

Thankful for the Good and the Bad

How can we be thankful in the midst of everything going on in the world today? We've been through a lot in the last few years and I just want to stop a minute and thank God, even for the difficulties many of us have gone through.

One of my favorite songs is "Through It All," written by Andre Crouch in 1971 after having purchased an engagement ring for a young woman. He was heartbroken when she announced that she was getting married, but not to him.

Through It All

He wrote: "I thank God for the mountains, and I thank Him for the valleys, I thank Him for the storms He brought me through; for if I'd never had a problem, I wouldn't know that He could solve 'd never know what faith in God could do.

"Through it all, through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus, I've learned to trust in God; Through it all, through it all, I've learned to depend upon His Word."

Even though it was written 50 years ago, this song seems perfect for today.

Life and All Its Sorrows

In the last two years, many people have gone through so much. It's not the same world we lived in, even in 2019. Things have drastically changed and may never go back to anything resembling normal. I grieve for those who have lost loved ones or have loved ones in the hospital trying to beat this pandemic disease. Many of these young and never had any health issues.

We never know what is around the next corner. Life is good at

throwing us curveballs. Dealing with those sometimes feels impossible. I can't imagine how those who don't know God have made it through the last two years. I understand more every day about how much I need Him.

Following God isn't always easy though. We don't get special favors because we are Christians; we just know who to trust and who we need to be following.

Endure Whatever May Come

In Luke 14:27 (AMP), Jesus explained this with a no-nonsense statement: "Whoever does not carry His own cross [expressing a wiliness to endure whatever may come] and follow after Me [believing in Me, conforming to My example in living and, if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of faith in Me] cannot be My disciple."

He didn't sugar-coat what it means to follow Him. He didn't tell us to say a prayer and then forget about Him. He said it's a journey that takes endurance. That means it takes the power of suffering patiently through an unpleasant or difficult process without giving way. It's the picture of someone standing in a thunderstorm with the wind ready to blow them away but they refuse to move. They are standing strong, holding on to God's almighty hand.

That's sort of what the last few years have felt like. Still Jesus told us there would be days like this when we must endure whatever may come. It sure is true because an awful lot has come our way that we never thought we'd have to face.

Thankful for Difficulties

All of us have many blessings that God has provided us and we should be thankful for every single one, but what about the difficulties we face? Can we be thankful for the losses we've had this year? When we have losses, we are sad and despondent. We feel low but without feeling low, how would we know what

the highs feel like?

Life is a series of ups and downs. The challenges we face will make us stronger and more able to empathize with others to help them on their journeys.

Mistakes, difficulties and problems can be things we should be thankful for. Without failing, we would never learn anything. Does a baby walk on his or her first try? No, they fall and then get back up again. Slowly they learn how to keep their balance. Failure is how we learn. Without it, we'd never grow.

Thankful for Honesty

Honesty is another one of those things that we aren't always thankful for. I can only see things from my perspective. I can't see them from another's perspective unless they honestly share that with me. That's called my blind spot; others can see it but I can't.

When I weighed over 400 pounds, I was at a workshop where we all had to give each other feedback. Those in my group told me I was holding back and not being completely honest. We didn't know each other before we came so what my group shared with me was based on current observations.

When I was super, morbidly obese, I related to people differently. I always tried to not say or do anything that would be challenged for fear of being rejected. These new friends saw right through that. They knew I was holding back and not sharing from my heart.

From then on, I came out of my self-imposed shell and shared what I saw or felt. I am now extremely thankful for honest feedback and consider it a gift anytime someone takes time not to criticize me but to give honest feedback.

Thankful for My Weight Gain and Loss

Remember what Andre said, "If I'd never had a problem, I

wouldn't know that He could solve 'd never know what faith in God could do." Had I never gained the weight I did, I would have never known the extreme grace and strength of God. I would have never known that God cares about my problems and is there to help me through them.

In 2 Corinthians 12:7-8, Paul confesses, "To keep me from thinking of myself as important, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, to torment and harass me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me."

We don't know what Paul's thorn in the flesh was but I know what mine was and is. It's the desire to eat things made with good, ole' processed sugar. When that substance is put into anything edible, I want to eat it and keep eating it.

Thankful for the Thorn

I'm thankful for the thorn because it led me to finally surrender sugar, which was what I loved most in the world, to God. When I saw I had nothing else left to do, I fell on God's mercy. I said, "I don't know how to do this. I need Your help knowing how to stop eating things made with sugar. It really sounds impossible but I believe You are the only one who can help me."

That became a 2 Corinthians 12:10 moment: "When I am weak [in human strength], then I am strong [truly able, truly powerful, truly drawing from God's strength]."

I am so, so thankful that God has led me every step of the way on my weight-loss journey. I could never have done it without Him.

Give Thanks in Everything

We weren't designed to do life on our own. We need God. So, I challenge you this Thanksgiving to think about how going

through difficulties has made you stronger and thank God for them.

First Thess. 5:18 (TPT): “And in the midst of everything be always giving thanks, for this is God’s perfect plan for you in Christ Jesus.” This verse tells us we should always give God thanks. Even in the bad times? Yes, even in the difficult, scary, hard, desperate valleys of life, we need to rely on God.

Romans 7:25 echoes that: “I give all my thanks to God, for his mighty power has finally provided a way out through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One!” Thank you God for helping us through it all!

For more on this topic, check out Sweet Grace for Your Journey podcast episode 107: Through It All? Go here. [eoat]

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