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Dear Friends

Thanksgiving Day will soon be here. It seems the older I get the faster the year passes. I have developed a plan to give thanks for the whole month rather than on one day. Emphasizing thanksgiving for a whole month each year will help me to apply thankfulness as 'a way of life'.

Last month I felt strongly confronted by Oswald Chamber's devotions on discipleship. The part that convicted me the most was about being faithful (and therefore thankful) with the boring stuff of life.

..."it does require the supernatural grace of God to live twenty-four hours of every day as a saint, going through drudgery, and living an ordinary, unnoticed, and ignored existence as a disciple of Jesus. It is ingrained in us that we have to do exceptional things for God – but we do not. We have to be exceptional in the ordinary things in life, and holy on the ordinary streets, among ordinary people – and this is not learned in five minutes."

When I was young in the ministry my goal was to build the largest church in the state of Pennsylvania. I had some pretty big plans for my work for God. I was going to stand up in the pulpit and set the whole state straight, for God of course. Well, here I am in a quiet little town in Washington sitting down and talking to people one at a time. Hoping I can gently guide someone in God's way of abiding in Christ. As you can see I have struggled with the problem of wanting to do big things for God. I have learned that it is seldom His plan.

The hard part is to practice being thankful when you do not feel that way!!

Here are two verses that are helping me live in the ordinary things of life. Teaching me how to be thankful; and teaching me my need for contentment.

I Thessalonians 5:18, "give thanks *IN* all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" ESV

Every time I quote this verse I emphasize the fact, to myself, that it is not necessarily giving thanks for something but choosing thankfulness toward God in that situation. It helps me focus on God and not on what I'm struggling with at that time. It takes practice to say thankful words that your emotions are doing their best to contradict.

The other verse that helps me is:

I Timothy 6:6-8. "But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content." ESV

I struggle with contentment, partly because I live in a country full of advertising geared to make me want something new, better, and expensive. The other part (this is truly my responsibility) is my selfish attitude that hates the idea that I can't take it with me or at least live luxuriously until I have to leave empty handed. Paul goes on to say that we Christians can be hurt badly by not being content.

During this month of Thanksgiving will you join with me in looking for small, ordinary, even boring things where you can verbalize your thankfulness to God?

Speaking of being thankful...Thank each of you for your prayers and financial support that make Alpha possible.

Thankfully in Christ,

Richard