

The Transforming Power of Thankfulness

"Be joyful always; pray continually; GIVE THANKS in ALL circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Being thankful to God comes easily when things are going well: we are offered the job; a check arrives to cover the mortgage payment; the biopsy comes back benign; the marital conflict is resolved.

God's Purpose in Problems

Problems are one of God's most effective tools for showing us the illusion of self-sufficiency. ***Instead of trusting in our own strength, we were forced to trust God totally.***

Nothing that happens to us is a surprise to God, and his purpose is to use challenges, pain and difficult circumstances to mold us, shape us, prune us and mature us into becoming more like Jesus. He is transforming us into becoming the person He created us to be so we will be ready and able to do the things in this world that He has designed and called us to do!

Praise Anyway

In the midst of any difficulty, we can thank God for things such as the fact that He is present with us and will not leave us (*Matthew 28:20*); that nothing is more powerful than His love for us (*Romans 8:39*); and that He is "**behind the scenes**" working out all things for our good (*Romans 8:28*). When you give thanks to Him despite your circumstances, He will empower you to experience power, transformation and the peace that "transcends all understanding" (*Philippians 4:7*).

Spirit of Thankfulness

Cultivating a spirit of thankfulness is more than a good idea; it's a direct command from God. In the Old Testament, God laid down specific guidelines for the Israelites to bring thank offerings. In the New Testament, believers are instructed to be thankful in all circumstances (*1 Thessalonians 5:18*). When we're struggling with trials and difficulties, this sounds like a strange command, especially since we live in a culture that encourages us to act on the basis of how we feel. But God knows that when we focus on our blessings, it's easier to keep our problems and concerns in the right perspective.

Cultivating a spirit of thankfulness honors God and strengthens our faith. It also strengthens our relationships with other people. We can't be in a right relationship with God or with anyone without a spirit of thankfulness. No matter what problems we're struggling with, we don't want to be like the nine former lepers who forgot to say "thank you" to their Healer.

I will give thanks to you with all my heart, O Lord my God. I will honor you forever because your mercy toward me is great. Psalms 86:12-13 (God's Word translation)

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