



Courage from Thanksgiving

Last week Pastor Bev wrote about courage, referencing Lord Aragorn's speech in the final battle of the "Lord of the Rings" and passages from Revelation describing Christ's victorious return. Did you feel your spirits rise as you absorbed these words expressing determination and victory? Did you feel more equipped and better armed to face the challenges of life?

There seems to be something about envisioning "the big picture" that makes our lives seem more meaningful and our trials more purposeful. We gain courage when we realize that our story is connected to God's story, and when we recognize where He is within our experience.

On the weekend, I stumbled upon a tool that helps me do this. I have been experimenting with it over the past few days, and it is proving more useful and powerful than I would have imagined. Let me explain.

During Oasis on November 10th, I asked everyone to practice an exercise on gratitude called The Examen. It's a series of questions which causes us to reflect on our days, weeks, and months, and to thank God for the good and the bad in our lives. A few days later I went for a walk, and as I began praying for situations that our family is facing, I realized that I was doing a lot of asking and very little thanking. I felt like God was nudging me to apply a spirit of thankfulness to my requests, and so I began again, rephrasing my thoughts after adding the words "Thank You" at the start. Look at how my prayers changed.

Prayer for a family member battling cancer which began as ...

"Lord, be with _____. Give him courage and strength as he goes through each day. I pray that your will will be done in his life, and that you will be glorified in whatever happens. Lord, if it is your will, please heal him."

Became ...

"Lord, Thank You that **you are with** _____. Thank you that **he is your child** and that you are never far from your children. Thank You that **you promise to guard** _____'s heart

and mind with a peace that passes all understanding. Thank you that **you alone hold life and death in your hands**, and that **you will be glorified** through his life.”

Prayer for my kids who face challenging people and situations at school each day which began as ...

“Lord I pray that you will protect their hearts and minds as they are exposed to words, ideas and images at school that aren't from you. Help them to stay strong. Give them courage to live for you, and represent you well. Give them wisdom each time they face new situations.”

Became...

“Lord, Thank You that **you are able to keep my kids from stumbling**. Thank You that **the spirit within them is greater than the spirit within the world**. Thank You that **you promise to continue the good work that you have begun in them**, until the day of Christ Jesus.”

The simple act of adding the words “Thank You” to the start of my prayers, forced me to shift my focus away from the problem and onto God’s promises. Doing so, gave me new courage and hope and perspective.

Maybe this is what Paul means when he challenges us to “not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, **with thanksgiving**, present [our] requests to God.” (Phil 4:6). Maybe Paul isn’t asking us to be thankful for every situation, but to bringing thankfulness into every situation. If we force ourselves to say “thank you”, we have to formulate a statement of what we can be thankful for and this requires us to focus on who God is and how near He is to us.

Please realize that I’m not suggesting this glibly – as if saying the words ‘thank you’ will make everything better. I know that it won’t make the pain go away, but it may give you the strength you need to keep going. I have thanked God with tears streaming down my face, not because I was grateful for what I was experiencing, but because I was overwhelmed with the realization that He was there with me, in the midst of it all, and that He was carrying me through.

Thank You, God. Thank You.

Kristal Toews

Administrative Assistant for Women's, Men's and Single's Ministries



Northview
COMMUNITY CHURCH

© 2010 Northview Community Church
32040 Downes Rd Abbotsford BC V4X 1X5
Phone: (604) 853-2931 Fax: (604) 853-9921
General Info E-mail: northview@northview.org
"Loving God, each other, and the world"