



Greater Joy
Part 4 – Without Grumbling or Arguing
Pastor Ted Cunningham

Welcome to Woodland Hills Family Church; we're glad that you're here. To all of those outside in the courtyard, over at The Gathering Place, and our church at home family, welcome. Thank you for being a part of today's service. As we just saw in that video, we have the opportunity to give above and beyond our tithes and offerings this season. We're grateful for your generosity all throughout the year. We have so many more opportunities this time of year.

There are several ways that you can give. You can give in boxes in the back. You can go to the Church Center app, hit the "Give Online Now" button, at woodhills.org, or you can text the amount to 84321. We have new givers coming alongside and partnering with us every single week, so we are grateful for that.

I want to just let you know what's going on this Christmas. Last year, we did an online Christmas celebration. It was our largest gathering as a church; the most views we've had really on anything we've done as a church. Remember we ran for 48 hours Christmas eve and Christmas day. The team is working very hard this year on another online gathering. So, our last Sunday gathering on campus for this year is December 19. We will not be gathering on campus on December 26, but for 72 hours, Christmas eve, Christmas day, and the day after Christmas, on Sunday. We want you to not rush back from Kansas, Oklahoma City, Texas, wherever you are spending Christmas and gather your family and friends around the family room, around the device in the kitchen, and have Christmas with us. The team is putting a lot of work into it.

One of the reasons that I'm excited about the plans this year is every Sunday at Woodland Hills, all three services... To make three services run on Sunday morning, it takes about 380 staff and volunteers. That's from children ministry to worship to the tech team to the parking to the hospitality to greeters and everything going on. We are grateful because about half of them will start calling in December saying they won't be able to be here on the 26th. So, we have just decided what a gift to be able to put all of our energy this month and next into a great online gathering so that every one of our staff and volunteers can take off on the 26th. So, help me thank them for how hard they work and we're grateful for that. So, plan on that. At any time during those 72 hours, it will be streaming.

I want to tell you about the 19th and something we have planned. I'm a big fan of those award shows. We just had the country music awards this week. One of my favorite parts of an awards show is when they do "in memory of." We're just reminded of those that provided us with such great music over the years, who lost their lives.

We just decided that this year we know there is going to be an empty chair at many thanksgiving tables and around the tree this holiday and Christmas season. So, we want to have a special time on the 19th remembering your loved ones in the service. We have something very special planned, but we need your help in preparing for that. So, there is an email we've set up called remember@woodhills.org. We would love for you to send a picture and the name of your loved one that you lost over the last year or two. We want to incorporate them into our Christmas service on December 19. Thank you for participating in that.

If you have your Bibles, turn to Philippians 2. If you are new to our church, we're going through this series called *Greater Joy*. We're going verse by verse through Philippians. Didn't Scott McElvain do a phenomenal job last week with the Humility of Christ? We're grateful for him kicking off Chapter 2.

Today, when you see the title, *Without Grumbling or Arguing*, you're thinking *this is a parenting talk, isn't it? Oh, I hope this is a parenting talk*. We all know what grumbling is. Grumbling is complaining under your breath. I love the word grumbling because it sounds like what it is. If you're a grumbler from time to time, would you just raise your hand. Buckets of sunshine all throughout here and across campus. How many of you have been grumbling this week? I grumble every week or two after the time change. If you've been grumbling about how dark it gets, raise your hand. I stumble into the house at night and I'm ready for bed. Amy's like, "What time is it?" And it's 6:15! I don't know why. It's like we're bears preparing for hibernation.

Amy sent me this picture from a barbeque joint down in Texas. It says, "I dare you to go one day without mentioning how early it gets dark." So, I've been singing to her that great Frank Sinatra tune this week that goes like this, "*When the moon hits your eye like it's 4:45, that's November.*"

Today we are picking up in Verse 12 of Philippians. We're going to see two aspects of joy and understand the working out of joy in our lives. It's the inner work of God fulfilling his purposes in us and through us. It's the inner work, and then it's the outer work of how we get along, and it's our testimony to a lost and dying world when we are expressions of joy everywhere we go.

If you are a parent and you can amen this, please do with a loud and authoritative voice. Parent's experience great joy when their children get along. Amen! Is there any greater joy? And when they get long when you're not in the room? Is there any greater joy than that? When they seek reconciliation without your participation, is there any greater joy than that?

Johnny W, a comedian, was here in February and I love his line. He had an older brother, and they did not get along; never got along. He said, "One Christmas, I asked my mom, 'What can we get you for Christmas?' My mom said, 'All I want is for you two to get along.'" He said, "That ain't going to happen; you want a sweater? I'll get you a sweater."

Parents want their kids to get along, so we're going to jump in to Chapter 2, Verse 12. It's very important as we look at the inner work and the joy that's growing in us when we live out God's purpose in our life. And we are going to see what happens when God's purpose for your life isn't your plan or

purpose for your life. How do you deal with that when life didn't go according to your plan and purpose, but God's working in you and in His purpose?

Philippians 2: 12 - **12 Therefore...** This is Paul writing to the church at Philippi. **...my dear friends...** We love this four-chapter letter in Philippians because it's just this letter... He's not dealing with a heavy theological struggle in the church or a conflict in the church. He is writing to them as dear friends, brother and sisters in Christ, expressing this joy. **...as you have always obeyed...** I just listen to this as a parent. **...not only in my presence...** When I'm there. **...but now much more in my absence...** Now that I'm away from you. **...continue to work out your salvation.**

I want to be very clear what he's saying here. He is not saying continue to work *for* your salvation. He's not saying that. He's saying work *out* your salvation. Your salvation, when you were justified, that's when you were declared righteous. What he's speaking of here is sanctification, allowing God to continue to work in you. But he's not saying continue to work for heaven, continue to work for your relationship with God. He's not saying work for, he's saying work out your salvation **...with fear and trembling...**

Let's go back to the first chapter of Philippians so we see exactly what he's talking about in Verse 12. In Chapter 1: 1, he refers to them as God's holy people in Christ Jesus. They are believers. They are already believers. In Philippians 1, go down a few verses to Verse 6. **He who began a good work in you.** So, this work has already begun in them. And he's saying, "We want to continue to rejoice and find joy in you as you find joy in your heavenly Father and in your relationship with Jesus. You are believers, but now we're just going to work this out and keep growing in it." And remember, for those who think. No, salvation is something that comes to me by working for it." No. Romans 6: 23 refers to salvation as "a free gift of God." There's nothing you can do to earn it. You can't work for your salvation.

In Ephesians 2: 8, Paul tells the church at Ephesus, "For it is by grace you've been saved through faith. This is not from yourselves." Church attendance, good deeds, starting good habits, giving up bad habits, that's not what brings you salvation. Jesus alone... Faith alone in Christ alone brings you salvation. It is the free gift of God.

So, he begins this by saying, "Okay, we just talked about the humility of Christ and now we want to work it out in our lives." Philippians 2: **13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.** Now, Paul went to Rome. He wanted to preach. He wanted to go throughout the streets, meet people, preach the gospel of Jesus, but he ended up in chains. God had another plan. And yet the message of Jesus still worked its way through the palace guard; the message went out.

What do you do when God's plan and purpose for your life doesn't fit yours? This is when we begin to grumble. This is when we begin to complain under our breath. You've seen complaining. We've gotten good at it. It's when the waiter or the waitress walks away from the table, you didn't get what you wanted. You wait until they are just far enough away, and you start grumbling. We do the exact same thing with God. "When we grumble," Pastor John Beason from Tucson, Arizona says, "we declare our distrust in God's sovereign rule over our lives." But if his inner work, if we're resting in it, working out our salvation with fear and trembling, if we are receiving, "God, what is your plan and purpose for my

life? I want to fall in line with that and with that, I will find joy.” He actually says it another way and I love it. “Grumbling is growling against God.”

I’m a grumbler with my teeth gritted. Does anybody else? I just leave my teeth gritted while I grumble. “This isn’t what I wanted, and this is why” and this is essential to our text this morning. When you get to Verse 14, he says this to the Christians, to the believers in Philippi. Remember he said already in this great book that you are going to experience difficulties. As you stand strong on the truth of the Word of God, there are going to be challenges, there is going to be persecution that comes your way. God’s plan, his purpose for your life, working out in and through your life, may not be what you’re planning on, but this is why we get Verse 14. **14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing...** It doesn’t say don’t grumble and argue; it says do everything without grumbling and arguing. What is arguing? This is dissension, this is discord, this is sowing discord in the church.

Years ago, Kevin Bowling... I know he watches a lot on Sunday. Kevin Bowling owned a fishing tournament here in the Ozarks. This was 20 years ago. He asked me to be the Chaplin for it and lead some Bible studies and all that. I thought that sounded like the perfect thing to do to hang out with fishermen and get free knowledge. I’ll never forget the first tournament I went to. They usually do a Friday night gathering. They gather all the anglers and then Saturday morning, the tournament started. Kevin would sit down at the front table. I’m in the back of the room. He’s going over all the rules, how everything is going to go down. I was absolutely shocked at how many rules there are for a fishing tournament. There are a lot of rules, and nobody was taking notes. I had no idea how we were going to keep track of everything you’re supposed to know for tomorrow. But at the end, the very last thing he did was just put up this sign that said, “No Whining.” I laughed. I was the only one that laughed in the room. None of the anglers laughed. I thought that was funny. I went to Kevin afterwards and asked why nobody laughed at that. He goes, “Because they know exactly what I mean. I’m going to hear it all day tomorrow.”

Do you know when grumbling starts in your relationship with God and in your relationship with others? Here’s the very moment if you want to do an anatomy of it and figure out where grumbling begins. Here’s exactly where it begins: Grumbling and Arguing is what we do when we don’t get our way. I think we have a socially acceptable term for grumbling called venting. “I’m not mad, I’m not grumbling, I’m just venting. I just need a sounding board. Can I have a sounding board for just a minute.” Let’s be honest. You are grumbling. You are complaining under your breath. No, it was out loud. Grumbling and arguing when you don’t get your way. Can I take you back into the text last week? Let’s go back to Chapter 2: 4 that Scott shared with us. Remember? Practicing humility and then we got the picture of it in Jesus, the perfect model of it. The one who emptied himself for us. What does it say? **Not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interest of the others.**

Grumbling begins one of two ways. It begins when you are no longer looking out for the interest of others or you start looking out for the interest of others and they stop looking out for yours. You’re not getting your way. Grumbling and arguing is what we do when others are not looking out for us. If you are a leader in here... Can I see the hands of all the teachers, school administrators? You own a business or you have employees that you lead. You’re a manager at work. Pastor Beeson has two great word pictures I want us to see today. The first one is this: Leaders are catch basins for grumbling. In the

home, you know grumbling is coming when you hear this: “MOM!” We are going to be complaining about something. Teachers at school, you know when the kid comes up and starts grumbling, he didn’t, she didn’t get his or her way. We’re catch basins for this. I have a whole list of the grumbings I receive as a pastor. Let’s do it for just a little bit. It’ll be really short. Give me 30 – 40 minutes; that’s all I need to get through this next part.

Going back 25 years in ministry, the first grumbling I really heard was about the music. I heard grumbling of “Why aren’t we using the hymnals anymore?” “We are. They’re propping up the projector over there on the table.” I am illustrating a point right now... It’s a sin in me right now that I’m dealing with because do you know what a leader’s skill needs to be? We need to be a catch basin for grumbling without returning it, which is what we do. Grumbling begets grumbling. We have to be good at being the catch basin without returning it. When your co-workers are grumbling and at each other’s throats at work, don’t you be the one, when they bring it to you, to grumble back at them. No. Leaders have to present themselves...

I was going to give more examples, but we’ll leave it at music and move on. We have a lot of other things... I want to take it into the home because children... Let’s talk about parents as these catch basins because I think parents really understand being a catch basin for sibling rivalry.

Children learn to look out for the interest of their siblings... that’s where it starts, this respect for authority and one another begins at home. ...by watching their parents look out for each other’s interests. Our marriages become models of this. And, boy, have we seen plenty of grumbling marriages. “I’ve done nothing but meet your needs, meet your needs, meet your needs. when are you going to meet mine?” “I poured into you and poured into you. When are you going to start pouring into me?”

Mom and dad, we have an opportunity to put this on display each and every day, serving and caring for one another, so that our kids will pick it up. This is going to be as practical as the morning gets. Let’s give some practical examples. If you are still at home and you have a sibling at home, would you raise your hand? Let me see because this is for you. Mom and Dad, you might want to take pictures of the next three screens. These are practical ways to look out for the interest of your siblings more than your own.

When your phone battery is at 5%, let your sibling, at 10%, use the charger first. Some of you are going, “That makes no mathematical sense right there. You’ve heard it in the car, “I need the charger.” What’s the next question? “What are you at?” “I’m at 8%.” “You’re fine. I’m at 2%”

Have you ever noticed... I love how Jerry Seinfeld says it. “Your physical energy correlates with your phone’s battery.” Have you noticed that? When your phone is at 8%, you’re like, “I just don’t have the energy to go throughout the day. When you are at 100%, you’re like, “I can take on the day!”

How about this. Give your spouse, give your child... Don’t look at the battery; just give the charger.

How about this: On vacation, plan an activity or excursion for each member of the family and get excited about your sibling’s activity or excursion. You’re like, “So, when we walk into the theme park, I

let my brother pick the first three rides?" Or the whole day's rides. Let's see what happens. You're like, "Nobody will believe me, Ted. It's been about me for so long. It's about what I want on vacation."

How about this: When choosing a drive-thru for dinner, ask your siblings what they want. Start there.

Last week, after church, we drove to Oklahoma City. We had an event in Edmond, Oklahoma and so I took my daughter and her fiancé, Caden Hazell, my son Carson, and Cooper. I don't know if you've been from Branson to Oklahoma City, but you have to plan your stops just right or you will starve. You won't make the final journey. You've got Joplin and you've got Tulsa. I get hungry between Joplin and Tulsa. But I knew Joplin was where we were starting. As soon as I said, "Hey, guys, we're going to be in Joplin," the grumbling started, me included. Because we have to pick out a place to eat. Have you been on vacation and been up against this struggle of where to eat?

Somebody threw something out and my daughter... She doesn't mind me telling you this. I think. I should probably ask her before I give the whole thing. Somebody said, "We're good with McDonalds." Corynn groaned. That's grumbling right there, let's just be honest. Caden Hazel had the absolute best response. He's really soft spoken, doesn't have many words. He's in the middle seat back there and he just says this, "Did anyone in this car listen to Scott's message this morning? It got silent. And then he said, "Well, it looks like I'm going to be the one to be Jesus in this car. Ted, you take us wherever you want to take us."

Here's where grumbling begins in our relationships. We see where it begins in our relationship with God. Grumbling begins after you've given, after you've let your sibling use the charger, pick the restaurant, pick the rides. Now watch this question right here. You know it sneaks in. And it's unspoken; it's always unspoken. "What about me? When do I get the charger? I just gave it to you; how far do you need to go?" "I'm at 30%." "That's plenty. We pick you and your rides and your restaurant; when does someone in this car and in this family prioritize me and my interest?"

I can really take this on because I feel it. I do. We're all there. We all are prone to grumbling, but what we are going to see today is that this grumbling, where we're not allowing this inner worth of God in us, working out our salvation, and we're void of joy, we're not rejoicing in what God's doing in our lives, we begin grumbling. And there is no light going out to a lost and dying world. We're just like them.

So, when you get to that moment where you're like, "What about me?" I'm going to encourage you to stop asking the other person to take care of your needs. We can go back to last week's message and passage. Jesus emptied himself and what do we read in Verse 9 of Chapter 2? God exalted him. Jesus emptied himself and didn't look to you and to me for what he needed from us. After Jesus emptied himself for you and for me, ***Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***

Can I encourage you as you serve and as you pour into and as we read in Verse 4, you look out for the interest of other people, let God be the one who shows you favor. Rest in that.

What does James 4: 6 read, **“God opposes the proud...”** Opposes there is a military term and it means to stand against. God stands against the proud when it’s about getting your way and what you want, I can just see God going okay... **“...but shows favor to the humble.”** Let God be the one that rewards your humility. And stop calling out your great acts of humility. If I can say this online.

Do something crazy this week to serve someone, give to someone without venting online. Have you seen any grumbling this week online? Christian people doing great things for the Lord, letting everybody know about it. And it’s not quite met with the same response that they want. This is our light. This joy, this work that’s in us, Paul says, this is to come out. This is to be the testimony to the world.

Jesus says in John 13, 24-25 - **34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples... you are followers of mine, ...if you love one another.”** Care for one another. Do everything without grumbling and disputing. Look out for the needs of each other. Our love and care for each other is our testimony to a lost and dying world.

We read this going back into Philippians 2 **15 so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”** We’ve been talking a lot about standing with truth, and this passage is going to take us there again, standing on truth not drifting from the truth. But can I encourage us? We need to be joy givers to the world. It needs to come out of us; this working out our salvation, building joy and this rejoicing inside of us needs to come out.

If I can encourage us, don’t drift with the grumbling of the culture either. I know the last election didn’t go the way a lot of you wanted it to go. Do everything without grumbling or arguing. And maybe beginning to ask, What is God’s plan and purpose? What is his plan and purpose for me? What is his plan and purpose for us? Rather than grumbling and complaining. We need to be standing out in a warped and crooked generation, not joining it, not going with the drift. Why? **Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you hold firmly...** Going back to our Armor series – to the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God **...to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.**

One more word picture that Pastor Beeson gives that I absolutely love. He says leaders are catch basins for this grumbling. He also says grumblers are what he calls toxin emitters. You’ve been around one. You typically meet one on the street and as soon as you meet them, you’re like, *okay, we’re getting away from that as quickly as possible.* Nobody wants to be around a toxin emitter. No one wants to deal with that.

Here’s what Pastor Beeson says, going on with that thought. *“To grumble is to leak darkness when we were made to shine. Christians are being transformed to shine ...”* So, that’s what we’re looking at in Verse 12. We’re being transformed by the renewing of our mind. We’re being transformed. The work of God in us, the inner work of God in us, working out, not for our salvation. *“You are bleach, not ink.”* Are we giving joy this week? Is it what’s going on inwardly that’s being expressed?

In Philippians 2: 17-18, he concludes this part of our text this morning. ***17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.***

Let's be rejoicing with one another instead of grumbling and disputing with one another. I love messages like this because I think every church needs a message like this every couple of months. I meet guests to our church almost every week who come up to me and tell me about something going on at their church. I was just at an event this week in Missouri, and somebody told me they lost their pastor during the pandemic. They said, "We're looking for a new one and we can't figure out what kind of pastor we want." I'm like, "Is this a job offer? Because I'm not super excited about the presentation here." It's because of the grumbling and the disputing. We have to be in check with this. "You'll be known as my disciples by the way you love one another."

I had an illustration planned to end the message, but it changed yesterday. I was convicted by it, and I thought it was perfect, that it was exactly what it needed to be. I was talking to friends about the worker shortage. It's worldwide. We don't know where the workers are. We think they are in the pacific somewhere, or maybe I'm getting this confused; I don't know. It started last week talking to my brother-in-law. He runs a grocery store in Minnesota. And for that grocery store to run well, they need 75 employees. And right now, they have 45. What happens when you need a staff of 75 and you have this faithful group of 45 showing up. You know what happens. We've all been there with the grumbling at each other. "Why am I closing... again?" "Why did I have to take the extra shift?" Shift... I want to make sure I pronounce my words correctly before the 10:00 and online. Stop clapping. That's the worst thing to clap at right there.

Some of you are going to go to your boss today saying, "I ain't putting up with this shift anymore, I'm telling you that right now." You will edit that out of the deal. I can't believe it. I've never done that in 25 years of ministry where I gave a fake cuss word. For those of you who are guests, we're a non-denominational church if you haven't figured that out by now. We claim no denomination. You're like, "Yeah, I know. You're probably not even ordained." Well, I am. I'm ordained Southern Baptist and they haven't taken it back yet, so... Where was I? You people are terrible. I didn't want this. I didn't ask for this; you brought it out of me. What I love about those moments is there are some people here and on the line as to whether or not they were going to join this church and right now, they go, "This is my church right here. I am becoming a member of Woodland Hills Family Church this morning."

Can we get serious for a second? This is very important. So, anyway, worker shortage. What an opportunity. I didn't even think about this until yesterday when somebody brought it up to me. What an opportunity for you and me to not be toxin emitters, but to be joy givers in this town right now. There were a lot of people here this week. I witnessed an accident – saw it take place. Came upon five or six. We love our guest; we just want you to watch a you tube video on roundabouts before you show up. But there were a lot of people here. Lines were long. So, we have businesses trying to function in this town with half the employees and twice the amount of people. Now, I stood in line. I stood in line at a place to eat. Amy and I were at one this week.

Now, I have this thing. I am what you would call a logistics expert. Every business I go into, I can help them run it better. If you are a logistics expert, would you raise your hand. Look around the room. It's everybody. I sit there and go, "I wouldn't do that." You know what really fires me up is when you finally get to the front of the line, and you've been waiting in line for 20 to 30 minutes, and they take an over the phone order. NOOO, they stay on hold until there's no line left. Listen, the workers have had enough. Raise your hand. You're showing up to work. You're tired. We have an opportunity to be a major blessing to those people that just raised their hand.

I love going to Sugar Leaf. You know Todd that works there and he's the owner. They are short on help and he's back there every day at noon making sandwiches. I like to think my jokes help during busy times when everybody is pretty worn out and frustrated. They're not always received. They haven't been received lately. Todd and I are good friends, but I cracked a joke at Todd this week and he just looked at me. There was no smile, no smirk. Then he goes, "You want to put on an apron and get back here? I'm more than willing to put you on the clock right now." I'm like, "Lighten up and make my sandwich, Todd."

Can we all admit grumbling is easy? Complaining is easy. Arguing with one another is easy. Looking out for the interest of others and trusting God to show me favor for that? That's a skill we all need to learn. Complaining under our breath, that's easy. But I want to do everything without complaining under my breath or disputing. Some of you don't like the fact that we said we're doing online for the 26th, the last Sunday of the year. Enjoy that service without grumbling or disputing. Think about this. What a great opportunity to show the love of Christ in this town right now during a difficult season when things are going so well. Isn't it crazy to put it that way? The challenges that businesses are facing, we get the opportunity to be one in twenty, maybe one in thirty. I don't know. But we get to be the one that walks up at the end and says, "You're doing a great job. Thank you." You're like, "What if they don't get my order right?" "You're doing a great job, thank you." "I didn't want a burrito. I ordered a burger, but I'll take it." And I'm going to do it and eat it without grumbling or disputing. Can I get an amen on that one?

Father, it is in the name of Jesus that we want to do everything as a church without grumbling or disputing. May this be a message that sticks with us and goes with us for weeks, months, years, and then prompt us with it again when we need it. Every church needs it. It's why Paul shared it with the church at Philippi.

We need to be reminded of your work in our life and your good purpose in our lives. May every follower of Jesus in here workout our salvation this week with fear and trembling. May we find opportunities throughout this town in shows, attractions, restaurants, businesses, stores to be joy emitters, not toxin emitters.

For the one who has never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day that they call upon the name of the Lord and they are saved.

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus. And everyone agreed and said... Amen