

## August 21

**Philippians 2:14-15 (NIV)** <sup>14</sup> Do everything without grumbling or arguing, <sup>15</sup> so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.

As we piled into the car, I was thankful that I had been asked to be part of a first-of-its-kind ministry event in Colorado. Having been part of the same ministry in Oklahoma, we were asked to help with the inaugural event. When we arrived, we were greeted by a group passionately in love with the Lord. We found ourselves at a retreat in the mountains that was breathtaking. During the three-day event, it snowed, covering us and the camp in a blanket of pristine snow. The men attending the event were touched by the Lord and entered into deepening relationships. As we were leaving, we prayed as a group and said our good-byes. For a while, we rode in silence, but, later, we began discussing the weekend. We intended to provide some positive feedback, but about an hour later, we realized that we had fallen into criticism, complaining, and grumbling. We were focusing on what we felt went wrong. We no longer felt we were in God’s presence.

When we read about Israel’s deliverance from bondage in Egypt, we find that the grumbling and complaining of the Israelites always resulted in arousing God’s anger. While there is room for true constructive criticism and correction, grumbling and complaining never offer solutions; they only focus on what we believe is a problem. There is no spiritual gift called grumbling. In a perverse and crooked generation, we will encounter grumbling, complaining, and arguing. We hear this every day in every aspect of life. We tear down others. We demolish ideas. We criticize leaders. We complain about everything. We do so without ever offering viable solutions. Jesus prayed that the Father would not take us out of the world; instead, He asks the Father to protect us while in the world. As we go into a warped and crooked world, we do not go arrogantly. We go humbly, remembering we are to be like the stars in the sky, visible in the darkness. Instead of grumbling and complaining, we praise the Lord, we lift up others, we offer solutions given to us by the Holy Spirit, we encouraged, and we bless. Grumbling, arguing, and complaining keep us from being a light or the salt. When we realized what we had been doing as we drove back home, we threw away our notes and started over. We focused on all that was good about the weekend and added ideas we felt would help. The ride home was much more pleasant then. We will have that same effect on our world if we keep our focus on Jesus.