

Can We Complain To God

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the one who unites us in faith, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

Are any of you complainers? I try not to complain about things, at least not too much... One of the things I learned in my days as an Air Force Officer was that if I knew something wasn't right and I said something, I'd better have a plan to fix it. (SLIDE) In the Air Force, those who just brought up things that weren't right, without offering a valid solution. or at least a proposed solution, were usually considered not much more than just a complainer. If you brought up a problem and a proposed solution, you were a hero and a problem solver.

That manner of getting things done might work in the Air Force, but I'm not so sure how that works in our Spiritual or prayer lives. (SLIDE) When it comes to prayer, I think God not only tolerates our complaints, God welcomes them and gives us answers to our problems when we raise our complaints through prayer. Let's look at Abram for our example. (SLIDE) Abram was a wealthy man with herds of camels and lots of other livestock. He had a large family and many servants. In his old age, God came to Abram and asked him to pack up his family, his servants, his livestock, and all his belongings and move to an unknown place. He was to keep moving about until God told him where to settle down. Abram did as God asked... (SLIDE) When he was about 80 years old God came to Abram again and promised him he would have a son and that many nations would come

Can We Complain To God

from his offspring. These two promises from God echoed the promise God made in creation. God made humans and placed them in the Garden of Eden. He instructed the first humans to be fruitful and multiply. So, in creation, God gave humans both a home and a legacy of descendants that would live into history. In Abram, God is doing the very same thing. God guides Abram and his family toward the promised land and promises him a legacy that will live into history.

Here's the rub... God seems to be delayed or to have forgotten those promises. So, what does Abram do? He does what any well-trained Air Force Airman would do. He comes up with his own solution to the problem. We call Abram, who later God changes his name to Abraham, the father of our Faith. That is what Abraham is, but not because of his brilliant solutions to the problem of the delayed fulfillment of God's promises. When we recall the actions Abraham takes we clearly see he tires of waiting for God to fulfill the promises and takes actions into his own hands. A couple of examples come to mind. First, he fails to rely on God to provide and when a famine hits, he changes directions in his wanderings and moves to Egypt. (SLIDE) While there he lies about his relationship to his wife Sarah and tells everyone she is his sister. He does this because he's afraid the Egyptian men will kill him and take the beautiful Sarah for themselves. After God rescues Abraham from Egypt he again gets impatient and decides God must want him to have a son by one of Sarah's handmaids. So, he has Ishmael with the slave

Can We Complain To God

Hagar. (SLIDE) Every time Abraham tries to come up with his own solutions and fails to follow God's plan, he runs into more trouble. It almost seems like instead of being the Father of our Faith, he should be our example of what not to do!

Today's scripture reading comes in the midst of that time after God made the promise of many descendants and before Issac was born. In one of Abram's finer moments, he goes to God in prayer and makes his complaint known to God.

(SLIDE) He basically says, "Hey God. You promised me a legacy and heirs, but so far all I have is Eliezer... Where is this legacy you promised? Finally, for once Abram is honest with God and voices his complaint. If you're waiting for God's righteous anger to smite poor Abram or for God to squash him like a bug under God's ginormous foot, you'll be waiting a long time. God isn't like the Air Force leadership who expect us to come up with our own solutions to our troubles, but God welcomes and encourages us to bring everything that's on our minds to God in our prayers. It's perfectly fine, in fact God approved, to make every complaint we have known to God in our prayers.

Why does God want our complaints? Well for one thing, when we complain to God, we're acknowledging God's existence and God's position as God and ruler of our lives. If we didn't believe in God or that God cared about us, we would never pray. Complaining to God is a sign that we believe God can and will do

Can We Complain To God

something about our complaint. Now God may say back to us go and use the resources I've already given to you to solve your problem, or God might give you additional resources to use. God might point out resources you already have, but might not be aware of to solve your problem. God might even give you a blessing and a miracle. It's hard to say how God will solve your complaint, but this much I know for certain, God always listens and always answers.

In our reading today, God takes Abram outside on a clear night and tells him to count the stars, if he can... Rather than limiting Abram to one offspring, God doubles down on the legacy promise and shows Abram his descendants will outnumber even the stars in heaven. Abram trusts God and finally is in the place where God can use him to begin the plan of salvation. One of those descendants will be the Messiah, the chosen one, who will save all of humanity from our sin. The trust Abram finally has in God's promise is what God uses to declare Abraham righteous. Not the brilliance of Abram's solutions to the legacy problem, but his trusting in God for the answers.

How is it in your spiritual and prayer life? (SLIDE) Do you rush in to solve every problem with your own plan and solutions or do you go to God with your concerns and complaints? God wants all your concerns and complaints. Not because God is unaware of them. God already knows everything you need and want, long before you do... God wants us to verbalize our troubles and complaints

Can We Complain To God

as a way to relieve us from the crushing weight of carrying those burdens. You might be suffering under a burden of guilt over the past. You might be carrying the heavy weight of serious health and medical problems. It might be the heavy load of debt because of inflation or the loss of income. You might be having trouble in your relationships with your family or friends or co-workers. Whatever it is that is weighing you down, when you give it to God your burden will be lightened. Even better yet, when you trust God to provide the solutions you will be blessed, just like Abram was. Your trust in God to provide for everything you need will be reckoned to you as righteousness. (SLIDE)

In theory, all this seems well enough, but our eternal problem is that we, time and again, like Abram, want to take matters into our own hands and tell God what to do and how to solve our problems. We plan and we worry and we fret... In the end, we fail to trust God for our daily bread. God knew long before any of us came along we would never be able to fully trust in God's provisions for our homes and our legacies. That's the whole reason God decided from the start to take our faults and our sinful nature into himself and provide for us, even in the midst of our rebellious and sinful ways. (SLIDE) That plan for salvation was Jesus Christ. God came to us in the flesh to reveal the height, the breadth, and the depth of God's great love for you and for me. God became one of us so we could live with God forever. Jesus Christ is our life and our salvation.

Can We Complain To God

May the God of Abram bless each of us with the same righteousness he gave to Abraham. May you be free to voice your complaints to God knowing God hears you, and loves you. May God be your shield and your strength in times of plenty and times of want. May the God of Abram assure you of your true home with all the saints and give you a legacy of faith that will live on forever. Amen.