



# Foundation of Faith

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GRATITUDE AS KEY TO SUCCESS

THANKFULNESS IN REAL LIFE?

GRATEFUL PEOPLE

WHY GIVE THANKS?

## *Gratitude and Contentment*

# Contents

## GRATITUDE AND CONTENTMENT

- 4     The Botanist and the Reindeer Herder**
- 5     Gratitude: Key to Success**
- 5     I Forgot to Thank You**
- 8     Gratitude and Contentment**  
*What gives us real happiness in life?*
- 10    Authentic Gratitude**  
*What gratitude is and what it is not:  
when gratitude is not just a word*
- 12    Why Give Thanks?**
- 13    Thankfulness in Real Life?**  
*When plans fail and dreams are shattered*
- 14    Have You Learned to Be Content?**
- 16    Grateful People**
- 17    Don't Forget to Give Thanks!**  
*Do you recognize the blessings of God in your life?*

## **3     Editorial**

### CHILDREN'S CORNER

- 18    Pray and Work**
- 19    Worries and Answered Prayers**

### YOUTH PAGES

- 20    God Needs Workers!—Report from Bolivia**

### STRENGTH FROM THE VALLEY

- 22    God Works Transformation in Our Lives—  
Even Today**  
*God's plans are higher than our thoughts*

### SERIES "I WILL BE WITH YOU"

- 26    The Last Years—Conclusion**

### POEMS

- 11    Thank You, Lord!**
- 28    Praise the Lord Every Day**

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## *Editorial*

Dear Readers,

Upon closer examination, this issue's topics—gratitude and contentment—reveal themselves to be intertwined: grateful people will always be content, and contented people will always be grateful. It could not be otherwise!

Because God is the author and giver of all that is good, the Bible invites us to be grateful in all things. It is right to do so, even when it comes to less pleasant things, because a good God who loves us infinitely can do us only good, whether or not we understand His gifts and plans.

Everyone wants to be happy. The good news is that happiness can be created through contentment and gratitude; the bad news is that gratitude often seems so difficult to learn! If our focus is distracted from God—and we instead fixate on our difficulties, needs, and problems, or even on the well-being of other people—the attitude of gratitude can quickly be lost. And beware: the enemy of the soul, Satan, is eager to speed this process along, knowing that the loss of our gratitude will eventually cause us to become dissatisfied with everything.

Let us be sure to keep our eyes on God! If we ask Him for a grateful, contented heart, He will be happy to help us achieve it.

It is my prayer that the following articles and reports on gratitude and contentment will be a help and a blessing to us, allowing both to become a major and indispensable part of our lives!

*Ron Taron*

# The Botanist and the Reindeer Herder

*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,  
and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)*

The Swedish botanist Lars Levi Lästadius (1800–1861) was considered the foremost expert on Arctic flora. He was a Lutheran pastor. Following personal tragedies, the death of his child and his own serious illness, he began to doubt God and became bitter and hardened. Early in January 1844, he met a woman named Milla Clemensdotter, who was a Sami\* and a reindeer herder. She had also had a difficult life. Her father was an alcoholic and had lost the family's entire estate. Milla was placed in various foster homes and repeatedly abused. In spite of all this, the 28-year-old woman radiated a deep trust in God and inner peace. Impressed by this, the learned Lästadius asked, "Where do you get such deep peace?" Milla replied, "As an undeserved gift through God's Son on the cross, as it says in the Epistle to the Romans: 'Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

"I can't do anything with that!" Lars replied unwillingly. "How can you feel this peace?" Milla answered without hesitation: "I can say Yes to everything God sends."

The embittered man understood that God has a good purpose in all the difficult situations of our lives—namely to seek Him and to know Him as a gracious God.

Lästadius became a preacher of the gospel of God's grace. A year after his encounter with Milla, a revival began, particularly among the Sami people, which would shape life in the entire North Calotte (Northern Scandinavia) for a long time to come. Lästadius was later called the Apostle of the Lapps. Inner contentment and resting in God's will is not a question of education, but of trust in the merciful and gracious God.

What burden have you long been carrying, weighing down your soul and troubling your mind? Take Jesus at His word (see Matthew 11:28) and leave all to Him!

*Gerrit Alberts (Life is More)*

\*Sami (a member of a people of northern Scandinavia, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula of northern Russia who are traditionally fishermen, nomadic herders of caribou, and hunters of sea mammals).



# Gratitude: Key to Success

**G**ratitude is a quality that profoundly transforms and influences our lives. However, it is not a given to be grateful. We often see this in our children—they're sometimes surprised when we remind them to say "thank you." It seems they are astonished that certain things even warrant gratitude.

In contrast, I think of the stories my grandparents told of their experience in labor camps in Russia, where they at times had nothing to eat. Their appreciation for food was immense. No leftovers were thrown away. Is it necessary to experience hardship to learn gratitude? I believe all of us have faced difficult times and, in the aftermath, felt a deep sense of thankfulness when we came through the crisis.

Yet gratitude should not depend on external circumstances. That's the mindset of people who don't know God. They seek fulfillment and happiness in worldly things. But such things cannot produce lasting contentment, gratitude, and genuine joy. The Bible offers a different perspective—one that isn't tied to our circumstances, but one that can be an ongoing reality in our lives.

## **Gratitude is a decision, not a result!**

The Bible repeatedly challenges us to be thankful. What's important is to consider who made these calls to gratitude and what circumstances they were in. Then it becomes obvious how different the biblical principle is from the human perspective.

The Apostle Paul, for example, didn't have a positive outlook on life because everything was going well for him. Instead, he intentionally chose to be thankful.

But why is gratitude good and helpful? The fascinating thing is that gratitude has a powerful impact on our lives. There are clear connections and links between gratitude and our health. Thankful people have stronger immune systems, sleep better, and experience

greater well-being. They feel less stress and have deeper relationships with others.

God, as our Creator, knows what is good for us. A life marked by gratitude leads to joy and contentment. That's why Paul writes:

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Of course, life is always a struggle. I often think of Peter. He had the opportunity to walk on water. Jesus

allowed his request, and Peter was able to experience something incredible. But instead of concentrating on Jesus and walking toward Him, he began to look at the circumstances around him—and that's when he started sinking.

Jesus also calls us to look beyond the problems of our time and fix our eyes on

Him. Yet we are also at risk of being easily distracted. A brother in our congregation often repeats the phrase:

"Gratitude keeps you from drifting and praising God is uplifting."

We need much more gratitude to give us stability in life, and praise and worship that glorifies our Lord and Savior. Gratitude fills our hearts with genuine, deep joy.

As one brother recently shared in a sermon:

"If we keep reminding ourselves how we have been bought at a high price, it cannot leave us unaffected."

For this reason, Paul, too, reminded the church in Corinth to fix their eyes on Jesus. That is our joy, our thankfulness, and our eternal hope—regardless of the situation.

"I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge" (1 Corinthians 1:4-5).

*Eugen Igel  
Kirchberg, Germany*

*A life marked  
by gratitude  
leads to joy and  
contentment.*

# *I Forgot to Thank You*

"Johnny, have you thanked Aunt Martha for your birthday present yet? She gave you something very nice, you know."

"No, not yet, Mother."

"You should. After all, she gave you something you really wanted. You could at least thank her."

"Yes, Mother, but she hasn't been here yet!"

"No excuse, Johnny. You know you can call her. After all, we have a telephone. You don't have to wait until you see her."

"I just forgot, Mother."

\*

My husband should have been home by now! Did something happen? I glanced at the phone. If only it would ring! But what if it was the hospital? What if he had an accident?

"Oh, dear Lord, please let him come home safely. Please, don't let anything happen to him." I prayed as I paced restlessly back and forth.

Then I heard the sound of a vehicle. As it drew nearer, I held my breath. "Please let it be him, Lord!" The vehicle turned into our driveway. I breathed a sigh of relief.

But because I am only human and the tension was over, I scolded my husband for being so thoughtless and not calling me. Why did he have to frighten me like that! At least nothing had happened to him; he was back.

But—I forgot to thank you for that, Lord!

\*

I sat on the edge of the bed and watched my child tossing and turning with a fever. The days of uncertainty seemed like an eternity. But there was nothing I could do. All I could do was sit there, wait—and pray.

Our child recovered. The hours and days of anxious worry were over. I could hardly imagine that they had

ever existed. Yes, everything was fine again.

But—I didn't thank you for it, Lord!

\*

"You're going to have to have surgery, Elaine," said the doctor, whom I trusted and who was also a good friend.

On the afternoon before the surgery, I was lying in the hospital ward. Other than me, the four-bed room was empty. "Dear God, please don't let it be too bad. Help me not to complain, and please don't let the pain be too much for me."

I emerged from the blurry world of sedation. The next few days were painful and not very pleasant. But it wasn't as unbearable as I had feared.

But—I didn't thank you for it, Lord!

\*

One more promotion, and I would have reached a good salary level. If I could just take this one step, I would be satisfied.

"O Lord, help me just this once to get what I want. Just this one promotion, then I'll be satisfied!"—My dream came true!

But—I forgot to thank you for it, Lord!

\*

Early one morning, we were driving along a narrow road. Our three children were asleep in the back of the car. On a slippery section of road, we lost control and slid backwards almost two meters down the embankment.

"Protect us, Lord! Keep your hand over us! Help us so that the car does not roll over!"

The car came to a stop on all four wheels. We looked at each other in silence.

But—we forgot to thank you, Lord!



\*

My two children and I walked along the tracks, laughing. I was so busy keeping my balance on the rails that I didn't pay attention to anything else. Suddenly, I turned around. There, around the bend, close behind us, the afternoon train rolled toward us silently and inexorably. My son and I jumped to one side, while my daughter veered to the other side—toward the road.

"Oh Lord, don't let anything happen to her! Please, don't let her fall off the embankment onto the road! Please, please!"

The train thundered past us, and there stood my daughter, safe and sound, with a smile on her face. Silently, somewhat pensively, we continued on our way.

But—we didn't thank you, Lord!

\*

I was very ill. For a while, I thought I wouldn't make it. As I lay there in bed, I realized how little I had done for my Lord.

"Dear Lord, if you give me another chance at life, I will work for you. I will do everything for you. Just let me live a little longer, Lord! I will serve you humbly."

Soon I was healthy again, and I felt better than ever. But I did not serve you better, Lord. I didn't find time to work in the church. I was too busy with other things.

I admit—I forgot to thank you, Lord!

*Ruth L. Duerr*

# Gratitude and Contentment

**H**ow would you like to have a simple way to improve your happiness in life in a lasting and noticeable way—regardless of your bank balance, state of health, or the general situation in your surroundings?

Gratitude and contentment are precisely this path—like the two wings of a bird. Gratitude lifts your heart and lets it rejoice in God's presence, while contentment keeps it at this blessed level. Living both consistently not only grants our lives more serenity in everyday life but also leads to a deeper relationship with God.

This attitude is much more than just a nice addition to our Christian profession. It is a treasure that brings unlimited blessings in every situation in life—in abundance as well as in crises—and shapes and refines our character.

## Ingratitude and Discontentment

Some of us tend to be quite sparing with our thanks but very generous with our criticism. From there, it is only a short distance to ingratitude and constant discontentment—and we do not even notice the poisonous effect of our attitude. (Travel through the world with your eyes open, and you will realize that many things at home are actually quite good.) Paul describes how people, although they knew God, neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him but fell into futile thinking (Romans 1:21). The moment we forget God's goodness, spiritual desolation begins: our hope crumbles, and our faith withers away.

Ingratitude and discontentment harm us. Chronic dissatisfaction makes us ill and weakens our immune system. Bitterness poisons our relationships. Being ungrateful is not only a character flaw, but also implies that we believe God, our Creator, is failing to provide

for us adequately. Ingratitude leads us to idolatry: we seek substitute gods when we doubt God's goodness. Today, these are called, for example, career, image, self-realization, and wellness.

What becomes of our faith when our hearts are increasingly filled with ingratitude and discontentment? Israel grumbled against God even though He provided them with manna at their doorstep. The ungrateful person spurns the gift and despises the giver. The grateful person sees the giver, not the gift. That is why it says: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18). This triad preserves our faith: joy in God protects us from resigned fatalism, prayer keeps us close to and dependent on God, and gratitude protects us from doubting God's faithfulness and goodness.

## Gratitude

In light of God's undeserved grace, how can we feel anything other than deep gratitude? Paul writes: "For by grace you have been saved . . . not of works" (Ephesians 2:8–9). Isn't this completely contrary to our performance-oriented society? We are trained to believe that our value is measured by our success. But the gospel gives us value apart from any achievement. With deep gratitude, we bow before the miracle of this grace.

When we practice seeing all of God's manifestations of grace with open eyes, it becomes our way of life. Even when we feel inadequate, or perhaps even guilty, we can take refuge in the merciful arms of our Father. Our hearts learn to value God's faithfulness and mercy more than our own efforts. His love is stronger than our weakness and mistakes. We learn to love Psalm 103.

## **Contentment**

In a Roman prison, Paul wrote these astonishing lines: “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content” (Philippians 4:11). This contentment is not resignation, but the quiet certainty that Christ is enough. Our Lord has promised us: “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Wealth should therefore not be defined by possessions, but by God’s presence.

Gratitude responds to the blessings and gifts we receive, but contentment remains even when what we ask for does not come. Both attitudes are based on the knowledge of God’s faithfulness. Paul learned this—he was a man just like us. When we look at his story, it seems as if he was very determined, perhaps even impatient. Through him, we understand that contentment is not a gift that suddenly changes us. Rather, we need to practice it and make it a habit.

Have you ever considered that you can practice contentment and sufficiency? The spirit of the times encourages us to always want more—higher, farther, richer. We have learned to constantly compare ourselves, to base our desires on what others have. Practice contentment by consciously choosing to practice restraint. Avoid consumption, new purchases, the new look, the latest model. Sometimes a repair is better than a new purchase.

## **In prayer and practical life**

Jesus gave thanks to the Father before multiplying the loaves (John 6:11). Do you know the recipe for prayer in times of great need? When the need is overwhelming, there is no way out, and no help is in sight, then stop asking in your prayers. Even if you don’t feel like it, even if it takes strength and effort—make no requests or complaints, but only and exclusively focus on thanksgiving! Thank God for everything that is worthy of thanks. But don’t stop there. Move on to the things

you take for granted and the ordinary things you have become accustomed to—and thank God for them with all your heart! Victory begins when you quietly and tentatively start to give thanks for the path of depth, humiliation, pain, and burden. God hears you and gives your soul great strength (Psalm 138:3).

Do you have a list of all the reasons you should be thankful? When you are in darkness and pain, this list can help you give thanks from the bottom of your heart—and triumph.

Is contentment possible without gratitude? Biblical contentment grows out of gratitude because it recognizes God as the source of all good things.

In Paul’s life, many things turned out quite differently than he had hoped. He may have prayed long and hard for some things, but God did not grant them to him. And it was precisely in this that he learned grateful contentment—the fruit of a heart that rests in God’s wisdom and grace. He learned to let himself be guided entirely by God’s will and to be content—whether in wealth or poverty, honor or contempt, success or loneliness, and whether God answered his prayer immediately or remained silent. This made him all the more grateful for every answered prayer (Philippians 2:27).

## **Final thoughts**

Gratitude purifies, and contentment anchors our soul. This is how God equips us for the next storm, the next crisis. Be thankful for these times too, because they give us the opportunity to test ourselves. Practice giving thanks by thanking God every evening for three instances of blessing that day. God guides you in His wisdom and gives you everything you truly need.

*Hermann Vogt  
Gifhorn, Germany*

# Authentic Gratitude

**A**t first glance, gratitude seems simple—yet it demands our whole heart. It is more than a reaction to the good things in life—it is the path to inner freedom and to God’s salvation. Psalm 50:23 says “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders *his* conduct *aright* I will show the salvation of God.”

Those who are grateful, not only see what they have, but also recognize the source.

In a world that revolves around itself, gratitude is a quiet but powerful counterforce. It protects us from negative comparisons with other people, from hard-heartedness, pride, and self-sufficiency. It leads us back to the source of all gifts, to God. For ultimately, nothing good in our lives is our own doing—everything is grace.

## 1. The essence of authentic gratitude

The word “authentic” means genuine, credible, unadulterated. Not feigned, not artificial—but true through and through.

Authentic gratitude is more than a polite, fleeting “thank you” or a feeling of elation in good times. It is gratitude that comes from the depths of the soul, sincere, honest, and enduring—even when God leads us through darkness and pain.

Gratitude grows in the presence of God. When we recognize His greatness, wisdom, love, and faithfulness, our perspective changes. Genuine gratitude does not need well-chosen words—because God sees and knows the heart. It is not a mood, but a quiet decision: “I will hold fast to God, even if I don’t understand everything right now.”

Job is an example of this. In Job 1:21, he declares: “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

Despite having lost everything—his children, his possessions, his security—there was no reproach, and no bitter words came over Job’s lips. In his deep pain, he turns to God with gratitude and worship.

This is neither self-evident nor easy. But it is possible—if the heart remains connected to God despite adverse circumstances.

## 2. What gratitude is not

We know there are useful plants in nature, some used for healing, others for nutrition. At the same time there are also look-alikes that are similar to the good plants but are worthless. This is also the case with respect to gratitude. There a kind of gratitude that is deceptive. It sounds right, may look pious, and yet it brings God no glory and does not honour him.

### a) *Gratitude is not arrogant*

There was a Pharisee that prayed, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess” (Luke 18:11–12). This prayer was not pleasing to God, since it was a prayer of pride and self-glorification. The Pharisee compares himself to others and places himself above them through his pious deeds and words. Such gratitude cannot please God and repels others.

Genuine gratitude grows out of humility. It knows that everything we have is undeserved mercy.

### b) *Gratitude is not superficial*

Then there is a kind of gratitude that is only external—mechanical and habitual, without the heart being in it. It is possible to pray, “Lord, thank you for this day,” and yet the heart may be full of worry and doubt or even bitterness. We read in Matthew 15:8, “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from Me.”

God is not looking for pretty words. When we pray, He wants us to pray in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23). David says: “Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts” (Psalm 51:6).

God is not interested in a flawless facade or feigned piety. He invites us to come to him as we are—child-like, honest, and trusting.

## 3. Genuine gratitude

We have a wonderful privilege. We can come to God with everything—with joy and pain, trust and doubts, longing and anxious sighs. We can stay in His pres-

# Thank You, Lord!

*Lord God, Creator, wise and holy,  
full of compassion, pow'r and light.  
You let the hot sun rise up slowly  
To warm the air by shining bright.  
We see your splendor every day.  
You supply us with all our needs.  
You're still there when the day fades away.  
A faithful God and friend indeed!*

*Thank you, Savior for what you have planned.  
I thank you for your awesome ways,  
Even if I do not understand  
The shadows and light on my way.  
You are with me in joy and sorrow.  
I thank you for the quiet hours,  
for strength and courage for tomorrow;  
for sun, wind, and gentle showers.*

*I give you thanks for friendly people,  
That always treat me lovingly;  
But let me show real kindness equal  
To those who are upsetting me.*

*I thank you for your loving children,  
That help me grow in faith and grace.  
I thank you for the church you're building,  
Uniting folks from every race.*

*You healed my heart, filled it with love;  
You gave your life upon the cross.  
You guide me with wisdom from above,  
All prideful gain I count as loss.  
You're close to me when things seem dark,  
You hear my prayers, you seek my best.  
Lord, help me to always do my part,  
For in your love my soul does rest!*

*I thank you for your amazing grace,  
And for the hope that strengthens me;  
For ev'rything that you've put in place  
That I can live successfully.  
Let me be yours in every way;  
In you, my Lord, I do delight,  
My counselor, beginning and end,  
Sunshine by day, and song at night.*

*Helene Rotfuss*

ence until our hearts find rest in His arms—comforted, strengthened, and filled with new gratitude and worship.

## *a) Thankful in all things*

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” We are called to remain thankful in all situations—even when they are difficult, unpleasant, and we don’t know what the future holds. This is not about cheap consolation, but reason to hope, for God knows the way and has counsel, strength, and the means to carry us through.

## *b) Gratitude is inexhaustible*

Jesus says in Matthew 6:21: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

If our hearts are focused only on things that are temporary, our gratitude will waver—or break completely. But when God Himself is our treasure, the reason to give thanks remains—even in the greatest trials.

And who, if it is not us—His children, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ—can have more reason to thank God from the bottom of our hearts?

## *c) Remembering the past*

Giving thanks often begins with remembering. ►

Those who forget God's faithfulness become hardened. But those who consciously look back and recognize God's work are filled anew with wonder and deep gratitude.

When God saved Israel in a hopeless situation, Samuel set up a memorial stone "and called its name Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the LORD has helped us'" (1 Samuel 7:12).

David also exclaims in Psalm 103:2: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Looking back with gratitude softens the heart—and makes it ready to remain grateful even when facing new challenges.

#### *d) Growing in gratitude*

Genuine gratitude flourishes if we practice it daily and it will become a character trait. We can begin the day

with a simple prayer, "Thank you, Lord, that I may walk with you today!" Or we can consciously focus on small things that we experience: expressions of kindness, a ray of sunshine, a flower, the smell of coffee, a smile, or a moment of silence.

Gratitude grows in conversation with God, through reading His Word, through prayer, and being conscious of His goodness at all times. It is expressed in our conversations with our friends, our neighbors and in our behavior toward others.

Gratitude does not require everything to go right—it only requires an open heart. And there are plenty of reasons to be thankful. Every day. With all of our hearts.

*Helene Rotfuss  
Pforzheim, Germany*

## Why Give Thanks?

**T**he Apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesians to "[give] thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). Why did he write these words?

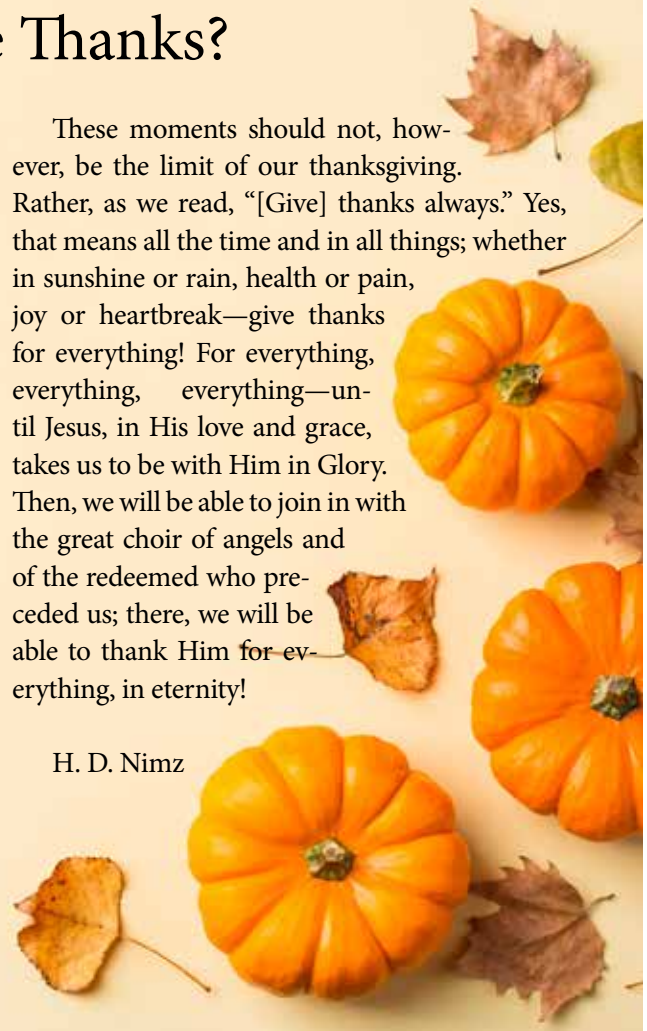
First of all, because it is God's will that everything be on Earth as it is in Heaven. And what is giving thanks like in Heaven?

We read, "All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen'" (Revelation 7:11–12). That is what happens in Heaven: constant worship and thanksgiving!

Knowing now that this is God's will, you and I must live out these words and "[give] thanks always." So when we wake up in the morning after a good night's sleep, let us give thanks for the Lord's protection. And when we sit down for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, let us thank God for the gifts that He has allowed to grow and flourish for us.

These moments should not, however, be the limit of our thanksgiving. Rather, as we read, "[Give] thanks always." Yes, that means all the time and in all things; whether in sunshine or rain, health or pain, joy or heartbreak—give thanks for everything! For everything, everything, everything—until Jesus, in His love and grace, takes us to be with Him in Glory. Then, we will be able to join in with the great choir of angels and of the redeemed who preceded us; there, we will be able to thank Him for everything, in eternity!

H. D. Nimz



# Thankfulness in Real Life

*"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:18)*

## **Thankful? How?**

How can I be thankful in all circumstances? What's to thank for when outcomes are different than expected and my expectations are mostly unmet? Oh, and did I mention all the loss and grief I've suffered? Why should I thank? How can I be thankful? My life turned out so different than I ever imagined it to. It's like planning my dream vacation in Italy, buying the guidebooks, anticipating with excitement the experience of the Colosseum, the ruins of Pompeii, the canals of Venice, but when the plane lands, the flight attendant comes in to say, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland!," I say. "What do you mean, Holland? I signed up for Italy. I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy." But there's been a change in flight plans. You've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

So, how will I choose to respond when all dreams are shattered? And what about my expectations? And what about the losses I've suffered? Is it fair to expect me to be thankful? So, what happens when all dreams are shattered?

Perhaps many of you can identify with this analogy. So how can one be thankful in all circumstances? Consider the following signposts:

### **1. Acknowledge that God is sovereign**

God makes no mistakes. He knows what He is doing in your life. Though it may be hard for you to accept and hard for you to understand, He has a plan for you. In Jeremiah 29:11 we read; "For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." And in Isaiah 55:8-9 we read; "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'" Unless we can accept these truths, a thankful disposition would seem impossible. Acknowledging God's sovereignty and

trusting His Word is a good start to finding a thankful heart.

### **2. Allow God to open your eyes**

Pray for God to help you see the beauty around you. Jettison your expectations and ask him for a grateful heart in your situation. Then cultivate gratefulness by opening your heart to new heights. Keep in mind how magnificent a view is on higher ground and climb every height to which God leads you.

### **3. Abide in Him**

Despite applying all your will power, maintaining true thankfulness can only happen when you stay connected to the source of your strength. Never trust in your own abilities. Trust in God's wisdom and drink deeply from His wellspring of grace. Ask to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Let His Word be in you. Believe His promises. Meditate on them and allow His eternal and dependable Word to feed your soul.

### **4. Stay focused on God's goodness**

Look for God! Seek His face! Notice His presence and be in tune with Him. Ask Him to speak to you. Run to Him with all your troubles. Don't be oblivious to the beauty around you. See God in nature. Hear Him speak. Recall past experiences with God, and answered prayers. Redirect your thoughts and conversations if you must. God is very present and truly good.

Following these signposts will bring you to a place you didn't know could be so beautiful! It is a place of peace and contentment, and a truly thankful heart. Declare His goodness over and over, and praise Him, praise Him, praise Him!

You will find joy you would never have wanted to pass up for an alternate route. And before you know it, you will see, with a very grateful heart, how beautiful "Holland" is!

*Joanne Friesen  
Steinbach, Manitoba*

# *Have You Learned to Be Content?*

**Discontentment grows as . . .**

- A man dreams of a better paying job.
- A teenager impatiently waits to drive.
- A wife complains, “My husband works too much.”
- A mother sighs over all the work she has to do in her household.
- The media brings us endless advertisements to awaken a desire in us to purchase more.

Yet the Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:11, “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.” So, at what stage in the Christian walk of life are we fully content? Is it only the older and mature Christians who are content? Does it take a lifetime to learn contentment?

As Christians saved by grace, we are to be spiritually content throughout our lives, since those who eat and drink of Jesus will hunger and thirst no more (John 6:35). The longing for peace, joy, and eternal life has all been satisfied in our Savior Jesus on the day we

were saved. Yet the race of faith had only begun, and Paul speaks of pressing on to the prize of eternal life with Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12–14).

We know that Christians are to bear good fruit and perform good works. Therefore, there is a certain tension in our spiritual lives between resting in the Lord and working for the Lord. This tension requires a proper balance by listening to the Holy Spirit, studying the Word and being guided by an active prayer life. With God’s help we will find a healthy balance between growing to be more effective Christians and serving the Lord while being content.

Jesus gave the woman who anointed Him with costly oil this testimony, “She has done what she could” (Mark 14:8). Led by the Spirit, she poured out her most valuable oil to anoint Jesus prior to His death. May we as Christians learn to trust His leadings, act upon them, be blessed and grow through them as this woman did. Therein lies spiritual contentment; knowing one is doing God’s will and resting in Him like a child in the Father’s arms.



The world around us will try to sow the seeds of discontent in our hearts. Paul warns us not to strive for earthly riches and fall into temptation and harmful lusts, but rather to be content with what God blesses us with (1 Timothy 6:6–10). Certainly, we can save and invest wisely, but we are to avoid the love of money and be generous in our giving. Christians are to walk in faith knowing “godliness with contentment is great gain” (v. 6). Are we content with our homes, our relationships, our marriages, our health, our job, our finances, and our church?

Our contentment in the Lord is not situation dependent. Paul, although imprisoned for his faith, had learned that there is grace for whatever situation in life he found himself in and he accepts this with contentment in Philippians 4:11–12:

“[F]or I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

He continues by sharing that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (v. 13). As we rest in Jesus and trust His leading, we will experience that our “God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (v. 19). What a wonderful promise in days where there is loss, heartache, and sadness. I have often been blessed when visiting the elderly, the sick, or those in wheelchairs, whose faith did not waver, and their contentment in the Lord was evident.

There is yet another promise for God’s children who are content to accept in faith whatever condition life brings, both the good and the difficult days. God’s conditional promise in Hebrews 13:5 is “*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’*” Learn to rest in Him and be content, while at the same time actively pursuing His will for your life.

*Harry Klinger  
Winnipeg, Manitoba*



# Grateful People

*“Vows made to You are binding upon me, o God;  
I will render praises to You.” (Psalm 56: 12)*

Just like David’s statement. Finally, someone who makes it a point to be thankful to his God! Grateful people make me happy; they encourage me and are a blessing to me. I, too, want to belong to that group—those known for their gratitude.

May I introduce you to a few of these “grateful people”? Let’s look at their lives. What is striking about all of them is this: each of them had reasons to be thankful—and they recognized and acknowledged those reasons. Whoever takes the time to look for reasons to be thankful will experience what the hymn writer once expressed: “Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.”

## David (Psalm 56)

It could hardly have been worse for him: hated by the hostile Philistines and hunted by his fellow countrymen. Wherever he turned, he faced enemies. Just read Psalm 56 to gain insight into his situation. And yet, he found his trust in God (verse 11). Thus far, God had helped him in wonderful ways—even in the presence of his enemies. He could say, “You have delivered my soul from death.” God was on his side. Consequently, he could not help but say: “Vows *made to You are binding upon me, o God; I will render praises to You.*”

## An Anonymous Man (Luke 17: 11–18)

Jesus describes his gratitude as exemplary. Freed from leprosy through a miracle, he returns to express his thanks to Jesus. He has regained his health and has been set free from the bonds of an incurable disease. Isn’t that reason to be thankful? How can one remain silent?

We can truly comprehend his situation when we read: “And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks” (verses 15–16).

What was surprising, however, was the lack of gratitude of the other nine who were also healed.

Their thanks never came. Regrettably! No wonder Jesus looked around and asked: “Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?”

## Paul (2 Corinthians 9: 6–15)

As a redeemed pastor, he cared deeply for individuals. He also carried a profound concern for the churches he had helped establish. He maintained contact with them through correspondence. In his letters, he provided direction, helping the church family live according to God’s principles. He often tackled “uncomfortable” topics—such as giving, in 2 Corinthians 9: 6–15. We are familiar with his statement: “God loves a cheerful giver.”

After encouraging the Corinthians to give, he seems to pause for a moment. Then he adds with emphasis:

“Thanks *be* to God for His indescribable gift!”

As if to say: Our giving is minimal when we consider God’s great gift—His Son. And for that, he thanks his God. Giving thanks played an important role in his life. That’s why he could also write to others: “[Give] thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5: 20).

October is the month of thanksgiving. At least, we are especially reminded of it during this month. God is worthy of our thanks. He has done great things for us. He lifts us up and carries us. He provides for us. He stands beside us in every situation.

Would you like to join the ranks of the grateful? There’s still a place available for you. No pressure—join voluntarily! Perhaps today, at this moment, we can chime in with David: “Vows *made to You are binding upon me, o God; I will render praises to You.*”

I want to do it—always and in all situations. I want to be thankful—always and in everything.

Harry Semenjuk  
Wetaskiwin, Alberta

# Don't Forget to Give Thanks!

*"Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!  
For His mercy endures forever." (Psalm 106: 1)*

In this Bible verse, we are told to give thanks. God's goodness and kindness should be the incentive to do so. This year's harvest should also be celebrated in this spirit. How easily individuals, and even entire nations, can become ungrateful towards God. Personal interests crowd God out of our lives. That is why so many fail to see the goodness and kindness of the Lord.

It is not without reason the Holy Scripture calls us to give thanks. Ungrateful people are dissatisfied and unhappy. They only see the negative side of life and carelessly overlook all the good things given to them. Neither God nor people can please them and they do not do what is right! They forget the goodness and blessings of the Lord. They take everything they receive for granted, and therefore they carelessly pass by the Giver of all good gifts. Our Bible verse calls us to give thanks: "give thanks to the LORD."

We would do well to pause for a moment and reflect on what we have received through God's goodness and kindness. Perhaps this will make us realize that we have neglected to give thanks. In that case, it is imperative to ask God from the bottom of our hearts for forgiveness and for a new, grateful heart.

First, we should thank God for peace and tranquility in our country. This cannot be taken for granted, because the flames of revolt and war are burning in many places around the world. Thousands are fleeing, have no shelter, and wander around homeless. Oh, what a desolate existence! Be thankful to God that this is not the case in our country. At the same time, pray for the authorities, that they may be aware of their great responsibility before God and only take paths for our country that preserve peace and ensure healthy development.

Second, we should thank God for our good livelihood. Looking back on the Depression and the post-war years, many will still remember the great hardship they had to endure. They looked to the future with hopeless, empty eyes. Today, instead of those conditions, we have prosperity. However, this carries with it the danger of forgetting our God. The Word of God also confirms this. We read: "But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; . . . Then he forsook God *who* made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deuteronomy 32: 15).

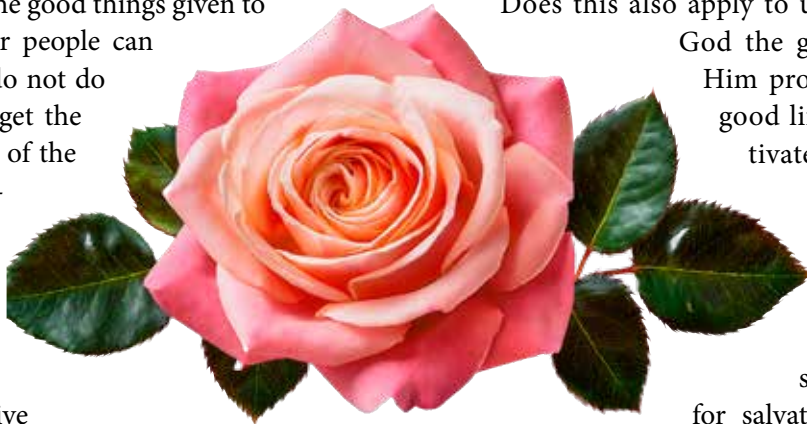
Does this also apply to us? Have we given God the glory and thanked Him properly? Or has the good life completely captivated us and led us farther away from God?

Third, and most importantly, we should thank God for salvation through Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for

our sins so that we, redeemed from the power of sin, might walk in the ways of God. Christ, as the Savior of mankind, still breaks the chains of sin today and leads us to the glorious freedom of the children of God. He is a wonderful Savior who brought us reconciliation and now represents us as our mediator with God. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2: 18–19).

Oh, what grace! Do you know Him yet? Experience your Savior, Jesus Christ, in His saving power, and don't forget what our Bible verse says: "Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He* is good! For His mercy *endures* forever!"

*Gustav Sonnenberg*





## Pray and Work

**W**orking and studying are important parts of our lives. Everyone has tasks to complete, whether at school, at home, or at work. Work produces many good things: houses are built, fields are cultivated, the sick are cared for, and knowledge is passed on. Children also have their tasks—they learn at school, help around the house, or look after younger siblings.

In the Bible, we read that God already gave the first humans work to do. Adam and Eve were to cultivate and preserve the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2: 15). But they also spent time with God, who came to them in the garden (Genesis 3: 8–9).

As the son of a carpenter, Jesus learned His father Joseph's trade. He was obedient to His parents and surely helped where He could (read Mark 6: 3; Luke 2: 51–52). But He was also the Son of God and studied the Scriptures diligently. Jesus took time for prayer and for His relationship with His heavenly Father. At the age of twelve, He spoke with the Jewish teachers in the temple, and they were amazed at what He said (Luke 2: 47).

And when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, it read: "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest" (Exodus 34: 21). On this day of rest, the people of Israel were to take time for fellowship with God—through worship, prayer, and the Word of God.

Working alone is not enough. God wants us to seek Him, listen to Him, and talk to Him about everything. In prayer, we ask for strength, wisdom, and patience. We thank God for what we have been able to achieve with His help, and trust that He will continue to guide us.

A farmer can plow the field, sow seeds, and water them, but only God can make them grow. It's the same in our lives: we can try hard, but without God's blessing, our work won't have lasting success.

Work and prayer belong together like your two hands. Those who only work and do not pray rely on themselves. Those who only pray and do nothing are negligent. When we work and pray, God gives us understanding, strength, and success. He will show us the way and bless our actions.

*Helene Rotfuss*

## Worries and Answered Prayers

“Mom?” Nicholas asked softly, standing in the doorway of the kitchen.

“What’s wrong? Shouldn’t you be asleep by now?” his mother responded.

“I have a difficult math test tomorrow. I’ve been studying every day, even with Dad. But I just can’t figure out this one problem!” Nicholas said with a trembling voice.

His mother pulled up a chair next to her. Nicholas sat down and began to cry. “I’ve studied so hard—and I still don’t understand! I even prayed that God would help me. But today at school, I couldn’t solve the problem. Tomorrow I’m sure to get a bad grade!”

His mother gently stroked his hair and said, “We already prayed for this during our devotions tonight. Jesus says in the Bible that we can come to Him with all our worries, and He will help us. Come, let’s get Dad, and then we’ll pray together again. I’m sure God will help you tomorrow—nothing is impossible for Him!”

She got up and called Father, who was sitting in the living room. After Mother explained the problem, all three knelt to pray. They asked God to give Nicholas wisdom for the math test.

When they were finished, Father put his arm around Nicholas and said, “You know, I used to feel the same way. I didn’t understand something, and we prayed about it. When I took the test, I suddenly knew everything—not because I had studied so much, but because God had given me wisdom. Now don’t wor-

ry. We have entrusted it to God, and He is all-powerful. He can do things that are impossible for us.”

Nicholas felt a little better, went to his room, and went to sleep.

“Mom, why is Nicholas coming home late today?” Laura asked two weeks later at the lunch table.

His mother smiled: “Maybe he lost track of time while sweeping the classroom.”

Suddenly, the front door flew open. “Mom! Laura! I got a B in math! God answered our prayers!” they heard Nicholas shout through the house.

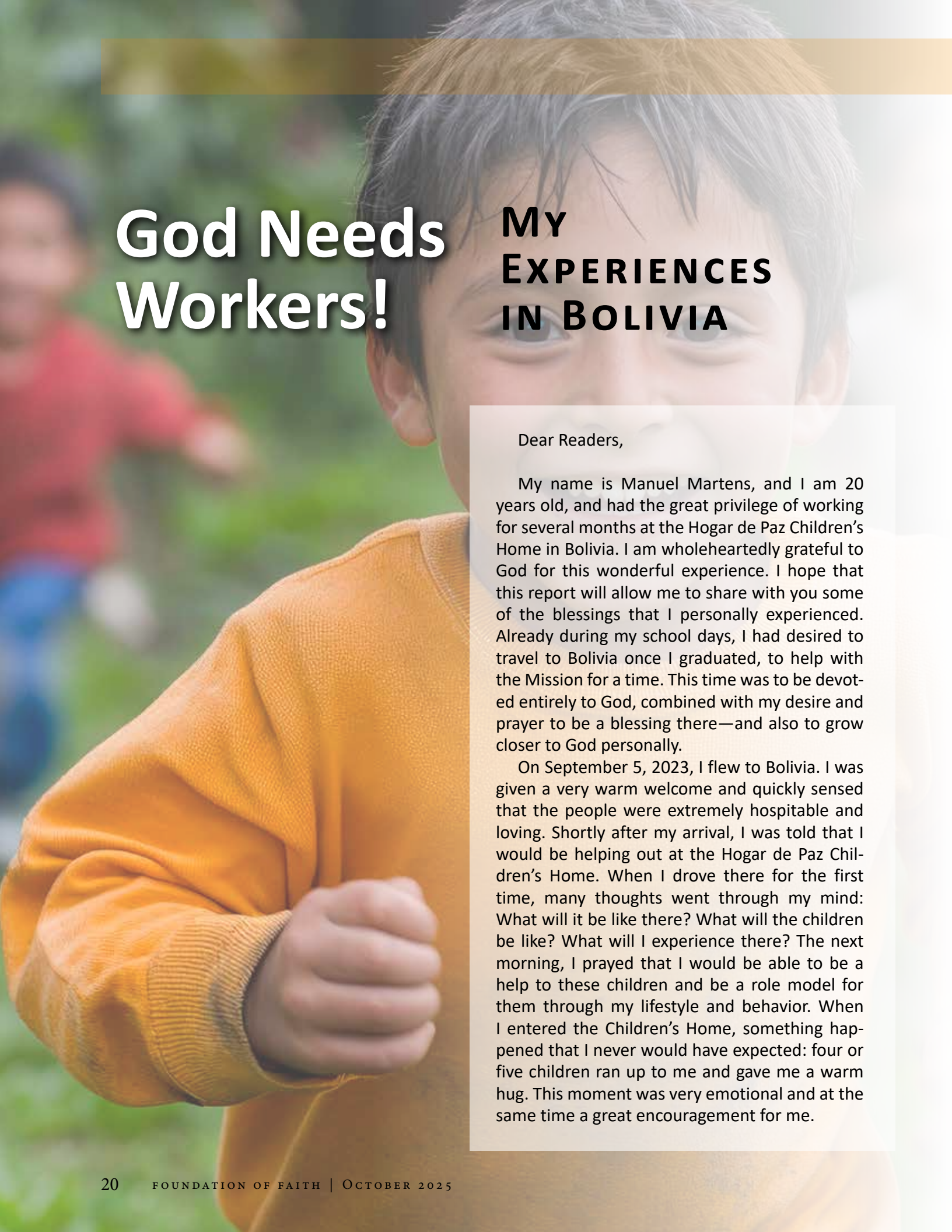
“Yes, thank God!” said his mother, beaming.

*Katharina Raiser*



“Casting all your care  
upon Him, for He  
cares for you.”

1 Peter 5:7



# God Needs Workers!

## MY EXPERIENCES IN BOLIVIA

Dear Readers,

My name is Manuel Martens, and I am 20 years old, and had the great privilege of working for several months at the Hogar de Paz Children's Home in Bolivia. I am wholeheartedly grateful to God for this wonderful experience. I hope that this report will allow me to share with you some of the blessings that I personally experienced. Already during my school days, I had desired to travel to Bolivia once I graduated, to help with the Mission for a time. This time was to be devoted entirely to God, combined with my desire and prayer to be a blessing there—and also to grow closer to God personally.

On September 5, 2023, I flew to Bolivia. I was given a very warm welcome and quickly sensed that the people were extremely hospitable and loving. Shortly after my arrival, I was told that I would be helping out at the Hogar de Paz Children's Home. When I drove there for the first time, many thoughts went through my mind: What will it be like there? What will the children be like? What will I experience there? The next morning, I prayed that I would be able to be a help to these children and be a role model for them through my lifestyle and behavior. When I entered the Children's Home, something happened that I never would have expected: four or five children ran up to me and gave me a warm hug. This moment was very emotional and at the same time a great encouragement for me.

What I will never forget are the eyes of these children. They revealed a lot about their life: you could see that many of them came from difficult circumstances, some were even traumatized. You could feel their longing for love—love that they may never have experienced enough of at home.

I quickly got into the routine of the day. My job was supervising the older boys. This meant waking them up in the morning, eating with them, working, playing, and accompanying them to school. Soon we became better acquainted, and it was wonderful to see how the boys gradually grew to trust their supervisors and foster parents more and more.

Every morning, the staff prayed together. These times were very uplifting, and it was often the morning prayers that gave us the strength we needed for the day. We experienced many answered prayers. Even though the work was not always easy, we were always able to draw new strength from our Lord Jesus.

After about three months, I came back home to Mexico. However, later in the year I had the opportunity to return to Bolivia for a few months to help out at the Children's Home again. This time I helped out as a teacher because the school was in urgent need of support in this area.

This task was completely new to me. I had little experience in teaching, but here too I was able to feel God's help and strength. He helped me again and again—even in moments when I didn't know how to proceed.

The Children's Home school is not your usual school: there are kids there who are already teenagers but are unable to read, and at the same time, there are others who are quite advanced. These big differences don't necessarily make teaching easy for the teachers. Yet somehow, thanks to the prayers of many brothers and sisters in Christ, it always worked out.

Together with Ruth Mirau, who also helped as a teacher, we tried to teach the children both

academic and biblical content. It was often like Sunday school. I was deeply touched by the fact that many children—especially those from the Old Colony—had never heard stories about Jesus before. Isn't that sad? There are thousands of children—even among Mennonites—who may never have heard Bible stories. When we think about this, shouldn't we wake up and realize that God wants to use us? Perhaps right here in Bolivia? I think it's worth thinking about.

We saw how children listened with great curiosity and attention when we told Bible stories. They looked at us with open, curious eyes, and you could clearly sense how interested they were. This often led to wonderful conversations. We saw how children gave their hearts to Jesus and how their lives visibly changed as a result.

The Hogar de Paz Children's Home is still operating. Daily, children are supervised there, and hundreds of them have already been exposed to God's Word. If you are interested in working at the Children's Home, please contact your local pastor or Pastor Roland Stieben directly (Tel. +59176004319). I can assure you of one thing: you will grow spiritually, and your heart will be filled with joy if you do this work with the right attitude. You will certainly not regret it. If you don't know just yet what you want to do in the future or what you want to study, then take the opportunity to travel to Bolivia and help out at the Children's Mission, whether as a teacher, childcare worker, or even in the kitchen. They will surely find the right place for you. I personally have been greatly enriched spending my time in Bolivia and thank God with all my heart for giving me this opportunity. Let us continue to pray earnestly for this important mission. Often it is your prayers that give the supervisors and caregivers the strength to continue.

*Manuel Martens  
Neustädt, Mexico*

# God Works Transformation in Our Lives—Even Today

**W**hen we sit quietly before the Lord and reflect on our life, we quickly reach the limit of what we can truly understand and comprehend. Subsequently, we are prompted through gratitude and deep humility to worship the One who has given us this life. We yearn to better understand how to attain a fulfilling, happy, blessed, and truly worthwhile life. We sense that life brings a certain responsibility which we simply feel unable to live up to—especially in our time!

We believe that God can still bring about these genuine, deeply transformative changes in our human nature today, just as seen in the Bible in the life of Peter and the other apostles. But how can we personally experience this? We know of times when God showers us with blessings, which produce praise and worship to God from the depth of our hearts. Yet sometimes, in an instant, we feel utterly abandoned, misunderstood by both God and people, and completely overwhelmed. Then the struggles and doubts arise, the feelings of powerlessness and inner emptiness.

## **Blessings in the sunshine**

I too, can speak of such times and circumstances very well, from personal experience. When I look back over my life, from the very beginning until today, I see wonderful traces of divine grace in all its different forms and colors. I see an abundance of blessings, both spiritual and natural, which resemble a glorious summer's day—times that brought me great joy, in which I could only praise and thank God from my heart.

## **Blessings outside the comfort zone**

But I also see the blessings that brought hard work into my life, which required efforts that were strenu-

ous, and took me out of my personal comfort zone. Blessings that came to me as tasks—opportunities God placed before me where I was privileged to do something for Him. Often this did not happen within the church congregation, but out in the world among people I hardly knew. Today I see what incomparable blessings for my personal life were hidden precisely in all these small tasks and challenges, without me having the slightest idea at the time of how important they would be for my life.

Now I clearly see how deeply these acts of service, done out of love for Jesus, strengthen our personal relationship with our Savior. Because we love Him, we are compelled to do what pleases Him. And, realizing our own personal weakness for these tasks, we cling to Him. In turn, God can bless even these small acts of love, and deep within our hearts, we sense that His favor rests on us. These little acts of kindness we do solely for God, as thanks for His love to us—not because others expect it of us, but simply because we know it brings Him joy—this willing, loving obedience becomes a source of pure joy that keeps our Christian life vibrant. At the same time, it is an opportunity for the God-pleasing qualities to unfold in our soul.

## **Lessons from the sickbed**

Then I think of the times of illness that became a lasting blessing for my life. For example, the time of my slipped disc, when I endured severe pain for months and no medical intervention brought any real relief. During that time, apart from the prescribed short and very painful walks, I could practically do nothing. However, I had much time to think. As I lay in bed and looked through the skylight above me into the heavens, I felt as though God had laid me on my

## BLESSINGS IN THE VALLEY

In the July 2025 issue, Brother Richard Kimmerle reported on his journey through deep trials and struggles. God wonderfully encouraged him with the words: “I love you!” The transformation that brought light back into his life only took place a few months ago.

In the same way, some of God’s children experience His unique ways that have a profound impact on their lives. It is not uncommon to wrestle with the questions: *“Why does God let me suffer like this? Why for so long? Why does He not answer?”* (Psalm 28:1). We desperately long for an answer, to understand what the purpose of such deep valleys might be.

In this testimony, Sister Claudia Wutke shares about God’s wise guidance in her life.

back to speak with me. I did not feel punished by God, but rather especially loved by Him. And I understood that He wanted to show me my life from a different perspective, and that He had something important to show me. I gained a deeper view of what truly matters in life.

In that time, I came to better understand that many things I had neglected in the bustle of everyday life actually mattered far more than the things that quietly consumed my time and energy. For example, God showed me that spending time in a good conversation with my neighbor was far more important than running a perfectly managed household.

I am not saying that the biblical priority system was unclear to me before; not at all. I also count it as one of the outstanding blessings of my life that God gave me parents who showed us children in practical, everyday life what Matthew 6:33 means: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” But even so, it was precisely this season, when I was physically weak and dependent on others due to great pain, that became a period of enduring blessing for my soul. It was a time when God aligned my way of recognition and assessment more closely with His.

### Through a dark valley

Yet, it seems to me that the deepest changes God worked in me happened during a time when His blessing came in a way that left me frozen in deep inner pain.

That period probably lasted a good ten years and seemed like a dark ice age, in which I felt like a bird with broken wings. When I finally came out of this long, dark valley, I felt as though I had lost ten years of my life. But over time, I began to realize what a great blessing that period had truly brought me. I saw how much God had changed me during that time. Today I am especially thankful to God for this difficult season.

The cause of all my inner anguish was simply that I could not understand the ways God was leading me. Of course, I had known struggles, doubts, and trials of faith before, since God had drawn me to Himself in my childhood, which I also count as one of His special gifts of grace to me. But after many blessings and successes in the first four decades of my life, I suddenly found myself, as a believing, responsible mother, at a point where I felt I had completely failed, since all the outcomes seemed to speak against me.

Over the years we had taken in two foster children in addition to our three biological children. We offered a home and family to a 10-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy and were able to lead them to Christ. However, when they grew up, all the children, one after another, chose a life without God. Within just a few years I had lost, bit by bit, everything for which I had sincerely prayed, strived, believed, and struggled. Before my eyes everything was shattered and gone. I felt completely robbed—and I could not understand how this could have happened.

My ongoing, painful questions, for which I found no satisfying answer through all those years, were: ►

“What did I do so fundamentally wrong? What did I neglect? What is the cause of this great failure?”—Before my eyes everything was broken; everything I so deeply loved. It was really a part of myself.—What was left to me? Each day anew, I asked these burning questions, but God seemed silent. Many times, I worked in the house and garden weeping and praying, constantly crying out to God for answers, for help, for a change of situation. For years I regularly fasted under this heavy burden—and from my perception, nothing changed. The gnawing pain, the burning questions, the whole distressing situation remained.—The only answer I received was simply: “This is your path.”

### **Rays of sunshine in the darkness**

I would so much like to understand better and more clearly in what manner God’s help came to me, but I cannot really say. What I do know is that over time, God brought me to the point of simply and humbly accepting the path He was leading me on. I realized that I could not force God to change my situation with either prayer or fasting.

What prayers of repentance over past mistakes could not accomplish, prayers of thanksgiving could! After some very good pastoral counsel, I began to thank God; to thank Him from the heart, and to thank Him every day for what I still had. I clearly remember how good that was for my soul, for I experienced a gradual peace returning to my heart.

I still associate leaving behind that long, dark time, with a visit to an unbelieving man who, after a stroke, had been transferred to a nursing home. He had not expected us. He wept for joy when he saw us. The visit was a blessing. We went to see him repeatedly; those visits were a joy for the sick man and at the same time, an encouragement for me.—In this way, God led me back exactly to the point that I had left behind. God let me continue in His school of life and kept working on me, patiently and with much love.

### **Now ready for new tasks**

With the awareness of aging, I recall that my heart developed a desire to live the remaining healthy years that God would give me with eternity in mind. I had no plan, no idea how I could do that, but evidently God noticed that desire in my heart. Perhaps He also wanted to see how serious I was. In any case, as the years went on, He developed a complete plan; initially

unknown to me. In His great wisdom, God arranged the steps of this plan to be so small that we did not shrink back, but instead, with joy and looking upwards to Him, we took the first steps. Thus, in 2017, through the invitation of a 10-year-old Albanian boy, we flew to Albania. The first time, we went for just a few days, understanding that we were pleasing God by going.

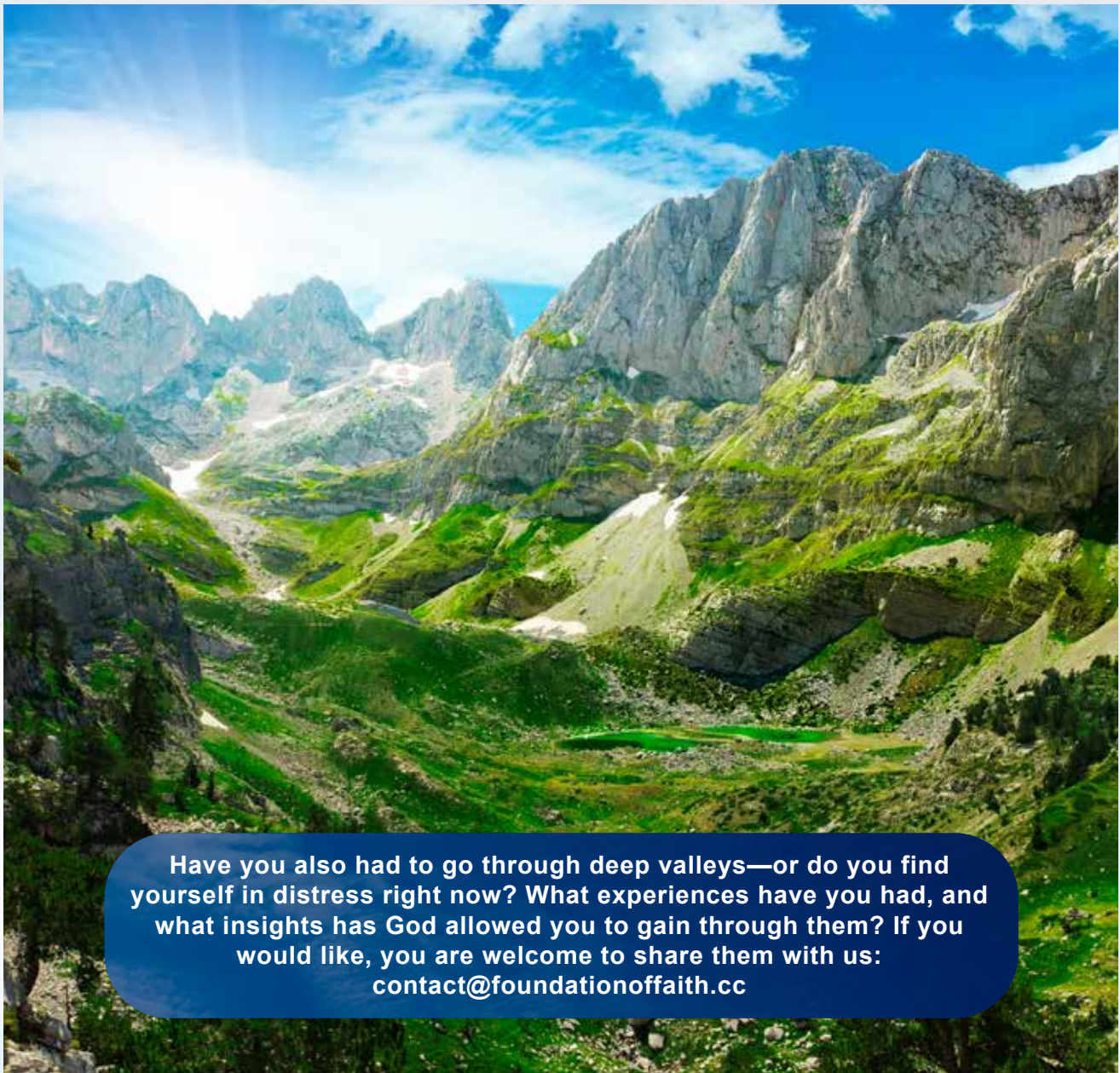
Looking back now, we see far more clearly than at that time how precisely God planned and prepared everything. Where else could such a warm welcome from complete strangers have come from, only being able to communicate very poorly due to the language barrier? God showed us the great inner and outer needs of people living in a Muslim cultural and value system. The great blessing we had received through Jesus Christ, through His love and His gospel, urged us from within to pass some of it on to these dear people. They sensed a love they had never encountered before, and when, after just a few days, the time came to say goodbye, many tears were shed. There was only one wish—that we return once more that same year.

God led us step by step into a work we had never thought of, never trusted ourselves to take on, never would have dared to accept, if we had known where the path would lead. But because God knew exactly what we could accomplish with His help, He wisely planned and prepared everything. And each time we were in Albania, we felt that God was truly present, that He Himself opened the doors, that He Himself blessed the people—as well as us, along with them.

### **Looking back and recognizing God’s faithful work**

When I pause and look back on my life, I can only praise and thank God from the bottom of my heart for the transformation and His divine work in my soul. I am so thankful that I have been allowed to learn that *it matters less what I do for God than how I do it*. For God does not first and foremost expect our service, but our love for Him. It does not depend on us making plans for our lives, nor on us understanding God’s plans and ways with us. What matters is that we live in such a relationship with God that He can fulfill His plan in us, and that we join and cooperate with His ways. We may entrust ourselves to Him. He knows us with our strengths and weaknesses, with our longing and our failures.

Because He loves us, He works on us. The important thing is that we remain in His school, and that we



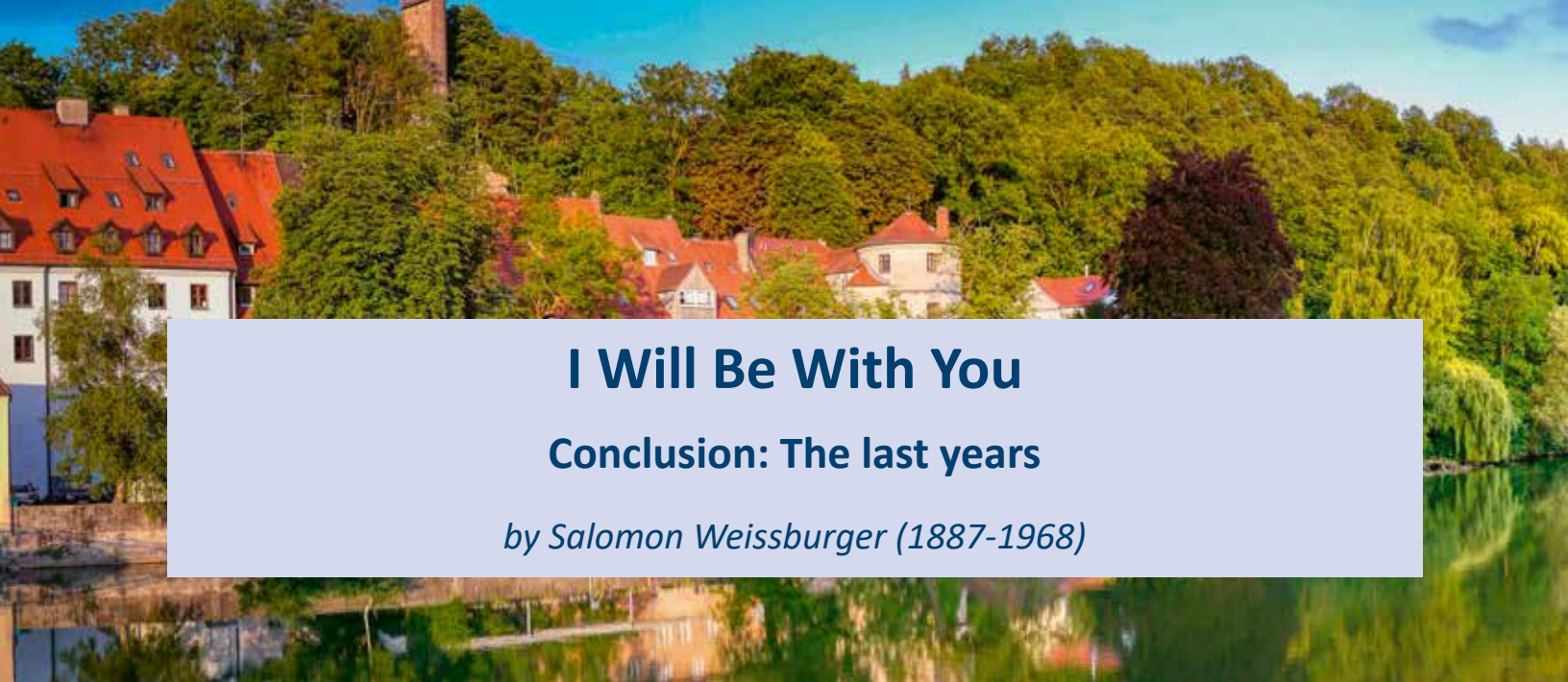
**Have you also had to go through deep valleys—or do you find yourself in distress right now? What experiences have you had, and what insights has God allowed you to gain through them? If you would like, you are welcome to share them with us: [contact@foundationoffaith.cc](mailto:contact@foundationoffaith.cc)**

are willing to let Him change us and not run away from Him. It becomes easier when we fight less in our own strength but instead surrender ourselves more to Him and accept His ways—regardless of how they feel to us, regardless of how well they match our own plans. The word God spoke to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9: “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness,” can still be experienced personally and is true today. It is good to walk even through the painful times with thanksgiving, trusting that the Father knows the path He is leading His child on.

We should only look back from the perspective of what God has done in our lives. If we look at our-

selves, we may either be discouraged or perhaps proud of what we have done—neither of which is good. But if we look at the traces of God in our lives, it will always keep us humble and at the same time encourage us, even when God must correct us. God always has thoughts of peace toward us; His love works redemption and blessing in our lives. This knowledge gives us hope and courage, purpose and meaning for our lives. Therefore, do not hesitate to throw yourself entirely into His loving, strong arms.

*Claudia Wutke  
Gifhorn, Germany*



# I Will Be With You

## Conclusion: The last years

*by Salomon Weissburger (1887-1968)*

**I**n 2 Samuel 7:3, we find an example of how people can fool themselves if they fail to be silent and allow God to speak. David sincerely wanted to build a house for the Lord, and the prophet Nathan approved of this plan. However, neither asked God, who eventually had to speak to the prophet one night to make clear His disapproval. By not making room for silence, both men of God had come to the wrong conclusions, because God's guidance—received in silence—is often quite different from what our human lines of thinking suggest.

A similar chain of events occurred when David was to be anointed as king. Samuel thought Eliab was the elect, but the Lord disagreed; in the end, His choice fell on David, the most unlikely one to human eyes. Imagine the consequences if Samuel had acted at his own discretion and had not let himself be guided by God. The words the Lord spoke then are still true today: "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD* does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Even our Savior had difficulty recognizing God's will in Gethsemane, facing the prospect of torture and death. His flesh wanted to make a different choice, but He held fast in prayer and deep devotion to God, and power from above helped Him do the Father's will. Although the Lord had been chosen from the beginning to accomplish the work of salvation, and although He had come into the world to serve as the Lamb of God

and bear the world's sins, and had repeatedly spoken of how this would end, He had a hard time following the Father's way. Had there been any other possible way, He would not have drunk from this cup.

We all have our struggles when times are tough. Let us have patience for each other when someone is having difficulty choosing the right way.

In His hour of need, the Lord asked for the help of three of His disciples in prayer. They failed, but through His devotion, the Lord nonetheless found the right path. And what a blessing that has been for all of us! Still, we can see that it is not always easy to know God's will. Very often, His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are quite different from ours. We can count on God's blessings only if we act according to His will and let ourselves be guided by His Spirit.

After the death of my wife on August 3, 1963, I lived with my children Heinrich and Klara Weissburger in Rio das Antas for a few months. In late 1963, I moved to Joinville to help with the work there—for there was much to do.

During the hot summer months, I made two trips to see my children in Rio das Antas. Because of my heart condition, I do not tolerate the heat well. When I returned from those visits, I stayed with the Bekerts for a few months, but since my children moved to Joinville in September 1965, I have been living with them.

In recent years, the Lord has given grace for a new church to be built here. Since Brother Hinz, the congregation's former pastor, put a lot of time into the construc-



tion efforts, most of the pastoral work fell to me. The church was built between 1963 and 1964. In addition, a two-story building was built so that the printing works of the Church of God (Grafica Luz) could be moved to Joinville from Rio das Antas. During this second construction period, from 1965 to 1966, much of the pastoral work rested on my shoulders as well. In 1964, I had also started a Bible school with evening classes in Joinville.

A number of other assembly places sprang up too, for which we can only thank the Lord; we also thank Him for the many spiritual coworkers He sent us. Ever since my son Heinrich came to Joinville, he has taken over many of my duties, but I support everything he does with a prayerful heart. May God continue to grace us with His blessings. One particularly clear recipient of His blessings so far has been the annual camp meeting in Joinville, which serves to significantly spread the reach of God's Kingdom.

Until my 80th year, I was still able to do much spiritual work. For the past few months, however, I have become increasingly sick and weak, and my hearing has also declined. I assume that the hot, humid climate here in Joinville is to blame.

The Apostle Paul's wish is now also mine: "For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you" (Philippians 1:21–24).

It would be so beautiful to be with the Lord. On the other hand, there is great need for people to do the Lord's work here on Earth. In any case, my heart is still beating and still burning for God, and although I cannot do much, I see my main task now as praying for the work of the Lord. I also make pastoral visits to the extent that God gives me the strength.

The years I have spent working in Joinville were extremely blessed. It was the most successful period of the many years I served in the ministry throughout my life. Even now, the Lord continues to create opportunities and open new doors. But who will do the work? May the Lord send workers into His harvest.

Looking back, I can only be grateful for all of God's guidance in my life. May the Lord's will continue to be done in the future. What He does is always good. To this day in my life, the Lord has not yet failed to deliver on His promise: "I will be with you."

That is a good place to end my autobiography. The Lord has done so much for me that I cannot list everything. He has shown me so much kindness and mercy that it is impossible for me to write everything down.

I am about to turn 81. Soon, the time will come when the Lord takes me home to be with Him forever. There, I will be able to fully understand the kindness He has shown me so abundantly. Blessed be the Lord!

*Salomon Weissburger  
(born February 21, 1887;  
died October 23, 1968)*

# Praise the Lord Every Day

*Oh my soul, praise the Lord daily, while you have breath.*

*Always, every day, do not neglect*

*To thank Him for His abundance. Let us confess*

*His loving kindness with due respect.*

*Or do you think you have no need to praise His name?*

*Everything you have comes from His hand!*

*Shall He withhold all His blessings and all your gain*

*So that you will know and understand?*

*Our redemption is one reason to give God praise!*

*Since Jesus brought a full salvation,*

*We have this precious gift that never fades away.*

*Let's bring Him daily adoration.*

*Up to now His grace and great love have carried you.*

*He protected you and gave you bread.*

*Through many needs and dangers He has brought you through*

*Wonderfully He guided and led*

*Thank Him daily for His help and the victory*

*Over sin and temptations anew.*

*Has He ever forsaken you in misery?*

*No! The Lord will never forget you.*

*If God has placed upon you a heavy burden,*

*He will help you bear it day by day.*

*He gives rest to all those who are heavy laden*

*He'll always help you through, come what may.*

*For all things are working together for the best*

*That your soul may be strong in the Lord.*

*And despite sorrows and trials you can find rest*

*When your faith is anchored in His Word.*

*Those who now praise and thank our Savior all day long*

*Will still give praise in glory above,*

*And then join with the angels in heavenly song*

*Forever, thanking God for His love.*

*Edeltraut Nimz*