

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

Recently I felt prompted by God's Spirit to slow down as I read the scriptures; to take the time to really absorb the information, in order not to miss an important point. When I chose this verse, my first thought was to use the example of the ten lepers who were healed, and while enroute to the temple as instructed by Jesus, only one, a Samaritan, came back to give thanks. And then there was the story of Job who, after his world and his health literally collapsed in one day, proclaimed "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him" (Job 13:15). Job is just one of many examples in the Bible of holding onto faith, despite the circumstances.

As I slowed down to absorb this verse, the command to "give thanks in all circumstances" jumped out at me. This is not an easy thing to do when it feels like your world is collapsing. The day my world collapsed was December 9, 2012. I remember vividly the strong sense of foreboding that overshadowed that day, and at 9 pm I got the phone call every parent dreads. "Your daughter is in the ICU, and she is not responsive. I suggest you call the family..."

"Give thanks in all circumstances." Really? Like I said, it's not easy. But life itself is not easy; it certainly was not easy for Jesus as He cried out to God in the garden of Gethsemane, knowing the extreme pain, suffering and death he was about to endure, and all without His friends or God's presence to comfort him. Scriptures confirm that Jesus was "a man of suffering, and familiar with pain" (Isaiah 53:3).

The days following that cold December evening were an emotional tsunami, but I try not to dwell on those days much, as it's a memory too painful to revisit. But I'll always remember and be thankful for my church family and the way they walked with me through the valley. I'll never forget the meals lovingly prepared and delivered to our home, the beautiful flowers, the Gideon Bibles that were purchased in her memory, and the many graces and acts of kindness that were poured out, too numerous to mention.

So rejoice always, knowing there's a day coming when Jesus promised he would make all things new (Revelation 21:5). Pray continually, which can be as simple as reaching out to our heavenly Father just to say, "help me", "thank you", "I love you". And give thanks even in the worst of circumstances, keeping in mind His promise "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5). For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

NOTES:

---

---

---

---