

Alpha Counseling Service  
20730 Bond Rd/Suite S-180  
Poulsbo, WA 98370/360.779.3624  
Web site: [alphapoulsbo.org](http://alphapoulsbo.org)  
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Dear Friends,

This letter is a repeat, with a few changes, from nearly 20 years ago. When I was looking for new ideas for this month's letter when I realized that some old ideas can be the best ☺

It's nearly time for my favorite holiday, Thanksgiving. No, it's not turkey or football that makes it my favorite but, it is history and the fact that worldwide only a half dozen countries celebrate a Thanksgiving Day. And what could be wrong with a day set aside to count your blessings? One of the most influential Bible verses in my life has been I Thessalonians 5:18;

***In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.***

I know this will probably sound weird but about 20 years ago I finished reading a fascinating book titled *Pain the Gift Nobody Wants* by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey. This book has inspired thanksgiving in me during the pain I went through recently. I would recommend your reading the book to get a good understanding of the seeming contradiction of thanks and pain. Dr. Brand, having lived in three different cultures, says that citizens of the west and especially of the US live in greater comfort but are less equipped to handle suffering. He says Americans suffer less, as a group, but fear it more. We are more likely to be traumatized by pain than those in other parts of the world. Throughout the book he mentions the loss of family closeness causing pain to be sharper and more traumatic.

Chapter 17 discusses Intensifiers of Pain. Surprising to me they are more psychological than physical. He mentions fear, anger, guilt, loneliness, helplessness all as attitudes about circumstances that make our pain hurt more! The research of a Dr. Hans Selye into the impact of emotions on health interested me greatly. In Dr. Brand's summary of this work he mentions that Dr. Selye found vengeance and bitterness as the emotional responses most likely to produce high stress levels in humans and these two, also, intensify our level of pain. In our culture we see pain as the enemy and tend to respond with attitudes of *-Why me? I don't deserve this! It's not fair!-* which has the vicious consequence of making physical pain even worse.

What do you suppose was the emotion that reduces stress and lessens pain's sharp edge? Now before you get upset at what I'm going to say remember the verse I mentioned above. Dr. Selye research, which Dr. Brand whole heartedly agreed with, found that GRATITUDE was the single emotional response that nourishes health and can reduce the suffering caused by pain. I'm not suggesting you send cards to sick friends encouraging them to be thankful for pain but, research is certainly pointing to what God knew all along. ***In everything give thanks!***... and the suffering you experience while in pain will be in God's able and compassionate hands!

May you have a Thank Full Thanksgiving Day!

Debi and I thank God for all your prayers and financial support to Alpha.

*Richard*