

Standing Strong When Satan Tries to Crush You

There are days, and we all have them, when we wake up on the wrong side of the bed.

Days when we just don't feel thankful. Worse than that, we don't even see what we should be thankful *for*!

When I Don't Feel Grateful—Before

And on those days, no matter what the weather outside, our hearts are gray, our minds are cloudy, and our thoughts drip with self-pity.

We grumble and groan about picking up dirty socks (again), being behind on the laundry (and it's only Monday!), having to answer the "What's for supper?" question (with no answer, for the millionth time), perhaps moderating yet *another* quarrel between the kiddos, and scrolling through Facebook only to see how stellar everyone else's life is.

During those times, we might pause in our self-defeating diatribe only after mumbling "Whatever," a word that you may relate to if you have teens around you all day.

How that common teenage response has irked me, when said by someone other than myself, of course! Usually delivered with a yeah-I don't-really-care-what-you-think-or-have-to-say attitude, it is the modern-day equivalent of delivering the same message. And if I'm to be honest, I deliver it to my almighty Father, the author of everything good in life, with the same snarky attitude. In God's mercy, however, I recently had a personal revelation that has actually helped me turn my use of that word around a full 180 degrees! But let me explain.

Contentment has been a big issue in my life recently. Not only have I been pondering it, but it has come up in discussions with random people out of the blue and been a topic I've seen in various books and magazines I've come across. Clearly, God's trying to teach me something!

When I Don't Feel Grateful—Revised

So I took a look at what Paul says about it in the Scriptures. Already familiar with Philippians 4:13, encouraging us to “do all things,” the line just prior to that verse jumped out to me:

“For I have learned in whatever state I am to be content. I know both how to face humble circumstances and how to have abundance. Everywhere and in all things I have learned the secret, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Phil. 4:11-12).

Paul has learned to be content, *whatever* the circumstances.

Now I understand that this is not what the average teenager is saying when using this response to a well-meaning parent or authority figure. And it's certainly not the meaning I may ascribe to it when I mutter it under my breath on one of “those” days. But the *word* no longer irks me. In fact, I realize that I need to use it with more frequency in my own prayers and pleas to the Father.

“Lord, **whatever** You send me, **whatever** I will go through today, **whatever** perceived trials I may face, **whatever** challenging people or issues I will need to deal with, whatever feast or famine I experience, **whatever** valley I need to cross, may my unceasing prayer be that of gratitude for Your unfailing love and faithfulness and mercy in my life. May I always seek more of You, and look less and less to my circumstances, **whatever** they may be.”

Paul learned to be content—and grateful—in circumstances much

more difficult than most of us will ever face.

This is my prayer for you and me today, as well. {eo}

Pat Fenner has been homeschooling her five children for 20 years, learning and changing her methods quite a bit during that time. Preparing for a soon-to-be empty nest, she shares what she's learned and encourages others in the journey over at . Join them over a cup of coffee and sign up to get useful and creative parenting and homeschooling "members-only" helps.