

10 Things You Should Be Thankful For

Right after Typhoon Haiyan hit the **Philippines** this month, a friend sent me the amazing photo I'm posting here. It's a snapshot of a Pentecostal church service held a few days after the monster storm displaced 3 million people and killed more than 5,000. Notice that the worshippers are standing in about 16 inches of water. A flooded church did not keep these people from thanking God that they were spared.

I've stared at this grainy photo many times since I received it. I intend to stare at it some more, especially during the **Thanksgiving** holidays, because I want the image burned in my heart. When I look at the dedication of these poor Filipinos—some of whom lost what little they owned—I am forced to face my smug first-world ingratitude.

If you are reading this online, you are already blessed because 70 percent of the world has no access to the Internet. Here are 10 more things you should be **thankful** for:

1. Got drinkable water? About 1.1 billion people in the world don't have access to clean drinking water. Because of that, about 9 million people will die this year because of water-related illnesses. The next time you open a bottle of Dasani or drink from your tap, remember that millions of women around the world spend an average of four hours daily walking to get water.

2. Do you eat three meals a day? The World Health Organization estimates that one-third of the world's population is overfed, one-third is underfed and one-third is starving. Approximately 925 million people in the developing world are chronically undernourished, and 15 million children die annually because of hunger.

3. Got electricity? About 1.5 billion people in this world have no access to electrical power. In the nation of Malawi, where I preached two weeks ago, only 9 percent of the people have electric lights. Do you enjoy that oven in your kitchen? The next time you prepare a meal, remember that 2.5 billion people in the world still use wood or charcoal to cook their food. Do you enjoy your washing machine? Data analyst Hans Rosling recently reported that 5 billion people in the world still wash their clothes by hand.

4. Got a roof over your head? The U.N. Commission on Human Rights says there are 100 million homeless people in the world. One in three children in the world live without adequate shelter. And today there are about 42 million people who are living as refugees. Most were displaced by war and live in crude camps.

5. Do you own a car? The United States still has the highest number of motor vehicles in the world. Globally, only 1 out of every 8 people has access to a car. Many of the others either walk, take crowded buses or public vans or ride on bicycles, rickshaws or animals. Did you fly somewhere in the past year? You are blessed. Only 5 to 7 percent of people in the world have ever flown in an airplane.

6. Do you have a flushable toilet? The United Nations Development Program reports that 2.6 billion people do not have access to any toilet facilities. India has the largest percentage of people who lack adequate sanitation. About 638 million Indians must go outdoors.

7. Can you read? Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names. There are 72 million children who should be in school but are not enrolled. If you have a college degree, you are in a privileged minority; only 6.7 percent of people in the world have a college diploma.

8. Do you have health care? Here in the United States, we are debating the pros and cons of Obamacare—and griping about the reliability of the government’s infamous health care website. But let’s keep in mind that in developing countries, you might wait 8 hours to see a doctor in a clinic where there are no medicines and no electricity—and you might have to bribe the doctor to see him.

9. Do you have political freedom? About 1.6 billion people in the world live in repressive societies where they have no say in how they are governed. They face severe consequences if they express their beliefs or assemble peacefully. The most oppressive countries today include North Korea, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Eritrea and Equatorial Guinea.

10. Are you free to worship? More than 75 percent of the world’s population lives in areas with severe religious restrictions. Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution simply because of their belief in Jesus Christ.

I encourage you to make your own list of blessings. Thanksgiving is not an optional virtue. Without it, our pride swells and our selfishness consumes us. This is why David wrote, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits” (Ps. 103:2, NASB). **Thanksgiving** is an important exercise because it adjusts our attitude. It calibrates our hearts so we remember again why we are blessed and who deserves the credit for our blessings.

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