

## Looking With Appreciation

How can we overcome strains & tensions between ourselves and our surroundings? How can we regain (or maintain) joy and serenity in our life? When we are feeling "out of sorts" how can we move in a new direction? When life seems to go wrong because of crisis, criticism, or condemnation, how can we move out of frustration, fear and self-doubt?

**God says: Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, that you and your descendants might live! Choose to love the LORD your God and to obey him and commit yourself to him, for he is your life. Then you will live long in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Deuteronomy 30)**

Every day God gives us the opportunity to make something good of the day, regardless of what happens. The Chinese word for "crisis" has the double meaning of danger and opportunity. Instead of living with negative feelings and attitudes we can commit ourselves to God's care and practice appreciation by asking: What do I have? What has God promised? What personal experience or testimony of another can I lean on? What attitude do I want to live in? WWJD?

**The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.**

**Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff - they comfort me.**

**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow**

**me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.**

God promises us life in all it's fullness. We get in the road of God's provision by following our own compulsions (our need for material security, pleasure, satisfaction, status, control, recognition, possessions, power) instead of seeing and appreciating God's provision. We need to put away fear that take us away from the truth that as we give ourselves to God, God will provide for us. We need to live today as a new opportunity to grow in God's goodness and to see that expressed in our lives.

**And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written, "He has scattered his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever. My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. (2 Corinthians 9 & 12)**

God wants us to live in His grace. When we do that, it opens us up to new possibilities and fill our lives with contentment and appreciation for all we are and have. To live in God's grace frees us from being anxious about our own needs and circumstances. It changes us without destroying our effectiveness to be responsible today. Receiving God's grace clears our vision so we see our talents and resources and makes us more sensitive to people, events, and things around us. Living with God in contentment and appreciation makes us more gentle and less frantic, and more willing to listen than to direct.

God promises us everything we need today. What has God given me? How have I walked in my own ways and missed what God had for me? Will I now turn back to God and let God give me the grace He longs to pour into my life?

### Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What attitudes and emotions will I choose today?
2. What "less than the best" am I willing to let go in order to live gratefully in God's provision for all my needs?
3. Will I live in God's kind of fullness of life and promised grace?
4. Will I accept a life of relying on God's grace?

**When we face life with a filter of appreciation we will discover that life itself, with all its ups and downs may challenge and surprise us but never defeat us.**

**Appreciative thinking enables us to see the crises of everyday life not as obstacles leading to defeat but as opportunities offering new directions by which to reshape our dreams.**