

Being Thankful

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”
Philippians 4:4-8 (NIV)

I’ll bet that you never thought you’d hear anyone say that they were thankful they had cancer.

Well, you won’t hear me say it either. It’s not really true. What is true is that having cancer made me thankful. It has been eight years since my diagnosis, and I consider myself cured, which in itself is reason to be thankful!

Having a major illness can really change your perspective. All the things that used to be the focus of my day—the tasks waiting to be done, the meetings, the email, etc.—were still there, but they didn’t seem quite so urgent. I remember thinking many times while sitting in a (boring) meeting, “I’m glad to be here. Thanks for this day, Lord.” Beautiful weather was no longer something I noticed just in passing. Every day was beautiful, whether the sun was shining or it was cold and windy.

Unfortunately, my “attitude of gratitude” has faded a bit as the years have passed. But God has spoken to me many times through this passage in Philippians. Over and over, He has reminded me that bringing everything to Him and being thankful are the keys to having God’s peace in both my heart (my emotions) and my mind (my thoughts). It takes effort on my part to remember to be thankful; to rejoice in the Lord in spite of circumstances; to make sure my gentleness is always evident; and to train my mind to focus on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy.

I’ve discovered to my chagrin that it doesn’t take much to get my focus on the negative. It’s so easy to be frustrated by the circumstances of the day, to feel overwhelmed by the demands before me, and to feel that our culture is becoming more and more hostile to those who hold Christian values. Perhaps that’s why Paul says it twice: “Rejoice in the Lord always... Rejoice!” Once I start, I remember all the things for which I can be thankful.

During this month, I intend to practice having a thankful heart and mind. I invite you to join me in the discipline of thankfulness!



—Ruth Kinnersley

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