

## Moving from ‘complaining victim’ to walking in freedom

### An excerpt from “[Hold That Thought: Sorting Through the Voices in Our Heads.](#)”

Having lived in Southern California for over 35 years, I have grown accustomed to two types of weather: sunny and warm, and sunny and cold. We experience a few days of rain or clouds, but most of the time it’s just blue skies and sun. On the other hand, I spent my childhood in rural Washington where I experienced some very harsh winters and all four seasons. The Pacific Northwest is known for its rain, and there were a few years when we encountered unexpected showers—even on the Fourth of July. I distinctly remember this because we would hold our own fireworks show in our front yard with my dad as the master of ceremonies. It’s very difficult to light a match when water is pouring from the sky.



One of the most painful winter experiences I can remember included ice rain. Imagine tiny freezing needles hitting your skin as the wind propels them toward you. It is as unpleasant as it sounds. One day, when I was in junior high school, an ice storm came through during the night and created a thick layer of ice over everything. Our car was weighted down and frozen to the ground, and our front door was glued shut by a thick wall of ice. A clear, glassy blanket had draped itself over everything in sight. It took my dad many hours to pry open our front door to attempt to free the car and get to work.

### **The voice of the complaining victim**

This same trapped feeling is the dynamic that lies at the heart of the voice of the Complaining Victim voice in our heads. It is the idea of having no choice—paired with the dynamic of feeling unseen—that can trigger this voice. Circumstantial and relational issues pour down like ice rain, and soon we find ourselves imprisoned with a growing fear we may not escape. This easily devolves into blaming others and easily morphs into nagging or complaining. Even though we may be in a difficult circumstance, we can choose to believe we are not powerless. It is this shift that allows us to work through our unintentional barricade and make our way out the door.

The Complaining Victim typically emerges when we have not placed appropriate boundaries in our lives. We tirelessly put ourselves out there for others and get nothing in return. This is when the voice rises to the surface: *Why does this always happen to me? I don’t have time for this. My whole day is messed up now. Nothing ever goes the way I want it to. If only they would change, things would be so*

*much better.* We don't believe we have the power to be free of such circumstances. This is a big, fat lie. We *do* have the power and we find it in a two-letter word: *no*.

No. Such a small word. Why is it so hard to say? Guilt. Obligation. Pride. But sometimes “no” is actually “yes.” Yes to margin. Yes to boundaries. Yes to rest. To what might you say “no” so that you might say a hearty “yes” to something greater? This is a key question to hold as you make your way out from under the voice of the Complaining Victim.

### **Find a solid place**

I've spent many years being easily swayed by the actions and opinions of others. I was incapable of seeing myself as separate from the web others had spun around me. This was due to my own lack of healthy independence, and it easily led to the Complaining Victim. I resorted to victim mode because I had given control of the storyline to others and then felt my only choice was reaction mode. If only *they* would change their behavior, everything would work out for me. I didn't have a category for stepping aside, unhooking, or letting go. So, I swirled around in endless inner tirades at the mercy of the Complaining Victim. At one point, I journaled this prayer:

God, I need you to come in, sweep out the old way and grant me a new kind of peace so that when other people are losing it, I don't lose it. Make a new solid place in me where I stand firm and don't get swayed by moods or words from anyone. May I be moved, held, stayed only by you.

This is the raw version of my prayer as I began to wake up to the unhelpful influence others were having on me. The Complaining Victim gains steam as she careens out of control. As I flap around like a flag in the wind, she has no choice but to turn up the volume on victimhood—which slides easily into complaining. That solid place within me was uncovered by finding a renewed sense of self. Part of that work was gaining a sense of individual personhood with healthy boundaries.

As I have grown in my own confidence, my assurance in God has grown as well. These dynamics are intertwined. Without a healthy sense of God's love for me, how can I make my way to the center of holy confidence? On the other side of the coin, without a healthy sense of self, I end up thinking I am unworthy of God's love, and it remains unattainable to me. This solid place I prayed for is a combination of refreshed confidence in who I am in Christ, paired with the growing assurance of God's nature and how much God loves me. These dynamics grow together and create a firm foundation on which to stand.

*Adapted from [“Hold That Thought”](#) by Gem Fadling. Copyright (c) 2022 by Gem Fadling. Published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL. [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com)*

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### **Do Good:**

- Read [“Hold That Thought: Sorting Through the Voices in Our Heads”](#) (IV Press, 2022) by Gem Fadling.

- [Get on the list for Good Words from the Good Word](#) and get a boost of inspiration in 1 minute a day with a daily affirmation from Scripture list this sent straight to your inbox. It's an email to help you start your day with *goodness*.
- You've probably seen the red kettles and thrift stores, and while we're rightfully well known for both...The Salvation Army is *so much more* than red kettles and thrift stores. So who are we? What do we do? Where? [Right this way](#) for Salvation Army 101.