

Give Up Complaining

By Susan Vogt



Lent is the season when many people “give up” something in order to join their small sacrifices with Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Others try to do something positive to grow in their faith. Here’s an opportunity to do both.

For

Adult / Couple

Season

Spring

Needed

- Determination
- Optional: you may want to use one of those silicone bracelets as a prompt.

Prepare in Advance

Decide whether you want to do this activity by yourself or together with your spouse. (See variation with spouse at end.)

Activity Plan

1. Pray. Find a quiet spot to pause for a moment and pray something like the following:

Loving God, you know my faults and my sins, yet you accept me and continue to love me. Help me to extend that kind of love to the people who share my home and workplace. Amen.

2. Consider. Although Lent may already be in progress, it’s never too late to take stock of one’s life and how we want to be more Christ like. One thing that most of us humans do plenty of is complaining. We complain about the weather, our jobs, the boss, politics, and each other – even those we love very much. Decide whether you are willing to give up complaining . . . at least until Easter.
3. Commit. Assuming that you’ve decided to stop complaining, the next step is to define what you will count as a complaint.
 - Is ventilating about work to your spouse okay because it’s short, harmless, and relieves stress?
 - Is complaining about an injustice okay, especially if you are motivated to take action to correct it. (For example, you may call a company to complain about an incorrect bill.)
 - You may want to focus your moratorium on complaints just to your family and save your irritation with others for another round.



- Tell someone close to you (perhaps your beloved) of your commitment so they can help you notice when you slip up.
4. Catch yourself. No matter how hard you try, you're bound to slip up at times. (This author did.) When you notice that you've complained, there's not much you can do other than resolve to not do it again. Of course you probably will do it again, but then you repeat your resolve. (Some people find it helpful to wear a silicone bracelet and move it from one wrist to the other whenever they catch themselves complaining. The goal is to see how long you can keep it on the same wrist – a day, a week, a month? All of Lent?)
 5. Substitute. At least once a day (or whenever you notice yourself making a complaint) think of a positive thing to say or think about the person or problem you complained about.

Variation With Spouse or Beloved

If both you and your spouse decide to do this, you can gently remind each other of your commitment. Lest this degenerate into a "got you" contest, however, commit to finding and sharing one genuine, specific, affirmation for your beloved everyday. Each day has to be different. It can be spoken or written. Experiment. Surprise each other.

