

Thankfulness metre check

Did you finish your list? No - not that one which you might have made for the guy who, according to a well known song is supposedly 'checking it twice!'? I am referring to the 'gift to yourself list.' It's also your 'list to God.' It's the list where you write down all of those many blessings for which you are thankful but may not often take much time to think about because they are taken for granted! And then there are the 'special blessings' that warm your heart when you think of them. Truly, regardless of your circumstances, there is always much for which you can and should feel overwhelmingly blessed. It all depends on your focus and your thankfulness metre.

Now, there are probably some among the readers of this article who are not quite in sync with the spirit and tune of 'Deck the halls with boughs of holly, fa la la la la, la la la la.' 'Tis the season to be jolly fa la la la la, la la la la!' Their holly has wilted, their jolly's gotten lost, and their fa la's have been somewhat off key and decidedly flat. Some who are in sync might feel badly and might be hiding their jolly thoughts for fear of making others feel even worse about their unfortunate situations 'job losses, poor health, deaths in the past year, financial stress and struggles, rebellious children, plans that didn't go as expected 'you know, the seemingly 'usual' fare these days if you listen to the news and read the newspapers. I personally don't listen often to the news because it can surely suck you into a black hole and I really am not fond of groping around in the dark!

If you focus on the darkness, it seems darkness is all you can see. It is better to focus on the Light of the world 'the Lord Jesus Christ. As we focus on Him the darkness will become less. As we carry His light with us, He will illuminate the way for us and others as well, with enough light for one step at a time. How do we follow that light? One way is to focus on what you do have, and not on what you don't have; on what you can do and not what you can't; on the blessings of the moment and hour and not the trials of yesterday; on what God has done for you and not on what you think He should have done for you. As you so focus, you will be able to be at peace, even in the storms of life. You will be able to take the next step, in faith that God is with you, lighting each step of the way.

As Christmas is upon us and 2013 will quickly draw to a close, I encourage you to give yourself a big Christmas/New Year present. Yes, you got that right. Give yourself a present!

Get a large sheet of paper and a pen you like to write with that is comfortable to hold because you will need to use it for a while. Turn on some pleasant music, and put your mind and heart into 'thankfulness mode'. Then, start writing down everything for which you are thankful in general, for special blessings during this past year, and for special blessings and people in your life. Use point form or sentences. Don't forget to be thankful for the measure of strength and health granted to you to be able to do what you do! You might make a rough draft over many days. Even write down blessed memories you will cherish forever of one who has gone on to eternity. When you honestly can't think of one more entry, write your 'gift list' on good paper and put it in a spot where you will find it regularly throughout the new year and for years to come as a precious gift to yourself, ready to be opened and savoured over and over again.

As a gift to others, make it a project to let each person appearing on your list know within 2014 how thankful you are for them and why! As the old hymn says, 'Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done . . . Count your many blessings; see what God hath done!' As you write, be sure to watch your thankfulness metre rise.

There is a wonderful story about an artist who painted 'peace.' The author, Beit Kjos, wrote about the painting, 'A tumultuous waterfall cascaded down a rocky precipice; the crowd could almost feel its cold, penetrating spray. Stormy-gray clouds threatened to explode with lightning, wind and rain. In the midst of the thundering noises and bitter chill, a spindly tree clung to the rocks at the edge of the falls. One of its branches reached out in front of the torrential waters as if foolishly seeking to experience its full power. A little bird had built a nest in the elbow of that branch. Content and undisturbed in her stormy surroundings, she rested on her eggs. With her eyes closed and her wings ready to cover her little ones, she manifested peace that transcends all earthly turmoil'.

No matter what comes your way in 2014, may you find that Jesus lights your path, one step at a time, and if ever you cannot see the light because of the storms, may you rest in the peace of God that transcends all earthly turmoil.

By the way, get into the habit of frequently checking the state of your thankfulness metre!

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