

HAPPY THANKSGIVING TO ALL!

2018

It's this time of the year when my husband and I, as grandparents, put on our thinking hats to find the perfect Christmas gifts for our grandchildren. It's always a challenging process since they're growing up so fast and we're not always aware of their wants and wishes. So, we always get our daughters-in-law involved. We need their help!.. And here's an email I received recently from one of them:

"Let me give the whole gift thing some thought. My dilemma is that they have so many toys already and still they complain that they are bored or they don't want to play with what they have. I want them to learn gratitude and thankfulness for the blessings they have and for how much they have that others don't have."

I wrote back to her saying that I totally understand her dilemma. She wants her kids to learn gratitude and thankfulness. What a noble and lofty goal! I admire her for that. And I'm sure she's not the only mom out there having the same goal in mind trying to find ways to inspire their own kids to display these attributes in their lives.

I remember as a kid growing up receiving one special gift on my birthday and one on Christmas day. That was it!.. And I'd never get tired of playing with them. I especially remember one Christmas when I got a doll with long blond hair, blue eyes with long and thick eyelashes. She was beautiful! I guess when you don't get many toys, you still remember those details decades later!... But I wasn't the only kid in the same situation. Some of my friends came from less fortunate families and clothes were the only things they received as gifts. No toys for them. I can only imagine how these kids must have felt...

My husband, our three boys and I went through some financial difficulties years ago and we had to depend mostly on the generosity of dear friends, family members, food stamps and used clothes donations to help us go through this rough patch. So, we know how it feels to live day by day not knowing when or if our situation will ever change. Oh, we certainly had our moments when angst, despair and grumbling were feelings we experienced, but we were also very grateful and thankful for every little miracle God would perform for us during these difficult times.

I recently spoke to one of my friends who now resides in an assisted-living facility. She was sharing with me about her health condition but mainly about the fact that she's surrounded by people who are oftentimes terribly physically or mentally handicapped. She commented that she sees many people in so much worse condition than she is that she should not be complaining about her own. I really admire her for her perspective on things regardless of her present circumstances...

Another one of my dear friends is going through some physical pain that she never experienced before. She doesn't call me as often as she used to because she says she would just be complaining about her situation and she doesn't want to do that. Oh, my heart goes out to her...

I'm asking myself, why do some people take everything for granted while others are grateful and thankful for everything in their lives?.. Why do some people start counting their blessings *only* after they've lost a loved one, their health or their possessions?.. And why do some people love to share their disgruntlement especially with other complainers while others prefer to keep it to themselves?..

Generally speaking, I think I'm not far off in saying that we live in a very complaining society. It seems that the more people have, the more complaining and discontent they are with what they have. And their children are oftentimes listening to what they say which may contribute in raising a new generation of complainers...

It's so easy to complain about the circumstances we're in, our job, our marriage, our kids or whatever it is that we're discontent with, isn't it?.. There will always be trials, testings and difficulties to make us gripe but I would hope that in these moments we can pray, trust in the goodness of God and be grateful and thankful for what we already have. As God's children, we can't dispute with Him about why things are the way they are, about why we have to do what we have to do or about why we're in the circumstances we're in. Oh, we may be able to do our part in making some changes in our lives, but in the end God is sovereign.

Gratitude or thankfulness is an attitude of the heart. And it's not something we're born with. It's instilled in us usually by our parents or caregivers. But at the end of the day, it's always a personal decision we make. And when we really think about it, it's a gift we give to ourselves. Happiness, joy, peace, contentment all flow from a grateful and thankful heart...

Giving thanks and being grateful is not something we should do only on Thanksgiving. It's an everyday thing... It can lift up our heavy heart. It can help us put aside our self-centeredness, selfishness that usually make us grumpy, discontent with our situation in life. It can make us appreciate all of our blessings...that our life is such a good one compared to others. It can make us realize that we don't deserve anything, but that God in his goodness and mercy gives us all. Oh, our circumstances may not always be euphoric and perfect. The persons around us may not always be and behave the way we'd like them to. It's not an idealistic world we live in... But we can choose to have a grateful, thankful attitude as well as a giving heart. God will always be there to help us in our endeavor if we ask Him.

This year my husband and I will be celebrating Thanksgiving with our oldest son and his family in Louisiana. We're really looking forward to that and are grateful for the opportunity to be blessed and hopefully be a blessing to them.

I would like to share the following prayer. I didn't write it but I think it reflects very well the kind of attitude we should have not only as we celebrate Thanksgiving but also throughout the year.

*Dear Lord,
Today we give thanks
For our many blessings,
As we pray for those in need.
We give thanks
For our family and friends
As we pray for those who are lonely.
We give thanks for our freedoms
As we pray for those who are oppressed.
We give thanks for our good health
As we pray for those who are ill.
We give thanks for our comfort and prosperity
As we share our blessings with others.
On this day of Thanksgiving,
May the love of God dwell within us,
May the joy of God uplift us.*

(Face Forward)

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