can be verbalized into complaint,

condemnation or praise. The choice belongs to the listener of their inner voice or conscience. How do we constantly seek the positive choice of praise? Perhaps it can be found with this simple question of "Is there actually a need for me to speak about this particular subject?" Good speech usually has a constructive purpose. Ideally, it is beneficial to those listening, increases knowledge, strengthens people's convictions, and adds a new thought or idea to the conversation.

King Solomon renowned for his great wisdom stated, *"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under Heaven: A time to keep silence, and a time to speak"* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,7). We are told in the Holy Book of Proverbs, *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver"* (Proverbs 25:11). The wise Son of Sirach said *"Answer a man if you know what to say, but if not, hold your tongue"* (Sirach 5:12). Certainly complaining does not fit the specifications of any of these Holy Bible verses.

Good communication helps to strengthen spiritual health and thus encourages growth. It can solve disputes, stall an argument, and avoid angry situations. Complaining definitely does none of the above. Abigail helped King David to avoid a guilty conscience strengthened his faith and conviction. She assisted the king to avoid seeking revenge upon

her husband through her speech. Nabal, Abigail's husband returned evil to David the Prophet. As David was preparing to avenge his honor and destroy Nabal and his entire household, Abigail hurried to the King and calmed his wrath with her wise words without any complaint or accusation within them.

David praised her wise words and said, "*Blessed is the Lord God of Israel who sent you this day to meet me! And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. Go up in peace to your house. SEE I HAVE HEEDDED YOUR VOICE AND RESPECTED YOUR PERSON*" (I Samuel 25:32-35). Abigail did not go to King David with complaining voicing the unfairness of life and shouting her anger.

Do you find yourself constantly complaining? Has this become a habit? If so, relate openly about your problem and seek solutions with your father of confession. Assume responsibility for the complaining, avoid idle time, and increase in your private devotions. Meditate upon Job. Job's suffering was viewed as purifying, sacrificial, and educational. Job plainly told all, "*My lips will not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit*" (Job 27:4).

So what exactly is considered complaining? Simply, it is a manner of carelessly speaking. It is a method of losing our hearts through our mouths. "*Fools speak before they think; wise men think first and speak afterwards*" (Sirach 21:26). Complaining can become habitual if chronically left unchecked. Do you prefer the company of a complainer? Most people do not. So therefore, speak mindfully and with wisdom. Useless chatter is bothersome to those who must be hearers of it. Those most favored speakers use words sparingly and modestly. Give a direct answer and avoid the personal connotations. No two persons share the exact same feeling and perceive the exact same situation the same so therefore the constant complainer is often avoided by those not wishing to hear murmurings.

Arnobius (c.305) said, "We should consider what is said-not with what eloquence it is said. Nor should we look at how it tickles the ear. Instead, we should look at the benefits that it confers on the hearers."

Complaining is often blaming others for your anger, your frustration, stress, and unhappiness. Can you attain peace while at the same time blaming others for your unhappiness? Certainly others can contribute at times to our problems, but we must take responsibility for our own happiness and state of spiritual health. Circumstances challenge all of us

but do not make us the person we strive to become. Blaming others takes an enormous amount of mental energy which produces fatigue, powerlessness, and stress. We know and it is well documented that our happiness is not contingent upon the actions and behaviors of others. When you stop complaining you will find that you have regained your sense of spiritual healthiness and can move forward in your spiritual growth.

Further, quietness was a sign of peace or reverence in the Holy Bible. The prophets in the Old Testament times often called for silence. Amos the Prophet said "*The prudent will keep silent in such a time; for it is an evil time*" (Amos 5:13). The Lord Jesus Christ Himself stood silent in the face of some of the accusations made against Him (Mark 14:61; 15:5). The Letters to the Thessalonians encouraged the early Christians to live in peace and work quietly (I Thessalonians 4:11; II Thessalonians 3:12).

An advocate of silence, Mark Minucius Felix (c.200) believed "We do not speak great things-- we live them."

Silence was considered reverence to the Lord, "*But the Lord is in His Holy Temple; Let all the earth keep silence before Him!*" (Habakkuk 2:20).

The next time you are tempted to complain think that struggle makes us feel the value of suffering. We should be prepared for any of life's difficulties with a positive spiritual outlook. The Lord Jesus Christ advised us to "*Take up our cross*" (Mark 8:34). St. Paul tells us "*Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope*" (Romans 5:4). The Letter of St. James takes this one step further and declares "*Whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy*" (James 1:2). We must all seek the joy of this earthly journey and cease to complain of its trials.

Tertullian (c. 197) teaches us, "You have your joys where you have your longings."

This destroys complaining and makes us one with our Lord, "*We suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him*" (Romans 8:17).

Cyprian (c.250) profoundly said, "When the soul, in its gaze into Heaven, has recognized its Author, it rises higher than the sun and far transcends all this earthly power. It then begins to be that which it believes itself to be." Perhaps this is the beginning of true spiritual growth.

Let us all "*Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer*" (Romans 12:12) without complaint.

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