

QUALITY  
OF  
LIFE  
BIBLE  
STUDY



*Blessings*®

COMPILED BY  
S.MCRAE

## **BLESSINGS** “Quality of Life Series”

### **LEADER: Are you blessed?**

Do you count your blessings instead of your complaints?  
Is your cup half full or half empty?

**READER: “If”** From Robert Simmons sermon “Count Your Blessings”

Source ~ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=50869&ContributorID=7276>

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness...you are more blessed than the six million who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation...you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death...you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead, and a place to sleep...you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace...you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

**READER: “Rich”**

Source ~ <http://www.elbourne.org/sermons/index.mv?illustration+4673>

Dear Lord, I have been re-reading the record of the Rich Young Ruler and his obviously wrong choice. But it has set me thinking. No matter how much wealth he had, he could not: ride in a car, have any surgery, turn on a light, buy penicillin, hear a pipe organ, watch TV, wash dishes in hot running water, type a letter, mow a lawn, fly in an airplane, sleep on an innerspring mattress, or talk on the phone. If he was rich, then what am I?

**LEADER: “Taken for Granted”** From Robert Simmons sermon “Count Your Blessings”

Source ~ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=50869&ContributorID=7276>

Most Blessings are taken for granted

Most folks only ask for, complain about, and give thanks for financial blessings. What if you had to put a price tag on other blessings?

If you bought a new Ford Escort, it would cost you between \$13,000-\$18,000. If you took that same car to the junkyard and sold it off, one piece at a time, at junkyard prices, it would be worth over \$100,000.

Let's look at our body parts:

**READER: “Taken for Granted” #2** From Robert Simmons sermon “Count Your Blessings”

Source ~ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=50869&ContributorID=7276>

I've read that the human body, with market prices on all our minerals and compounds, is worth about \$0.47. If you took this same body and sold it off for parts, how much would you be worth?

What you are willing to pay, in the time of a tragedy to restore something you are currently blessed with:

1. Coronary artery bypass surgery \$15,000 - \$20,000
2. Heart transplant \$210,000
3. Gastrointestinal Surgery \$15,000
4. Fertility Treatment \$40,000
5. Kidney Transplant \$42,000
6. Liver Transplant \$115,000
7. Bone Marrow Transplant \$106,000
8. Lung Transplant \$105,000

9. Home Nurse \$300 / day
10. An insurance man showed article that it costs \$70,000 / year to replace your wife.
11. What would you pay to be able to walk, see, hear, or breathe? All that you had and more.

**READER: “Spots”**

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1a/spots.htm>

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.* - Psalm 103:2

As a minister was addressing a group of men, he took a large piece of paper and made a black spot in the centre of it with a marking pen. Then he held the paper up before the group and asked them what they saw. One person quickly replied, “I see a black mark.”

“Right,” the preacher replied. “What else do you see?” Complete silence prevailed. “Don’t you see anything other than the black spot?” he asked. A chorus of “No” came from the audience. “I’m surprised,” the speaker commented. “You have overlooked the most important thing of all - the sheet of paper.”

Then he made the application. In life we are often distracted by small disappointments, and we forget the innumerable blessings we receive from the Lord. But, like the sheet of paper, the good things in life are overwhelmed by the adversities that monopolize our attention. Rather than concentrating on the trials of life, we should fix our attention on its blessings. Let us say with the psalmist, “*Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits.*” Psalm 68:19

If we keep praising Him, we won’t be distracted by life’s little “spots.”

**READER: “The Cup of Life” by Melanie Schurr (Excerpt)**

Source ~ [http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2/cup\\_of\\_life.htm](http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2/cup_of_life.htm)

A king wanted to test the wisdom of two of the wisest men in his court. Two men were given a silver goblet, each containing equal portions of crystal clear spring water. Each was asked what he saw in the cup. The first man looked and said he saw a half-empty goblet. The second man replied, “My cup is half full.” The men were then asked to drink the contents of the cup and relay how drinking the liquid made them feel. The first man complained that the water tasted fine, but there was not enough, he wanted more. The second man then took his turn. “The water tastes good and it has quenched my thirst.”

The king smiled and, finally, declared who was the wisest man in all his court. “It is you,” he said, turning to the second man. Now I will tell you why. Looking to the first man, he said, “The cup represents one’s life, the world in which you live. When you looked into the cup, what you saw was a cup half empty, even though the goblet contained the finest spring water in all the land. Instead of sipping and finding satisfaction in its contents, you desired more. In life, you will never see all your many blessings, for your greed and lust for more will always cloud your thinking.”

The king then turned to the second man. “When you looked into the cup you saw a cup half full. So, too, will you regard life in this way, reaping all its many blessings and being grateful for the gifts bestowed upon you. A half full cup is not a full cup, yet its contents can still be sweet and satisfying.”

The moral of this story is that life is not always perfect, yet how we view our cup will determine what mind frame we have when sipping of its contents.

**READER: “Count Your Blessings” #1**

Source ~ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=62121&ContributorID=9906>

Blessings are something we as a people, receive from God every day of our lives. Some things we take for granted, like our heart beating, our lungs exchanging oxygen for carbon dioxide, our brains thinking and processing all sorts of input, our livers cleansing the impurities from the foods we eat. While other blessings we gaze upon with eyes of wonder, like the birth of a child, and miracles of healing.

I’d like to share the list that a group of students were asked to come up with for what they thought were the present Seven Wonders of the World.

Though there was some disagreement, the following got the most votes

1. Egypt’s Great Pyramids
2. Taj Mahal

3. Grand Canyon
4. Panama Canal
5. Empire State Building
6. St. Peter's Basilica
7. China's Great Wall

While gathering the votes, the teacher noted that one quiet student hadn't turned in her paper yet, so she asked the girl if she was having trouble with her list. The girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many." The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help." The girl hesitated, then read, "I think the Seven Wonders of the World are

1. to see
2. to taste
3. to touch
4. to hear

She hesitated a little, and then added,

5. to feel
6. to laugh
7. and to love

The room was so full of silence you could have heard a pin drop. Those things we overlook as simple and "ordinary" are truly wondrous. This is a gentle reminder that the most precious things in life cannot be bought. God gave them to us. Being happy doesn't mean everything's perfect, it just means you've decided to see beyond the imperfections.

#### **READER: "Beauty Tips"**

Source ~ [http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2/beauty\\_tips.htm](http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2/beauty_tips.htm)

For attractive lips, speak words of kindness.  
For beautiful eyes, look for the good in other people.  
To lose weight, let go of stress, hatred, anger, contentment and the need to control others.  
To improve your ears, listen to the word of God.

Rather than focus on the thorns of life, smell the roses and count your blessings, giving thanks for each one of them.

For poise, walk with knowledge and self-esteem.  
To strengthen your arms, hug at least 3 people a day. Touch someone with your love.  
To strengthen your heart, forgive yourself and others. Don't worry and hurry so much.

Rather than walk this earth lightly, walk firmly with determination and leave your mark.

For the ultimate in business, casual or evening attire put on the robe of Christ; it fits like a glove but allows room for growth. Best of all, it never goes out of style and is appropriate for any occasion.

Doing these things on a daily basis will certainly make you a more beautiful person.

Peace Is Not The Absence Of Trouble But The Presence of God!

#### **READER: "Why Christians Fall" #1 (Excerpt)**

Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/ds/rd901/point8.html>

"They Take Things for Granted"

It is possible to be the special objects of God's love, and to be the recipients of His manifold blessings (a good job, a healthy family, and a successful business), and yet forget all about the One who gave us these things in the first place. We fail to remember that:

*"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."* - James 1:17

When we are richly blessed of the Lord and fail to recognize the true source of all the good things, we tend in

our fallen human nature to become self-satisfied and to feel self-sufficient. We fail to rely on the Lord the way we should. We neglect Him, trusting only in ourselves.

**READER: “Why Christians Fall” #2 (Excerpt)**

Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/ds/rd901/point8.html>

“They Take Things for Granted”

I am reminded of these words of Moses:

*“When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His ordinances, and His statutes, which I command thee this day, lest, when thou hast eaten and art full and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold are multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage” - Deuteronomy 8:10-14.*

These words of warning are needed just as much now in this 21st century as they were in ancient Israel’s day. Human nature doesn’t change. We are prone to take our blessings for granted, to give ourselves the credit for our successes, and to assume that we’ll always have good health.

**LEADER: “Why Christians Fall” #3 (Excerpt)**

Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/ds/rd901/point8.html>

“They Take Things for Granted”

Missionaries working in depressed areas of the world report that the poverty-stricken often seem much more grateful for what they have than we who enjoy so much more. Oh, we may say a prayer of thanks, but too often there is no real appreciation. Yes, taking God’s blessings for granted and failing to recognize and acknowledge His goodness can lead to spiritual decline. When we count our blessings, therefore, let us remember from whom they come, and be careful to express our gratitude to Him in both what we say and what we do.

**LEADER: Let’s remember He can supply us** pact down and running over more than we can think or ask.

**READER: “Super Abundant Blessings” By Woodrow Kroll**

Source ~ <http://www.backtothebible.org/devotions/features/lessons/342>

Howard Hendricks, professor emeritus at Dallas Theological Seminary, told a story about a couple in Christian ministry who had four children. While things were financially rough, Timmy, the youngest, asked, “Dad, do you think Jesus would mind if I asked for a shirt?” “Well, of course not,” his father replied. So every day they prayed for a shirt. Several weeks later the mother received a call from a merchant who inquired, “Could you use some boys’ shirts?” “How many do you have?” she asked hesitantly. He said, “Twelve.” That night when Timmy began to pray for a shirt, his father said, “We don’t have to pray for the shirt, Timmy. The Lord has answered your prayer.” Older brother Tom went out of the room and brought back one shirt. Then he went out again and brought back another, and another—until he had piled 12 shirts on the table. Timmy thought God had gone into the shirt business! Today, there is another young boy who believes that God is able to provide superabundantly.

**READER: Ephesians 3:20-21**

*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

**READER: John 10:10**

*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they (1) may have life, and have it abundantly.*

**LEADER: Let’s look at some spiritual blessings we can count:** F.E. Marsh has enumerated some of God’s blessings:

Source ~ <http://www.higherpraise.org/illustrations/blessing.htm>

1. An acceptance that can never be questioned.

**READER: Ephesians 1:6**

*to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*

2. An inheritance that can never be lost.

**READER: I Peter 1:3-5**

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

3. A deliverance that can never be excelled.

**READER: 2 Corinthians 1:10**

*who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,*

4. A grace that can never be limited.

**READER: 2 Corinthians 12:9**

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

5. A hope that can never be disappointed.

**READER: Hebrews 6:18-19**

*so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,*

6. A bounty that can never be withdrawn.

**READER: I Corinthians 3:21-23**

*So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.*

7. A joy that need never be diminished.

**READER: John 15:11**

*"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

8. A nearness to God that can never be reversed.

**READER: Ephesians 2:13**

*But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

9. A peace that can never be disturbed.

**READER: John 14:27**

*"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*

10. A righteousness that can never be tarnished.

**READER: 2 Corinthians 5:21**

*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

11. A salvation that can never be canceled.

**READER: Hebrews 5:9**

*And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,*

**READER: "Being Thankful" By Peter Kennedy**

Source ~ [http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon3/being\\_thankful.htm](http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon3/being_thankful.htm)

*"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." - Colossians 3:15*

A. J. Cronin was born in 1896 in Cardross, Scotland. He was educated at Dumbarton Academy where he received baccalaureates in medicine and surgery. In 1914, he entered the Glasgow University Medical School, graduating in 1919. During World War I Cronin served as a surgeon in the Royal Navy. After the war, he worked as a ship's surgeon on a liner bound for India, and then served in various hospitals. In 1930, his health broke down and he turned to writing as a profession. In 1931 he produced his first novel, "Hatter's Castle," which became an immediate success. He followed it with several best-selling books including "The Citadel," "The Stars Look Down," and "The Keys of the Kingdom." Once Cronin told about a colleague who gave an unusual prescription to patients afflicted with worry, fear, discouragement or self-doubt. The doctor called it his thank-you cure. "For six weeks I want you to say thank you whenever anyone does you a favor. And to show you mean it, emphasize the words with a smile." Within six weeks most of the doctor's patients showed great improvement.

Giving thanks should not be a once a year event. It should be practiced daily for all the blessings that we receive. Are you feeling worry, fear, discouragement or self-doubt? Today in prayer, thank Christ and thank others whenever anyone does you a favor.

"Gratitude is born in hearts that take time to count up past mercies." - Charles E. Jefferson

God's Word: *"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." - Colossians 2:7*

**READER: Psalm 92 (Everyone turn to)**

It is good to give thanks to the LORD  
And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;  
To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning  
And Your faithfulness by night,  
With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp,  
With resounding music upon the lyre.  
For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done,  
I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.  
How great are Your works, O LORD!  
Your thoughts are very deep.  
A senseless man has no knowledge,  
Nor does a stupid man understand this:  
That when the wicked sprouted up like grass  
And all who did iniquity flourished,  
It was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.  
But You, O LORD, are on high forever.  
For, behold, Your enemies, O LORD,  
For, behold, Your enemies will perish;  
All who do iniquity will be scattered.  
But You have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox;  
I have been anointed with fresh oil.  
And my eye has looked exultantly upon my foes,  
My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me.

The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree,  
He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.  
Planted in the house of the LORD,  
They will flourish in the courts of our God.  
They will still yield fruit in old age;  
They shall be full of sap and very green,  
To declare that the LORD is upright;  
He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him

**READER: “Be Thankful” Poem**

Source ~ <http://www.sermons.org/search.html>

Be thankful that you don't already have everything you desire.  
If you did, what would there be to look forward to?  
Be thankful when you don't know something,  
for it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times. During those times you grow.  
Be thankful for your limitations,  
because they give you opportunities for improvement.  
Be thankful for each new challenge,  
because it will build your strength and character.

Be thankful for your mistakes. They will teach you valuable lessons.  
Be thankful when you're tired and weary,  
because it means you've made a difference.

It's easy to be thankful for the good things.  
A life of rich fulfillment comes to those who  
are also thankful for the setbacks.  
Gratitude can turn a negative into a positive.  
Find a way to be thankful for your troubles,  
and they can become your blessings.

**READER: 1 Thessalonians 5:18**

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

**READER: “What You Took Away” By Vickie Lambdin**

Source ~ [http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon7/what\\_you\\_took\\_away.htm](http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon7/what_you_took_away.htm)

Lord, I thank you for the blessings  
You bestow on me each day.  
But, most of all, I thank you, Lord,  
For what you took away.

You took all my transgressions  
And nailed them to the cross  
So I wouldn't have to pay that debt.  
Your Intercession paid the cost.

All that pain and misery  
You suffered, there, was meant for me.  
But, You took three nails for me, that day,  
And I'm so grateful, Lord, for what you took away.

Now, I could never quite comprehend  
Why you'd atone for all our sins.  
Your enduring love was manifest that day  
And, now, I love You, Lord, for what you took away.

**READER: “Start Counting” Our Daily Bread**

Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/odb/odb-01-26-00.shtml>

I have a friend in England who is in her mid-eighties. Although she’s housebound and frail, she has an attitude of gratitude every time we talk on the telephone. One of her favorite hymns has always been, “Count Your Blessings.” So I was concerned when she remarked one day, “I’ve stopped naming my blessings one by one.” But then she continued cheerfully, “My blessings are so many, I’m weighing them ton by ton!”

Years ago when I was struggling with restless sleep, I started a new habit. Throughout each day I tried to notice every blessing, large or small, that came my way. Each night in bed I named them one by one and thanked God for them all. Not only did this practice change my attitude from negative to positive, but I often fell into a peaceful sleep before finishing my list. God used a time of struggle in my life to help me to develop an attitude of thanksgiving.

Donald Grey Barnhouse said, “How strange that the Lord must plead with those whom He has saved from the pit to show gratitude to Him!” Is the Lord using a tough trial to plead with you to praise Him more? If so, start counting your blessings and discover how good it is to give thanks to the Lord. (JEY)

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings—every doubt will fly,  
And you will be singing as the days go by. —Oatman

Praise to God comes naturally when you count your blessings.

**READER: “Count Your Blessings” #2 From Robert Simmons sermon “Count Your Blessings”**

Source ~ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=50869&ContributorID=7276>

For the Christian, gratitude should be a life attitude.

“Count Your Blessings” was written by one of the prolific gospel song writers of the past century, a Methodist lay preacher named Johnson Oatman. In addition to his preaching and the writing of more than 5,000 hymn texts, Oatman was also a successful business man, engaged in a shipping business and in his later years as an administrator for a large insurance company in New Jersey.

It is good for each of us periodically to take time to rediscover the simple but profound truths expressed by Mr. Oatman in the four verses of this hymn.

When upon life’s billows You are tempest tossed  
When you are discouraged, Thinking all is lost  
Count your many blessings, Name them one by one  
And it will surprise you What the Lord has done.

####Chorus:

Count your blessings, Name them one by one  
Count your blessings, See what God has done  
Count your blessings, Name them one by one  
Count your many blessings, See what God has done.

Are you ever burdened With a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy You are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings, Ev’ry doubt will fly  
And you will be singing As the days go by.

####

When you look at others With their lands and gold  
Think that Christ has promised You His wealth untold  
Count your many blessings, Money cannot buy  
Your reward in heaven, Nor your home on high.

####

So, amid the conflict, Whether great or small  
Do not be discouraged, God is over all  
Count your many blessings, Angels will attend  
Help and comfort give you To your journey's end.

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**READER: "No Jacket Required"**

Source ~ [http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2b/no\\_jacket\\_required.htm](http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2b/no_jacket_required.htm)

I shook my head in disbelief. This couldn't be the right place. After all, I couldn't possibly be welcome here. I had been given an invitation several times, by several different people, and had finally decided to see what this place was all about. But, this just couldn't be the right place.

Quickly, I glanced down at the invitation that I clutched in my hand. I scanned past the words, "Come as you are. No jacket required." and found the location. Yes, I was at the right place. I peered through the window again and saw a room of people whose faces seemed to glow with joy. All were neatly dressed, adorned in fine garments and appeared strangely clean as they dined at this exquisite restaurant.

Ashamed, I looked down at my own tattered and torn clothing, covered in stains. I was dirty, in fact, filthy. A foul smell seemed to consume me and I couldn't shake the grime that clung to my body. As I turned around to leave, the words from the invitation seemed to leap out at me...

..."Come as you are. No jacket required."

I decided to give it a shot. Mustering up every bit of courage I could find, I opened the door to this restaurant and walked up to a man standing behind a podium. "Your name, sir?" he asked me with a smile. "Jimmy D. Brown," I mumbled without looking up. I thrust my hands deep into my pockets, hoping to conceal their stains. He didn't seem to notice the filth that I was covered in and he continued, "Very good, sir.

A table is reserved in your name. Would you like to be seated?"

I couldn't believe what I heard! A grin broke out on my face and I said, "Yes, of course!" He lead me to a table and, sure enough, there was a placard with my name written on it in a deep, dark red.

As I browsed over a menu, I saw many delightful items listed. There were things like, "peace," "joy," "blessings," "confidence," "assurance," "hope," "love," "faith," and "mercy." I realized that this was no ordinary restaurant! I flipped the menu back to the front in order to see where I was at... .."God's Grace," was the name of this place!

The man returned and said, "I recommend the 'Special of the Day'. With it, you are entitled to heaping portions of everything on this menu." You've got to be kidding! I thought to myself. You mean, I can have

ALL of this! "What is the 'Special of the Day' I asked with excitement ringing in my voice. "Salvation," was his reply.

"I'll take it," I practically cried out.

Then, as quickly as I made that statement, the joy left my body. A sick, painful ache jerked through my stomach and tears filled my eyes. Between my sobs I said... "Mister, look at me. I'm dirty and nasty. I'm unclean and unworthy of such things. I'd love to have all of this, but, but, I just can't afford it.

Undaunted, the man smiled again. "Sir, your check has already been taken care of by that Gentleman over there," he said point to the front of the room. "His Name is Jesus."

Turning, I saw a man whose very presence seemed to light the room. He was almost too much to look at. I found myself walking towards Him and in a shaking voice I whispered, "Sir, I'll wash the dishes or sweep the floors or take out the trash. I'll do anything I can do to repay you for all of this."

He opened His arms and said with a smile, "Son, all of this is yours if you just come unto me. Ask me to clean you up and I will. Ask me to take away the stains and it is done. Ask me to allow you to feast at my table and you will eat. Remember, the table is reserved in your name. All you must do is accept this gift that I offer you."

Astonished, I fell at his feet and said, "Please, Jesus. Please clean up my life. Please change me and sit me at your table and give me this new life."

Immediately, I heard the words, "It is finished."

I looked down and white robes adorned my squeaky clean body. Something strange and wonderful had happened. I felt new, like a weight had been lifted and I found myself seated at His table.

"The 'Special of the Day' has been served," the Lord said to me. "Salvation is yours." We sat and talked for a great while and I so enjoyed the time that I spent with Him. He told me, me of all people, that He would like for me to come back as often as I liked for another helping from God's Grace. He made it clear that He wanted me to spend as much time with Him as possible.

As it drew near time for me to go back outside into the "real world," He whispered to me softly, "And Lo, I am with you always." And then, He said something to me that I will never forget. He said...

"My child, do you see these empty tables throughout this room?" "Yes, Lord. I see them. What do they mean?" I replied. "These are reserved tables...but the individuals whose names are on each placard have not accepted their invitations to dine. Would you be so kind as to hand out these invitations to those who have not joined us yet?" Jesus asked.

"Of course," I said with excitement as I picked up the invitations." "Go ye therefore into all nations," He said as I turned to leave.

I walked into God's Grace dirty and hungry. Stained in sin. My righteousness as filthy rags. And Jesus cleaned me up. I walked out a brand new man...robed in white, His righteousness. And so, I'll keep my promise to my Lord. I'll go. I'll spread the Word. I'll share the Gospel... I'll hand out the invitations. And I'll start with you.

Have you been to God's Grace? There's a table reserved in your name, and here's your invitation... "Come as you are. No jacket required."

*"For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."* – Ephesians 2: 8-9

### **READER: Ephesians 1:3**

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

**READER: "More Blessed Than Hurt"** Charles Allen, "Lessons from the Lepers," Preaching Today  
Source ~ <http://biblecenter.com/illustrations/blessing.htm>

I've seen a picture of the pilgrims at the first American Thanksgiving. Do you know half of their number died the first year they were here? They had a hard time, and it was a cold winter. Dangers lurked everywhere, but those pilgrims didn't think of the death of their loved ones and the dangers and the cold weather. They didn't let that obscure the blessings of God. They went together, and they thanked the Lord for the blessings they had received.

Sometimes we need to put down our assets alongside our losses. Everyone of us is more blessed than we are hurt.

### **LEADER: "How to Observe Thanksgiving"**

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1/howto.htm>

Count your blessings instead of your crosses;  
Count your gains instead of your losses.  
Count your joys instead of your woes;  
Count your friends instead of your foes.  
Count your smiles instead of your tears;  
Count your courage instead of your fears.  
Count your full years instead of your lean;  
Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.  
Count your health instead of your wealth;  
Count on God instead of yourself.

**READER: Colossians 3:15**

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.*

**LEADER: “The Cup of Life”** by Melanie Schurr (Excerpt)

Source ~ [http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2/cup\\_of\\_life.htm](http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2/cup_of_life.htm)

Today, look at your life with new eyes and begin to see the cup half full as opposed to half empty. Do you have food, shelter, clothing? Be thankful, for there are those in impoverished countries who don't even have these basic necessities. Do you have your health, friends, and loved ones who truly care about you? Be grateful, for there are those who lay in hospital beds, suffering and dying with no loved ones to visit and hold their hand. Lastly, do you have God in your life? Then you are among the richest in the world! If not, it is not too late for Him to fill YOUR cup with His great love and manifold blessings!

LEADER: I am so thankful for each of you and the blessings you bring to my life. Hope ya'll have a wonderful, blessed Thanksgiving and get to spend some time counting your blessings.

**COMMENTS IF TIME:**

**ALLOW TIME FOR  
PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES:**

**COPY AND DISTRIBUTE THE FOLLOWING PAGES FOR YOUR READERS**

## READERS

### “If”

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness...you are more blessed than the six million who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation...you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death...you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead, and a place to sleep...you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace...you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

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### “Rich”

Dear Lord, I have been re-reading the record of the Rich Young Ruler and his obviously wrong choice. But it has set me thinking. No matter how much wealth he had, he could not: ride in a car, have any surgery, turn on a light, buy penicillin, hear a pipe organ, watch TV, wash dishes in hot running water, type a letter, mow a lawn, fly in an airplane, sleep on an innerspring mattress, or talk on the phone. If he was rich, then what am I?

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### “Taken for Granted” #2

I've read that the human body, with market prices on all our minerals and compounds, is worth about \$0.47. If you took this same body and sold it off for parts, how much would you be worth?

What you are willing to pay, in the time of a tragedy to restore something you are currently blessed with:

1. Coronary artery bypass surgery \$15,000 - \$20,000
2. Heart transplant \$210,000
3. Gastrointestinal Surgery \$15,000
4. Fertility Treatment \$40,000
5. Kidney Transplant \$42,000
6. Liver Transplant \$115,000
7. Bone Marrow Transplant \$106,000
8. Lung Transplant \$105,000
9. Home Nurse \$300 / day
10. An insurance man showed article that it costs \$70,000 / year to replace your wife.
11. What would you pay to be able to walk, see, hear, or breathe? All that you had and more.

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## “Spots”

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.* - Psalm 103:2

As a minister was addressing a group of men, he took a large piece of paper and made a black spot in the centre of it with a marking pen. Then he held the paper up before the group and asked them what they saw. One person quickly replied, “I see a black mark.”

“Right,” the preacher replied. “What else do you see?” Complete silence prevailed. “Don’t you see anything other than the black spot?” he asked. A chorus of “No” came from the audience. “I’m surprised,” the speaker commented. “You have overlooked the most important thing of all - the sheet of paper.”

Then he made the application. In life we are often distracted by small disappointments, and we forget the innumerable blessings we receive from the Lord. But, like the sheet of paper, the good things in life are overwhelmed by the adversities that monopolize our attention. Rather than concentrating on the trials of life, we should fix our attention on its blessings. Let us say with the psalmist, *“Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits.”* Psalm 68:19

If we keep praising Him, we won’t be distracted by life’s little “spots.”



## “The Cup of Life”

A king wanted to test the wisdom of two of the wisest men in his court. Two men were given a silver goblet, each containing equal portions of crystal clear spring water. Each was asked what he saw in the cup. The first man looked and said he saw a half-empty goblet. The second man replied, “My cup is half full.” The men were then asked to drink the contents of the cup and relay how drinking the liquid made them feel. The first man complained that the water tasted fine, but there was not enough, he wanted more. The second man then took his turn. “The water tastes good and it has quenched my thirst.”

The king smiled and, finally, declared who was the wisest man in all his court. “It is you,” he said, turning to the second man. Now I will tell you why. Looking to the first man, he said, “The cup represents one’s life, the world in which you live. When you looked into the cup, what you saw was a cup half empty, even though the goblet contained the finest spring water in all the land. Instead of sipping and finding satisfaction in its contents, you desired more. In life, you will never see all your many blessings, for your greed and lust for more will always cloud your thinking.”

The king then turned to the second man. “When you looked into the cup you saw a cup half full. So, too, will you regard life in this way, reaping all its many blessings and being grateful for the gifts bestowed upon you. A half full cup is not a full cup, yet its contents can still be sweet and satisfying.”

The moral of this story is that life is not always perfect, yet how we view our cup will determine what mind frame we have when sipping of its contents.



## **“Count Your Blessings” #1**

Blessings are something we as a people, receive from God every day of our lives. Some things we take for granted, like our heart beating, our lungs exchanging oxygen for carbon dioxide, our brains thinking and processing all sorts of input, our livers cleansing the impurities from the foods we eat. While other blessings we gaze upon with eyes of wonder, like the birth of a child, and miracles of healing.

I'd like to share the list that a group of students were asked to come up with for what they thought were the present Seven Wonders of the World.

Though there was some disagreement, the following got the most votes

1. Egypt's Great Pyramids 2. Taj Mahal 3. Grand Canyon 4. Panama Canal 5. Empire State Building 6. St. Peter's Basilica 7. China's Great Wall

While gathering the votes, the teacher noted that one quiet student

hadn't turned in her paper yet, so she asked the girl if she was having

trouble with her list. The girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many." The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help." The girl hesitated, then read, "I think the Seven Wonders of the World are

1. to see
2. to taste
3. to touch
4. to hear

She hesitated a little, and then added,

5. to feel
6. to laugh
7. and to love

The room was so full of silence you could have heard a pin drop. Those things we overlook as simple and "ordinary" are truly wondrous. This is a gentle reminder that the most precious things in life cannot be bought. God gave them to us. Being happy doesn't mean everything's perfect, it just means you've decided to see beyond the imperfections.

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## **“Beauty Tips”**

For attractive lips, speak words of kindness.

For beautiful eyes, look for the good in other people.

To lose weight, let go of stress, hatred, anger, contentment and the need to control others.

To improve your ears, listen to the word of God.

Rather than focus on the thorns of life, smell the roses and count your blessings, giving thanks for each one of them.

For poise, walk with knowledge and self-esteem.

To strengthen your arms, hug at least 3 people a day. Touch someone with your love.

To strengthen your heart, forgive yourself and others. Don't worry and hurry so much.

Rather than walk this earth lightly, walk firmly with determination and leave your mark.

For the ultimate in business, casual or evening attire put on the robe of Christ; it fits like a glove but allows room for growth. Best of all, it never goes out of style and is appropriate for any occasion.

Doing these things on a daily basis will certainly make you a more beautiful person.

Peace Is Not The Absence Of Trouble But The Presence of God!

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**“Why Christians Fall” #1 “They Take Things for Granted”**

It is possible to be the special objects of God’s love, and to be the recipients of His manifold blessings (a good job, a healthy family, and a successful business), and yet forget all about the One who gave us these things in the first place. We fail to remember that:

*“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” - James 1:17*

When we are richly blessed of the Lord and fail to recognize the true source of all the good things, we tend in our fallen human nature to become self-satisfied and to feel self-sufficient. We fail to rely on the Lord the way we should. We neglect Him, trusting only in ourselves.



**“Why Christians Fall” #2 “They Take Things for Granted”**

I am reminded of these words of Moses:

*When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His ordinances, and His statutes, which I command thee this day, lest, when thou hast eaten and art full and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold are multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Deuteronomy 8:10-14.*

These words of warning are needed just as much now in this 20th century as they were in ancient Israel’s day. Human nature doesn’t change. We are prone to take our blessings for granted, to give ourselves the credit for our successes, and to assume that we’ll always have good health.



**“Super Abundant Blessings”**

Howard Hendricks, professor emeritus at Dallas Theological Seminary, told a story about a couple in Christian ministry who had four children. While things were financially rough, Timmy, the youngest, asked, “Dad, do you think Jesus would mind if I asked for a shirt?” “Well, of course not,” his father replied. So every day they prayed for a shirt. Several weeks later the mother received a call from a merchant who inquired, “Could you use some boys’ shirts?” “How many do you have?” she asked hesitantly. He said, “Twelve.” That night when Timmy began to pray for a shirt, his father said, “We don’t have to pray for the shirt, Timmy. The Lord has answered your prayer.” Older brother Tom went out of the room and brought back one shirt. Then he went out again and brought back another, and another—until he had piled 12 shirts on the table. Timmy thought God had gone into the shirt business! Today, there is another young boy who believes that God is able to provide superabundantly.

- Ephesians 3:20-21**
- John 10:10**
- Ephesians 1:6**
- I Peter 1:3-5**
- 2 Corinthians 1:10**
- 2 Corinthians 12:9**
- Hebrews 6:18-19**
- I Corinthians 3:21-23**
- John 15:11**

**Ephesians 2:13**

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**John 14:27**

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**2 Corinthians 5:21**

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**Hebrews 5:9**

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**“Being Thankful”**

*“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.” - Colossians 3:15*

A. J. Cronin was born in 1896 in Cardross, Scotland. He was educated at Dumbarton Academy where he received baccalaureates in medicine and surgery. In 1914, he entered the Glasgow University Medical School, graduating in 1919. During World War I Cronin served as a surgeon in the Royal Navy. After the war, he worked as a ship’s surgeon on a liner bound for India, and then served in various hospitals. In 1930, his health broke down and he turned to writing as a profession. In 1931 he produced his first novel, “Hatter’s Castle,” which became an immediate success. He followed it with several best-selling books including “The Citadel,” “The Stars Look Down,” and “The Keys of the Kingdom.” Once Cronin told about a colleague who gave an unusual prescription to patients afflicted with worry, fear, discouragement or self-doubt. The doctor called it his thank-you cure. “For six weeks I want you to say thank you whenever anyone does you a favor. And to show you mean it, emphasize the words with a smile.” Within six weeks most of the doctor’s patients showed great improvement.

Giving thanks should not be a once a year event. It should be practiced daily for all the blessings that we receive. Are you feeling worry, fear, discouragement or self-doubt? Today in prayer, thank Christ and thank others whenever anyone does you a favor.

“Gratitude is born in hearts that take time to count up past mercies.” - Charles E. Jefferson

God’s Word: *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” - Colossians 2:7*

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**Psalm 92**

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**“Be Thankful”**

Be thankful that you don’t already have everything you desire.  
If you did, what would there be to look forward to?  
Be thankful when you don’t know something,  
for it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times. During those times you grow.  
Be thankful for your limitations,  
because they give you opportunities for improvement.  
Be thankful for each new challenge,  
because it will build your strength and character.

Be thankful for your mistakes. They will teach you valuable lessons.  
Be thankful when you’re tired and weary,  
because it means you’ve made a difference.

It’s easy to be thankful for the good things.  
A life of rich fulfillment comes to those who  
are also thankful for the setbacks.  
Gratitude can turn a negative into a positive.  
Find a way to be thankful for your troubles,  
and they can become your blessings.

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## 1 Thessalonians 5:18



### “What You Took Away”

Lord, I thank you for the blessings  
You bestow on me each day.  
But, most of all, I thank you, Lord,  
For what you took away.

You took all my transgressions  
And nailed them to the cross  
So I wouldn't have to pay that debt.  
Your Intercession paid the cost.

All that pain and misery  
You suffered, there, was meant for me.  
But, You took three nails for me, that day,  
And I'm so grateful, Lord, for what you took away.

Now, I could never quite comprehend  
Why you'd atone for all our sins.  
Your enduring love was manifest that day  
And, now, I love You, Lord, for what you took away.



### “Start Counting”

I have a friend in England who is in her mid-eighties. Although she's housebound and frail, she has an attitude of gratitude every time we talk on the telephone. One of her favorite hymns has always been, “Count Your Blessings.” So I was concerned when she remarked one day, “I've stopped naming my blessings one by one.” But then she continued cheerfully, “My blessings are so many, I'm weighing them ton by ton!”

Years ago when I was struggling with restless sleep, I started a new habit. Throughout each day I tried to notice every blessing, large or small, that came my way. Each night in bed I named them one by one and thanked God for them all. Not only did this practice change my attitude from negative to positive, but I often fell into a peaceful sleep before finishing my list. God used a time of struggle in my life to help me to develop an attitude of thanksgiving.

Donald Grey Barnhouse said, “How strange that the Lord must plead with those whom He has saved from the pit to show gratitude to Him!” Is the Lord using a tough trial to plead with you to praise Him more? If so, start counting your blessings and discover how good it is to give thanks to the Lord. (JEY)

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings—every doubt will fly,  
And you will be singing as the days go by. —Oatman

Praise to God comes naturally when you count your blessings.



## “Count Your Blessings” #2

For the Christian, gratitude should be a life attitude.

“Count Your Blessings” was written by one of the prolific gospel song writers of the past century, a Methodist lay preacher named Johnson Oatman. In addition to his preaching and the writing of more than 5,000 hymn texts, Oatman was also a successful business man, engaged in a shipping business and in his later years as an administrator for a large insurance company in New Jersey.

It is good for each of us periodically to take time to rediscover the simple but profound truths expressed by Mr. Oatman in the four verses of this hymn.

When upon life's billows You are tempest tossed  
When you are discouraged, Thinking all is lost  
Count your many blessings, Name them one by one  
And it will surprise you What the Lord has done.

####Chorus:

Count your blessings, Name them one by one  
Count your blessings, See what God has done  
Count your blessings, Name them one by one  
Count your many blessings, See what God has done.

Are you ever burdened With a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy You are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings, Ev'ry doubt will fly  
And you will be singing As the days go by.

####

When you look at others With their lands and gold  
Think that Christ has promised You His wealth untold  
Count your many blessings, Money cannot buy  
Your reward in heaven, Nor your home on high.

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So, amid the conflict, Whether great or small  
Do not be discouraged, God is over all  
Count your many blessings, Angels will attend  
Help and comfort give you To your journey's end.

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## “No Jacket Required”

I shook my head in disbelief. This couldn't be the right place. After all, I couldn't possibly be welcome here. I had been given an invitation several times, by several different people, and had finally decided to see what this place was all about. But, this just couldn't be the right place.

Quickly, I glanced down at the invitation that I clutched in my hand. I scanned past the words, “Come as you are. No jacket required.” and found the location. Yes, I was at the right place. I peered through the window again and saw a room of people whose faces seemed to glow with joy. All were neatly dressed, adorned in fine garments and appeared strangely clean as they dined at this exquisite restaurant.

Ashamed, I looked down at my own tattered and torn clothing, covered in stains. I was dirty, in fact, filthy. A foul smell seemed to consume me and I couldn't shake the grime that clung to my body. As I turned around to leave, the words from the invitation seemed to leap out at me...

...”Come as you are. No jacket required.”

I decided to give it a shot. Mustering up every bit of courage I could find, I opened the door to this restaurant and walked up to a man standing behind a podium. “Your name, sir?” he asked me with a smile. “Jimmy D. Brown,” I mumbled without looking up. I thrust my hands deep into my pockets, hoping to conceal their stains. He didn't seem to notice the filth that I was covered in and he continued, “Very good, sir.

A table is reserved in your name. Would you like to be seated?”

I couldn't believe what I heard! A grin broke out on my face and I said, "Yes, of course!" He lead me to a table and, sure enough, there was a placard with my name written on it in a deep, dark red.

As I browsed over a menu, I saw many delightful items listed. There were things like, "peace," "joy," "blessings," "confidence," "assurance," "hope," "love," "faith," and "mercy." I realized that this was no ordinary restaurant! I flipped the menu back to the front in order to see where I was at... .."God's Grace," was the name of this place!

The man returned and said, "I recommend the 'Special of the Day'. With it, you are entitled to heaping portions of everything on this menu." You've got to be kidding! I thought to myself. You mean, I can have

ALL of this! "What is the 'Special of the Day' I asked with excitement ringing in my voice. "Salvation," was his reply.

"I'll take it," I practically cried out.

Then, as quickly as I made that statement, the joy left my body. A sick, painful ache jerked through my stomach and tears filled my eyes. Between my sobs I said... "Mister, look at me. I'm dirty and nasty. I'm unclean and unworthy of such things. I'd love to have all of this, but, but, I just can't afford it.

Undaunted, the man smiled again. "Sir, your check has already been taken care of by that Gentleman over there," he said point to the front of the room. "His Name is Jesus."

Turning, I saw a man whose very presence seemed to light the room. He was almost too much to look at. I found myself walking towards Him and in a shaking voice I whispered, "Sir, I'll wash the dishes or sweep the floors or take out the trash. I'll do anything I can do to repay you for all of this."

He opened His arms and said with a smile, "Son, all of this is yours if you just come unto me. Ask me to clean you up and I will. Ask me to take away the stains and it is done. Ask me to allow you to feast at my table and you will eat. Remember, the table is reserved in your name. All you must do is accept this gift that I offer you."

Astonished, I fell at his feet and said, "Please, Jesus. Please clean up my life. Please change me and sit me at your table and give me this new life."

Immediately, I heard the words, "It is finished."

I looked down and white robes adorned my squeaky clean body. Something strange and wonderful had happened. I felt new, like a weight had been lifted and I found myself seated at His table.

"The 'Special of the Day' has been served," the Lord said to me. "Salvation is yours." We sat and talked for a great while and I so enjoyed the time that I spent with Him. He told me, me of all people, that He would like for me to come back as often as I liked for another helping from God's Grace. He made it clear that He wanted me to spend as much time with Him as possible.

As it drew near time for me to go back outside into the "real world," He whispered to me softly, "And Lo, I am with you always." And then, He said something to me that I will never forget. He said...

"My child, do you see these empty tables throughout this room?" "Yes, Lord. I see them. What do they mean?" I replied. "These are reserved tables...but the individuals whose names are on each placard have not accepted their invitations to dine. Would you be so kind as to hand out these invitations to those who have not joined us yet?" Jesus asked.

"Of course," I said with excitement as I picked up the invitations." "Go ye therefore into all nations," He said as I turned to leave.

I walked into God's Grace dirty and hungry. Stained in sin. My righteousness as filthy rags. And Jesus cleaned me up. I walked out a brand new man...robed in white, His righteousness. And so, I'll keep my promise to my Lord. I'll go. I'll spread the Word. I'll share the Gospel... I'll hand out the invitations. And I'll start with you.

Have you been to God's Grace? There's a table reserved in your name, and here's your invitation... "Come as you are. No jacket required."

*"For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."* – Ephesians 2: 8-9

**Ephesians 1:3**

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**“More Blessed Than Hurt”**

I’ve seen a picture of the pilgrims at the first American Thanksgiving. Do you know half of their number died the first year they were here? They had a hard time, and it was a cold winter. Dangers lurked everywhere, but those pilgrims didn’t think of the death of their loved ones and the dangers and the cold weather. They didn’t let that obscure the blessings of God. They went together, and they thanked the Lord for the blessings they had received.

Sometimes we need to put down our assets alongside our losses. Everyone of us is more blessed than we are hurt.

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**Colossians 3:15**

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