



## What Comes Out of You When You're Squeezed?

### Having the right responses

Flashback: I'm 15 years old and my mother, who has just had major abdominal surgery, is depending on me to help with meals, housework, and babysitting during her recovery.

**M**y reaction? Not good. Instead of recognizing the experience as an opportunity to show my dependability, I complained about all the fun I was missing out on. And, to make matters worse....*gulp*... I wrote a letter to my mother expressing those bitter feelings!

I didn't realize that my attitude was the by-product of a high pressure situation, (a.k.a. stress!). My social life, my personal life, my (fill-in-the-blank) life, was being squeezed with inconveniences and demands *not* chosen by me. And what came out of me was sour juice! A positive, cooperative response would have honored my parents and pleased the Lord. My negativity showed a spirit that lacked the sweetness of a Christ-centered testimony.

An anonymous quote, "When we think right, there is always an abundance" is written in my Bible, next to Philippians 4:17: "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." Paul's words to the Philippians were stressing the importance of a visible testimony. If our actions and attitudes—our fruit—



line up with God's Word, others will see the evidence. "Thinking right" means there may be some nasty weeds to pull. Removing bad attitudes that have taken up residence in our hearts is necessary so that we can make room for the nourishment we need.



### Weed #16: Weed of Complaining

**Characteristics:** Fine, threadlike fibers completely cover its trunk and branches.

**Caution!** It's best to discover this one early! Has the uncanny ability to rub off on others!

**Cure?** Dust frequently with doses of enthusiasm and delightfulness.

1. Look up Philippians 2:14–15. What responses are we commanded not to have?

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~ Under what circumstances? \_\_\_\_\_

~ What reasons are given for this command? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. God's Word mentions several areas which can be affected by our choosing to behave unpredictably and unpleasantly. Identify where a complaining or unwilling spirit has already set in or has the potential to.

~ Luke 10:40–41 \_\_\_\_\_

~ 1 Peter 4:9 \_\_\_\_\_

~ 2 Corinthians 9:7 \_\_\_\_\_



3. The account of the Israelites' deliverance and journey to the Promised Land of Canaan is referenced in 1 Corinthians 10:10–11. Why did this experience occur, and why is it significant to us?

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~ Why would God want to warn us about such behavior?

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4. What is it that the Israelites are unhappy about in the following passages?

~ Exodus 16:1–3 \_\_\_\_\_

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~ Exodus 17:1–3 \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Moses follows God's instruction to send a representative from each tribe to explore the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:1–3). In verses 25–33, the men return to report on their findings. Once again, the people find occasion to grumble! Refer to Numbers 14:1–4 and record their responses.

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6. Not everyone was a naysayer! Read Numbers 14:24 to find out what was different about the response of Caleb. What two reasons are given?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_



- ~ Who else does God say will inherit the Promised Land in Numbers 14:30?

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7. What is the consequence for the children of Israel? (See Numbers 14:29–34.)

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- ~ Why would this wrong attitude cause God's judgment to prevail?

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- ~ How are we like the Israelites when it comes to responding to pressure and change?

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8. Our problems and worries can certainly prevent us from trusting Jesus' Words. David states in Psalm 119:92, "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction." How often do you turn to the Scriptures for enjoyment and encouragement?

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9. In John 16:33, the expression "but be of good cheer" is used by Jesus as He addresses His disciples. Jesus was preparing His followers for the time when He would no longer be present with them. What has God given us in return?

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~ Jesus punctuates the same verse with this statement: "I have overcome the world." What do these words assure us of?

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10. What instruction is given in Philippians 4:4 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16 that can surely bring "good cheer"?

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~ What do you think is required of us in order to conquer a complaining attitude?

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11. List the promises you can find in John 15:16 that will give you victory over a grumbling spirit.

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### Weed #17: Weed of an Angry Spirit

**Characteristics:** Has a high tolerance to extreme temperatures; roots run deep into ground.

**Caution!** Harsh, hard-edged leaves will NOT easily break free!

**Cure?** Must be sheltered from other vegetation; Allow it to wither in seclusion.

1. Ephesians 4:26a gives the instruction to, "Be ye angry," yet it includes a restriction, "and sin not." How can one display anger and not sin in their actions, thoughts, or deeds?

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~ Look at the latter part of Ephesians 4:26. How would you write this out in your own words?

~ According to Ephesians 4:27, who are we pleasing when we display an angry spirit?

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2. Wrath is defined as lasting anger. There may be situations in which anger is justified; however, if not dealt with properly, it becomes a long-term liability! Observe in Genesis 4:4-8 how Cain's envy quickly escalates into a deadly outcome. In verse 5, what is stated about Cain's attitude when his offering is presented to the Lord?

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3. In verses 6 and 7, the Lord questions Cain's reaction, and states the effect of good choices (if one does well) versus bad choices (if one does not do well). What happens when we make a bad choice?

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4. Due to the lasting anger that Cain would not relinquish, what ultimately happened? (See verse 8.)

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~ What other emotions can fester as a result of anger being stirred up within us?

~ Are we able to control an angry spirit in our own strength?

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5. What additional warnings concerning anger are given in Psalm 37:8?

~ How do you think this is possible?

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6. The book of Proverbs provides us with much insight regarding our relationships with others. Look up the following passages and fill in the blanks below.

- ~ Proverbs 14:29—One exhibits \_\_\_\_\_ when they are slow to anger.
- ~ Proverbs 16:32—Controlling your anger requires \_\_\_\_\_.
- ~ Proverbs 29:22—Anger stirs up \_\_\_\_\_.
- ~ Proverbs 25:23—Anger can affect our \_\_\_\_\_.

7. What measures are given in James 1:19–20 that would help deter someone from displaying outbursts of anger?

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- ~ What is the best way to prevent a situation from becoming more fierce and fiery (Proverbs 15:1)?
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8. There's an adage that states, "A believer at war with his brother cannot be at peace with his (Heavenly) Father." Hebrews 12:14 and Romans 12:18 stress the importance of maintaining peace with others. The Greek interpretation for peace is to "set at one again," implying a joint, harmonious bond. Keeping this definition in mind, explain why God places such a high priority on the attribute of peace.

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9. Having an angry-free testimony will bless God first and foremost. When all else around us seems to be falling apart, we can have confidence knowing that God is the One in charge, and He is not in a panic about any of it! How is God described in 1 Corinthians 14:33?

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~ God's very essence is one of serenity and stillness—the exact opposite of anger!

10. How could you be ready to withstand the temptation to sin with an angry response?

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Remember this! The greatest remedy for anger is delay!

### Weed #18: Weed of Discouragement



**Characteristics:** Easily known by its droopy, weak framework; lacks motivation.

**Caution!** Very twisted foliage—notorious for its stubborn, entangled clasp.

**Cure?** Metal fencing or caging recommended for a firmer support system.

1. Hannah was discouraged. She was barren, constantly being reminded of that fact by Peninnah, who had many children. Look up 1 Samuel 1:10. What action did Hannah seek in order to overcome her bitterness?



2. A situation that troubles us will trigger a reaction. Read the following passages to discover what was done when dismay set in.

~ Psalm 119:71 \_\_\_\_\_

~ Job 1:20 \_\_\_\_\_

~ Matthew 8:23-25 \_\_\_\_\_

~ Luke 8:43-44 \_\_\_\_\_

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~ 1 Peter 5:7 \_\_\_\_\_

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3. The Scriptures are full of promises of peace, strength, and hope. The definition of hope is "a feeling that what one desires will happen." How can an attitude of hope help combat discouragement?

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4. What can result in one who does not have hope? (See Proverbs 13:12.)

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~ On the other hand, what will occur if we *do* have hope (Psalm 31:24)?

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5. What does Psalm 73:26 declare will eventually fail us?

~ How would Philippians 4:13 help someone who is discouraged?

~ What quality mentioned in Psalm 27:14 is also required for those who will be strengthened by God?

6. Titus 2:13 puts a greater perspective on what we can hope for. What are we told to anticipate?

~ Are you behaving in a way that reflects anticipation of the Lord's coming?

7. What two words describe God in Psalm 71:5?

8. God's Word is rich with the assurance of hope! As you read Psalm 31, note the extreme range of emotions and the despair David had. In verse 14, what does David declare?

9. In Psalm 31:24, what will occur from having hope in the Lord?

10. What does God say about "His ways" in Isaiah 55:8-9?



- ~ How can trusting "His ways" in every situation help us reflect the godly attribute of an encouraging spirit?
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### Digging Deeper—Seeds of Sweetness:

When you are squeezed, what comes out of you? Are you quick to complain, or do you lash out in anger? Perhaps a discouraged heart dictates your mood the majority of the time. An irritable nature is difficult to control, whether it is ours or another's!

It's our sin nature that causes us to react wrongly. Sin blocks our communion with a Holy God, who sees all and knows all. Unless the barrier is eliminated, our ability to overcome any onset of disturbances is destined to fall short and fail utterly.

Isn't it reassuring to know that we have a merciful, patient God who is able and willing to forgive us when we respond inappropriately? Let us bravely forsake the grumbling, let go of the resentments and focus on that which is positive and uplifting.

One of the Bible's most steadfast promises can be found in 1 John 1:9. Confess the sin that has kept you in bondage, and restore your relationship with God today! Write it here.

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