

KEEPING IN TOUCH

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When I was a kid, my pastor used to tell us that we should "thank the Lord" all the time. To be quite honest, I couldn't think of anything to thank the Lord for. My parents took care of my needs. Besides, they weren't Christians so talking about God just didn't happen. As I got older (I was a Christian now), I would quickly thank the Lord when something good happened. These were times of desperation, though.

It never occurred to me until later in my life that maybe I should thank the Lord when things did not go well. Do you mean that I should say a "thank you" to God when something really crummy comes down? That was certainly a foreign thought. I am not saying that I started doing this. No sir!

One happy day I got married. It seems she had been taught to give thanks to God for "everything". She shared that thought with me when times really stunk. I naturally ignored her words of "interference". I did - like you did and everyone else who has a brain and a mouth - I complained and crabbed repeatedly until I felt worse. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

I hate to admit it but "giving thanks" to God in the tough times does work. It gives peace inside and I believe a real healing takes place with our attitude and behavior. Do I do it all the time? Sorry, but no. That's the bad part - I know what I should do but I choose not to.

After some study of the Word on this subject, I have discovered some truths. To give thanks to God is His Will for us (I Thess. 5:18). We are supposed to be thankful for everything that comes into our lives (Ephesians 5:20). We've all heard that we have no control over what we encounter, but

we do have control over how we react or deal with it.

Paul had it right. He decided to thank the Lord FIRST (Romans 1:8). Rather than get sidetracked by complaining and being a real negative bore, we should give thanks first - EVEN IF WE DON'T FEEL LIKE IT.

Paul was not naive. He knew we couldn't muster up enough personal strength to "thank". We are to do it through the power of Christ (Colossians 3:17). Everything that I have in life that is worth anything is because of my Lord Jesus Christ. Because my life is all wrapped around Him, then all the things I deal with are wrapped around Him too. I can thank the Lord for "Him" and I can thank the Lord for the "things". Sounds easy? Nope.

Giving thanks is probably a weird thing to do. Why? Because no one else does it around us (Ephesians 5:4). We would stand out and be different if we were a thankful person.

We say a lot of stuff we do not mean. Paul knew this. I could say "thanks to God" with my mouth and yet not have those same words in my heart. Paul said to "show yourself thankful" (Colossians 3:15). Ouch! My life should also demonstrate that I am thankful. People would actually see it in my face and in my actions.

Near my house grows sage brush. It is a plain, ugly bush. It has no fragrance until the dampness of dew or rain hits it. When the rain storms of life hit me, will I give forth a wonderful fragrance of thanks to God? I hope so because if I do, it tells the world that I trust my God completely.

Bruce Leary