

## *Pk's Perspectives... Thankfulness*

Thanksgiving is a great time of year. People seem to be nicer the week of Thanksgiving. Maybe it's because we are reminded to count the blessings in our lives. Or maybe it's the calm before the storm of the busy Christmas season. Regardless, I love it.

But I believe the spirit of Thanksgiving is supposed to last longer than just one day or one week in November; it's more than just an excuse to overeat and watch hours of football. For a follower of Christ, thanks-giving is our default state of mind; thanks-giving is the essence of our lifestyle. Rather than simply a yearly holiday, thanks-giving should be a lifelong compulsion.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." Read that verse again slowly: "Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." Now, even slower: "Be thankful IN all circumstances..." as opposed to "Be thankful FOR all circumstances..."

Paul challenges us that regardless of what we walk through, we can maintain an "Attitude of Gratitude." That's hard because life is hard. There are many circumstances I deal with where "thankful" isn't my first response (*full disclosure*). Our natural tendency isn't to keep an attitude of gratitude when life gets hard. Our natural tendency is to see what's wrong in the situation, or find someone to blame! Owing to human nature, we are discontented. We want something different, better, or more. But I'm learning that even when I'm not thankful FOR the situation, I can be thankful IN the situation because I know God is leading me through the difficulty.

It's easy to fall into the trap of "when and then" thinking. "When and then" thinking says: "When I get \_\_\_\_\_ (*fill in the blank*), then I'll be happy." When I get out of college, when I get that job, when I get married, when my spouse grows up, when I get that car, that home, those shoes, then I will be happy. Sometimes we're so focused on acquiring more stuff in order to stimulate our mood of thanks-giving that we overlook the gifts which our Father has already given us.

Paul said in Philippians 4, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." This verse tells us that contentment can be learned. Learning contentment starts with identifying the blessings in your life; focusing on what you hold rather than what you wish to get your hands on.

I came across this testimony the other day: *There's a woman in our church named Traci. Traci is a wife and a mom. Years ago she was in a car accident that left her a paraplegic – bound to a wheelchair. Just this week I walked by Traci and asked the question we all ask each other, "How are you?" Instead of the typical, "Good. How are you?" Traci responded enthusiastically with, "I am blessed! I am so thankful!" Her joy caught me off guard. I sat down and asked her to tell me why she feels so blessed. She went on to say that even though she's bound to her wheelchair, even though the accident changed her life forever, it didn't change who she was as a daughter of God. Her faith in Jesus was strong. She shared how grateful she was that her children weren't in the car with her, and that her husband stayed by her side. She talked about how God has used her wheelchair to start conversations with strangers and share her faith. Traci has learned the secret of being content in all circumstances, and as a result the joy and grace of God is defining her life.*

Let's be people who are thankful in all circumstances and allow the grace and goodness of God to shape our lives. Take time this week to think about the blessings in your life. I hope to see you in Worship & Sunday School, PK.