

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 68:19; 116:12,13,17; 100:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:18
HYMN: Count Your Blessings

THE SECRET TO JOY

I have learned an amazing thing, something that changes my life every time I remember it and do it. It changes me, when life is painful, assuring me that God is in control, and that He is doing His good work. It lifts a heavy burden from my heart. When life is going well, it multiplies my happiness. It increases my faith in our God, that He is alive and actively involved in my life. It is simple, yet powerful. It is an act of obedience to God's Word, because sometimes it makes no sense at all to us, to do it. Are you curious as to what I am talking about? It is, "give thanks".

The Lord repeats this command to us throughout His Word. (As a good Teacher, He emphasizes, through repetition, what He wants us to "get"!) One of my favorite verses in the Bible is 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." This is an attention-getting statement, for all of us who follow the Lord have asked the question, "What is God's will for me?" Here we have a clear answer! God's will is for us to give thanks.

It is natural for us to thank those who do things for us or give us a gift. But we also must not forget to thank our God, who "daily loads us with benefits" (Psalm 68:19), the One who gives us "every good and perfect gift" (James 1:17). We may forget because we do not see Him. But when we do remember, we are amazed at His manifold works- His answers to our prayers; His daily kindnesses; His presence in us and everywhere around us.

I have heard stories of those, who, even in the worst of times in life, have been known to have an abiding joy. Those who ask, "how?" receive the same answer: it is because they are keeping a journal of their blessings. This act of focusing on what they have in the Lord- versus what do not have- makes all the difference. And, because they are committing to write down what they are thankful for, they are putting purposeful effort into *looking* for their blessings. Good idea for all of us, eh?!

Giving thanks also protects us from the sin of complaining. I do not know about you, but this is my natural "bent"- to complain- and I need all of the help I can get, that I may not sin against my Lord! (Some days, I feel just like the Israelites of old- and this is not a good thing!) It is also a simple way I can re-direct my children when they fall into complaining themselves: "Now it's time to give 3 reasons to give thanks!"

Yet there is more to this command- the word "everything". In everything we are to give thanks- good and bad. This is where we need even more faith- not only can we not see the Lord, but also we cannot see any good in the situation we're in. And yet God tells us to give thanks anyway. Sound impossible? Everything in our life in Christ is, apart from His help. [He even taught us, "apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).] All I can say is, God tells us to do it. I have discovered a glorious peace in obeying this

sometimes difficult command. It expresses my trust in our Heavenly Father, that He sees, He cares and He is working it all out. If I forget to thank Him, especially when I am going through a hard time, I lose this blessing, my faith falters and I feel far from God. I also lose the chance to glorify Him, to show His peace- even joy - in the midst of a storm- something, again, I cannot do on my own.

In good times, I find that thanking the Lord is a way to multiply the blessing, just like we love to share our good news with our closest friends. It also protects me from thinking it happened because of something I did, versus acknowledging God as the One who truly made it happen.

It is hard to put in words what a blessing it is to give thanks to the Lord. Maybe the best way to share it is to say to you, “give thanks in everything”. Try it for yourself and discover a secret to real joy!



Copyright © 2007 by Karen Cupit. All Rights Reserved.