

**November 7th, Don't Forget To Say Thank You**  
**Part 6 in the series 'The Gift of Life'**

What were some things from last Sunday's message that resonated with you?

Was there anything you wrestled with?

Can you remember the short story about the farmer from the beginning of the message? What was the point of the story?

A: the farmer understood that everything that happens in life can be a blessing, even those things that appear on the surface to be setbacks or "bad luck."

**READ Romans 5:3-5 (NLT)**

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love."

What's so great about endurance?

What kind of lens does Paul want us to see problems through and why?

Have you seen problems in your own life or the life of someone close to you develop strength of character? In what way?

Marci Shimoff in a book called Happy For No Reason writes: "People often find some sense of happiness by indulging in addictions or behaviors that may feel good in the moment but are ultimately detrimental or destructive. -the highs that come from drugs, alcohol, excessive sex, "retail therapy," compulsive gambling, overeating, and too much television watching, to name a few. This kind of happiness is hardly happiness at all. It is only a temporary way to numb or escape from our unhappiness through fleeting experiences of pleasure."

Why do you think so many forms of indulgence that our society tells us will make us happy fall into this category of happiness, as described by Shimoff?

What else do you find interesting about this excerpt of Shimoff's book?

Can you remember the necklace analogy from the message?

READ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

16 Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

READ Romans 8:28-30

28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.

What kinds of things can we always be grateful to God for— so as to make the string of our necklace gratitude?

A:

- gratitude toward God for the gift of life,
- gratitude toward God for the people in your life,
- gratitude toward God for his grace and love
- gratitude toward God that he has given you a glorious destiny, etc.

What's the number 1, main thing we can "do for God"?

A: Be grateful! God doesn't need anything you have. God doesn't need anyone to do anything for him. We get to participate in what he is doing in the world- a privilege.

If you have time, read and discuss this amazing story:

Richard Stearns, the president of World Vision, reflected on his visit to a church in Port-au-Prince, Haiti a year after the devastating earthquake in 2010. The church's building consisted of a tent made from white tarps and duct tape, pitched in the midst of a sprawling camp for thousands of people still homeless from the earthquake. This is how he describes the church and the lesson he learned in Haiti:

In the front row sat six amputees ranging in age from 6 to 60. They were clapping and smiling as they sang song after song and lifted their prayers to God. The worship was full of hope ... [and] with thanksgiving to the Lord.

No one was singing louder or praying more fervently than Demosi Louphine, a 32-year-old unemployed single mother of two. During the earthquake, a collapsed building crushed her right arm and left leg. After four days both limbs had to be amputated.

She was leading the choir, leading prayers, standing on her prosthesis and lifting her one hand high in praise to God .... Following the service, I met Demosi's two daughters, ages eight and ten. The three of them now live in a tent five feet tall and perhaps eight feet wide. Despite losing her job, her home, and two limbs, she is deeply grateful because God spared her life on January 12th last year ... "He brought me back like Lazarus, giving me the gift of life," says Demosi ... [who] believes she survived the devastating quake for two reasons: to raise her girls and to serve her Lord for a few more years.

Richard Stearns goes on to say, "It makes no sense to me as an "entitled American" who grouses at the smallest inconveniences—a clogged drain or a slow wi-fi connection in my home. Yet here in this place, many people who had lost everything ... expressed nothing but praise.

I find my own sense of charity for people like Demosi inadequate. They have so much more to offer me than I to them. I feel pity and sadness for them, but it is they who might better pity me for the shallowness of my own walk with Christ.