

## “DON’T FORGET”

How is it that I’m always forgetting to thank God for the ordinary days in my life?

Sometimes, when I’m waiting for the traffic light to change at an intersection, I’ll reflect on my day up to that point. Usually it’s a pretty typical day, doing things like working and eating and spending time with my wife. My “normal” days are days without death, illness, accident or other bad news.

On the other hand, typical days are also days without extra money in my pocket to spend on myself, no calls from the long lost friends of my childhood, or any other extra special joy. Most days are like most of the others I lived through—and I often forget to thank God for them.

Do you ever notice how quickly we turn to God when there’s a crisis in our lives, and how easy it is to thank God at times of great happiness? And yet God is with us in all of our days, and so much time can slip through our fingers without praising God for the ordinary blessings that ordinary days bring.

Why is that, I wonder? Aren’t days that are simple and common still a treasure, still a gift to us from God, just like the greatest days of our lives? So, why do we so often forget to thank God for them? Even when we’re experiencing difficult and painful days, can’t we still find at least one reason to give thanks to the Lord?

Yes, it might take some thought, reflection and searching, but when we find something we can sincerely give thanks to God for, it can make those bad days less painful and difficult. Giving thanks on bad days is a powerful way to praise God and deepen our faith; and it can also help lift us out of the mire of our sorrow and despair.

Greg Anderson, in his book *Living Life on Purpose*, shared a true story about a man whose wife had left him. He was deeply depressed. He had lost faith in himself, in other people, and in God. One morning, this man went to a small neighborhood diner for breakfast. There were several other people there as well, but no one was speaking to anyone else. The mood in the place was cold and

dark as this miserable man sat hunched over the counter, stirring his coffee.

In one of the small booths next to a window sat a young mother with her little girl. They had just been served their food, and the youngster broke the icy silence of the diner by nearly shouting, “Mommy, are we going to pray here?”

The waitress who had just served their breakfast turned around and said, “Sure, honey, you can say a prayer. Will you say it for us?” The waitress then turned and looked at the rest of the people in the diner and said, “Bow your heads.” Surprisingly, one by one, the other customers’ heads went down. The little girl then folded her hands, closed her eyes and said, “God is great. God is good. Now we thank Him for our food. Amen.”

Anderson said that the little girl’s prayer of gratitude changed the entire atmosphere of the diner. People began to talk and laugh with one another. The waitress said, “We should do this every morning.” “Right after that little girl said grace,” the despondent man said, “my whole frame of reference started to improve. I began to stop focusing on the things I didn’t have and instead thank God for everything I did have. Over time, as I continued to express gratitude for things I had never given thanks for before, I found more and more things in my life to be grateful for. And gradually, as more time passed, I was transformed into a more grateful, joyful person.”

All of that happened because a young girl didn’t forget to give thanks to God for the meal she was about to eat.

In the classic novel *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe, when Crusoe found himself stranded on a deserted island, the first thing he did was to make out a list. On one side of the list, he wrote down all of his problems. On the other side of the list, he wrote down all of his blessings. So, on one side he wrote, “I do not have any clothes.” And on the other side he wrote, “But it is warm and I really don’t need any.”

On one side Crusoe wrote, “All of my provisions were lost.” On the other side he wrote, “But there is plenty of fresh fruit and water on the island.” And on down the list he went. In this way, Crusoe reminded himself that for every negative aspect of his situation, there was a positive aspect—something to be thankful for.

Maybe we could use that example from Robinson Crusoe to inspire us to sit down and take an inventory of our blessings—even write them down on a piece of paper if that helps—so we can focus on the blessings and joys we enjoy and the positive things that have happened and are happening in our lives, and not

forget to thank the Good Lord for them.

Robert Fulghum, in his famous book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, wrote about being happy and grateful for the little, unexpected, delightful things that happen to us in life.

“Murphy’s Law does not always hold,” says Grandfather Sam. “Every once in a while the fundamental laws of the universe seem to be momentarily suspended, and not only does everything go right, nothing seems to be able to keep it from going right. . . .

“Ever drop a glass in the sink when you’re washing dishes and have it bounce nine times and not even chip?

“Ever come out after work to find your lights have been on all day and your battery’s dead, but you’re parked on a hill and you let your old hoopy roll and it fires the first time you pop the clutch and off you roar with a high heart?

“Ever pull out that drawer in your desk that has a ten-year accumulation of junk in it—pull it too far and too fast—and just as it’s about to vomit its contents all over the room you get a knee under it and stagger back, hopping on one foot doing a balancing act like the Great Zucchini, and you don’t lose it?

“A near-miss at an intersection?

“The glass of knocked-over milk that waltzes across the table but doesn’t spill?

“The deposit that beat your rubber check to the bank because there was a holiday you forgot about?

“The lump in your breast that turned out to be benign?

“The heart attack that turned out to be gas?

“Picking the right lane for once in a traffic jam?

“Opening the door of your car with a coat hanger through the wing window on the first try?

“And on and on and on and on. “When small miracles occur for ordinary people, day by ordinary day. When not only did the worst not happen, but maybe nothing much happened at all, or some little piece fell neatly into place. The grace of what-might-have-been-but-wasn’t, and it was good to get off scot-free for once. The ecstasy of what-could-never-happen-but-did, and it was grand to have beat the odds for a change. Or the bliss of . . . a day when nothing special took place—life just worked.

“My grandfather says he blesses God each day when he takes himself off to bed, having eaten and not having been eaten once again. ‘Now I lay me down

to sleep. In the peace of amateurs, for whom so many blessings flow. I thank you, God, for what went right! Amen.”

So, let’s not wait until Thanksgiving Day to remember the things we’re grateful for. Today—right now!—may we not forget all the reasons there are, large and small, ordinary and extraordinary, for giving thanks to God. Amen.