

When You Don't Feel Especially Thankful

We're in a season of giving thanks. Thanksgiving Day is set aside for giving thanks for the blessing of the harvest of the year before. Yuletide joy over the birth of Christ follows.

But what if it doesn't? What if you don't feel especially thankful this Thanksgiving? What if you don't feel particularly joyful this advent season? What if you are going through trials and tribulations that have you spinning in circles, struggling to maintain your faith, and avoiding prayer like the plague?

During this season when many are celebrating Christ, singing Christmas carols and counting their blessings, there are many going through divorce, grieving over deaths, and watching the enemy work to steal, kill and destroy their children. During this time when people are jolly, jingling bells and telling holiday jokes, there are many fighting depression, despair and death.

What to Do, What to Do?

So what do you do when you don't feel especially thankful? What do you do when your emotions are on a roller coaster? What do you do when nobody seems to understand or care what you are going through? What do you do when you're tempted to blame God for your circumstances?

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In short, you obey the Word. The Bible says, "Give thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20). The bottom line is that even when bad things are happening into us, even when we're

experiencing gut-wrenching pain that makes us want to withdraw from everyone including our Comforter, God is still worthy of our thanks.

Romans 8:28 is still true. God really is working all things together for good—even the things that are tragic. Ephesians 1:11 is still true. God really does work all things according to the counsel of His will—even the things that defy His will. God's will is good, perfect and acceptable and He's going to turn it all around in due season.

God Has Not Betrayed You

Satan will do anything he can to drive a wedge between you and your loving Creator. He points a finger at God when tragedy—or even just circumstances you don't like—strikes. He suggests God doesn't care about your problems. He blames God for not healing your sick loved one or saving your children.

Although God never does anything wrong and never needs forgiving, we can sometimes feel like God has betrayed our trust. We stood on His Word, believed with all our heart, waged spiritual warfare, prayed in tongues for hours, and still didn't see good come to pass. That can leave us resentful, bitter and unforgiving.

I've shaken my fist at God once and been furiously angry with Him at least one other time. I can tell you this: He would much prefer you talk to Him about it than shut Him out. If you communicate with God, even if you are angry, He can reach you, help you and heal you. God never betrays us, but our emotions do.

Managing Your Emotions

We are all emotional beings. God gave us emotions—and God Himself has emotions. Think about it for a minute. Sometimes we feel joyful; sometimes we grieve. Sometimes we feel bold; sometimes intimidated. Sometimes we feel triumphant; sometimes

completely and utterly physically and emotionally exhausted.

Our emotions can be a great motivator at times and a great enemy at other times. In fact, Watchman Nee, author of books like *Spiritual Discernment*, *Secrets to Spiritual Power* and *Let Us Pray*, once said that emotions are the believer's number one enemy—not the devil, but our emotions.

If we give God the reins of our heart, we'll find stability—but we have to give Him all the reins or we are in danger of pulling in the wrong direction as we run our races. If we pick and choose which emotions we will submit to God and which ones we'll allow free reign in our souls, we'll wind up unstable—and wound up. We'll find ourselves holding on tight as the emotional roller coaster turns us upside down and leaves us spinning in circles.

Give God the Reins

We need to align our emotions to the Word of God. Yes, I know. That's easier said than done. Believe me, I know. But if David did it so can we. It's not a matter of putting on a soldier face and keeping a stiff upper lip. David poured out his emotions to God—the anger, the disappointments, the hurt, the confusion—but he didn't wallow in those emotions. He submitted them to the one who could stabilize his soul.

Yes, there is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to love and a time to hate, as Solomon shares in Ecclesiastes 3. But it's always time to rejoice in the Lord—not in our circumstances but in the Lord. I believe choosing to rejoice in Him as an act of our will is one of the most strategic ways to submit our emotions to Him—to give Him the reins of our hearts.

So what do you do when you don't feel especially thankful? Intentionally find something to thank Him for—and there's plenty. I assure you, there's plenty. Whatever we face in this life, it's only temporary and, like Kathryn Kuhlman used to

say, "No matter what happens to you, as long as God is still on His throne and there's an answer to prayer. Just so long as your faith in Him is intact, you cannot be defeated." Amen.