

Some people are never satisfied. Other people seem to be at peace all the time, no matter what is going on. What is the difference? Genetics? Personal decision? Life experience?

I often have had opportunity to talk to people who are going through tough times and I usually end up asking them what they are thankful for. Usually they can name a thing or two. More often than you might imagine, however, they can't think of a single thing they are thankful for. They have lost their job, their family is broken, their health is suffering the consequences of their choices and all seems gloomy. So I have a routine set of questions to reflect on... What did you eat in the past 24 hours? I have never had anyone who didn't have anything, but it wasn't what they wanted. Where did you sleep last night? I have gotten all kinds of answers, but most of the time it wasn't WHERE they wanted. And the list goes on.

Eventually they get the point... gratitude, and personal happiness, is a choice. For those of us fortunate to live in the United States, or all of western culture for that matter, it is a matter of focus. We have a lot to be thankful for that we take for granted every day. We don't even see it as a blessing because of our expectation that it is just "supposed to be there." In so much of the world, clean water is miles away and must be carried by hand. We turn on the faucet and let it run without a second thought. In much of the world, electricity is only available a few hours a day. If we forget to turn off the switch, the lights will still be on when we come back. We go to sleep at night with a reasonable expectation we will be safe in our beds. Not necessarily so elsewhere. If they want to get somewhere, they have to walk. Not us, oh no, not us...I could go on and on.

This is not a new problem. In Lamentations, the author writes:

¹⁷my soul is bereft of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is; (Lam 3:17)

His soul is bewildered and he cannot see what good there is, so in faith, he clings to the Lord. Just a few verses later, he shows he knows where real hope lies.

²¹But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:²²The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end,

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they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

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"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."
(Lam 3:21-24)

When we fail to be thankful for what we have, we increase our own discontent. When we fail to acknowledge God as the source of all we have, we insure it. Gratitude is the beginning of true happiness. Being able to see what we have to be thankful for in every situation is a skill that must be developed. Clinging to God in the midst of trial and trouble is also a skill that must be continually practiced. Counting blessings, looking for the strength and hope, breathing in the loving presence of God... all of it is part of the discipline of training ourselves to see the world as God sees it. Be thankful today. It is an amazing day.