

Thanksgiving—The Remedy for a Rotten Attitude

My experience with Third-World poverty last week reminded me that we are so much more blessed than we realize.

Whenever I stare Third-World poverty in the face I receive a painful attitude adjustment. This happened to me last week when I visited a refuge for disaster victims in the small community of Manatí, Colombia. Approximately 1,500 people—all of whom lost their homes during floods two years ago—now live in crude storage units equipped with running water and makeshift latrines.

I stuck my head in one of the apartment doors just to see the conditions. A single mother lived in one room with her eight children. Some pigs and dogs, looking uncomfortable in the South American humidity, sought shade near a window nearby. Most kids in the camp played with old jars, plastic bins and sticks, but I noticed one dirty-faced girl with a used doll. She had created a home for her Barbie in the dirt outside her front door.

The people of Manatí know nothing about hot water, air conditioning or flush toilets. They certainly don't have smartphones, flat-screen televisions, washing machines or Internet access. They've never heard of digital books, granite countertops, spa treatments, GPS devices, Jacuzzis, gourmet kitchens or Netflix. They can't imagine paying \$4 for a cup of coffee or \$10 for a movie ticket. Being able to own a car is unthinkable.

They are part of the 50 percent of the world's population living on less than \$ per day.

Before my tour of the compound in Manatí I spoke to a group of women, many of them abused or abandoned by their husbands.

They gathered in a tent on the camp property to hear the gospel. I used a scratchy sound system mounted on a motorcycle to share the message of Jesus with them. When I looked into their worn faces I was reminded of how fortunate I am to have an education, Christian parents and the basic blessings of life.

I wish every American could spend at least one week a year in a developing country. It would make all of us more grateful if we could understand that the majority of people in this world are baffled by the comforts we enjoy.

As you gather with friends and family to celebrate Thanksgiving this year, I hope you will ponder these stark truths about world poverty:

- 2 billion people in this world have no access to electricity.
- According to UNICEF, 30,000 children die every day due to poverty.
- Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names. 72 million children who should be in school are not enrolled.
- One in three children in the world live without adequate shelter.
- 1.4 million children die each year from lack of access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation.
- Millions of women spend an average of four hours daily walking to get water.
- Approximately 790 million people in the developing world are still chronically undernourished.

In light of these realities, our worries—even in what we call a weak economy—seem silly. We have absolutely nothing to complain about. Instead we should be on our knees thanking God for His goodness.

Thanksgiving has the power to adjust our selfish hearts and

recalibrate our whiny attitudes. When we thank the Lord, we subdue the pride in our hearts and crush our craving for entitlement.

When I was a child, my church used to sing a hymn that contained this chorus:

Count your blessings, name them one by one,

Count your blessings, see what God has done!

If you have become a smug, grumbling American, I urge you to take this on as a homework assignment. Look around you and begin to list your blessings. Thank God for your drivable car, your health, your drinkable water, your secure roof and your abundant provision of food. Thank Him for your income, relationships, talents and abilities. Keep listing these positive benefits until your heart overflows with gratitude.

I guarantee if you will learn to thank God for His blessings, He will take First-World pride out of your heart and give you a fresh revelation of His kindness and grace.

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