

Count Your Many Blessings

“Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”

Matthew 6:26-27

One day in physical education class in college I noticed that the girl playing volleyball beside me was only setting the ball with one hand. We had been told to set it with both hands. I had played many sports with this gal and she always did a good job. Then I noticed that only one of her arms was fully developed. The other hand was shriveled. She couldn't set the ball with it. She never complained and this was our junior year in college. I had never noticed it before. She never asked for any exceptions and no one ever commented on it. I realized how much I had been blessed. She was smiling, talking with everyone, and was doing a better job than some of the other people who had both hands! I learned that day not to judge what a person could do by her physical

appearance. She also had been blessed and was a blessing to others. In the eyes of much of the world, she was not blessed by God because she had a shriveled arm. But she was blessed in other ways. Receiving physical and/or spiritual blessings from God does not equate to salvation.

Many people are blessed physically, but do not know God as their personal Savior. Many people, even in the times that Jesus walked on this earth, were blessed financially, but they were very unhappy. In Luke 12, Jesus tells the people what the rich farmer said who was having a wonderful season *“What can I do? My barn isn't big enough for this harvest.”* Then he said, *‘Here's what I'll do: I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll gather in all my grain and goods, and I'll say to myself, Self, you've done well! You've got it made and can now retire. Take it easy and have the time of your life!’* But then *“God showed up and said ‘Fool! Tonight you die. And your barnful of goods—who gets it?’”*

“JESUS DIDN'T SAY, 'BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO CARE FOR THE POOR.' HE SAID, 'BLESSED ARE WE WHERE WE ARE POOR, WHERE WE ARE BROKEN.' IT IS THERE THAT GOD LOVES US DEEPLY AND PULLS US INTO DEEPER COMMUNION WITH HIMSELF.”

HENRI NOUWEN

When a flower doesn't bloom you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower.

Alexander Den Heijer

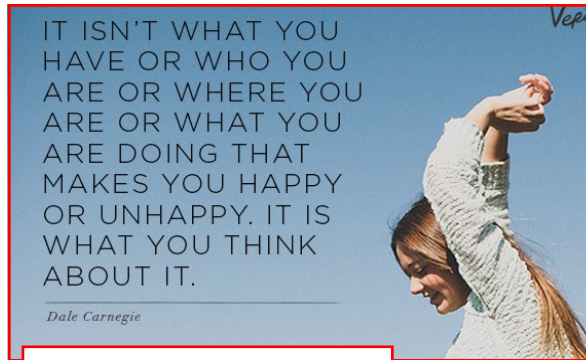
I have a friend whose daughter is called a “special needs person.” When she was in the Special Olympics she noticed that some of the other people in the races had problems. She said to her mother, “I feel sorry for her. She really has a problem with her legs.” Then she started talking with her mother about the problems these poor people had. She had a fully developed body but she had other problems that were not so visible to others. Today she works her job, and still never complains. She is a testimony to what can be done.

Helen Keller, blind from birth makes us realize how blessed we really are. Merciful is defined as compassionate, kindhearted, forgiving and gracious. Those are difficult goals for us to reach all the time. It is easy to be that way when everything is going our way and when the other person is easy to love!

When we help someone, we often feel blessed. Maybe that is why we are told

we get more blessing by giving than receiving. Oh, it is nice to get. But sometimes a person needs a little help or a hug or a greeting, or just someone who cares enough to ask "How are you doing?" And then listens. Kids need to be noticed and told they have done well. Older folks need to be appreciated for the knowledge they have accumulated over the years. All need to be thanked for taking time to help someone else, and not always thinking of self. Then the one giving and showing mercy receives more. It is sort of a paradox. The more we give, the more we receive. We can help several others by our helping a child make a card, or some cookies, and taking them to someone who needs to be encouraged by a gift or a visit. Those things cannot be measured monetarily. They are a blessing that often the child will never forget.

Eugene Peterson, in THE MESSAGE, translates one of the parables this way: "You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for." But, it takes time. It takes time away from thinking about self and thinking about others and how we can help them. When we realize this, we think more of others and quit dwelling on ourselves and what we can do to help ourselves. We can help ourselves immensely by helping others.



"The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched, they must be felt with the heart."

Helen Keller

Don't think of the things you didn't get after praying.
Think of the countless blessings God gave you without asking.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to be merciful to those around us. Help us to show we care in everyday situations for we know that we will receive blessings untold. As we go through today, help us to find someone to give a positive greeting. Even if it is just that they are wearing a nice blouse, or shirt. If we need to send a card or give someone a telephone call, help us to do it for Your sake because You have given us so much. Amen.

1. Is asking a blessing - For the one asking? For the one being asked?
2. How can giving a part of us to someone else be a blessing for us?
3. How can we dare to believe, act, and realize God is in control?
4. Have you ever given of yourself and been sorry afterwards? Why?

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info@rgscripts.com

