

## Grateful

*When You Don't Feel His Love, Look for It*

*"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever." -Psalm 118:1*

Can you think of a time when you've fallen down with gratitude? Usually, we'd be more likely to collapse in desperation, but sometimes we drop to our knees in worship. When I received my acceptance letter to Auburn College of Veterinary Medicine, I'm pretty sure that was one instance where I was physically overcome with gratitude. It was a dream I'd been chasing since I was a child, and it was finally being realized.

In cases like that, it's not hard to *feel* that the Lord is good. I imagine I was shouting about His enduring love from the rooftops after I got back to my feet.

But that was a long time ago, and I can't think of many moments since where I've been quite so overwhelmed with gratitude. More commonly, our days are a bit more mundane, and sometimes involve suffering to some degree. In these cases, giving thanks to the Lord doesn't come quite as naturally to us because we don't *feel* His unending love or *see* His goodness.

The phrase, *"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever,"* is found in Scripture seven times. The section, *"Give thanks to the Lord,"* is quoted over 20 places throughout the Bible, including our theme passage in Psalm 100:4-5. Repetition is a literary device used to show emphasis. Clearly this phrase is not merely a suggestion. Maybe "giving thanks" is not so much about *feeling* grateful, but more of an attitude, even a spiritual discipline of *practicing* gratitude.

Author, Aundi Kolber introduced me to the concept of "Beauty Hunting." Some days, we have to look for the beauty, because it's not always going to knock us over.

Last week, my rambunctious young Labrador knocked me off my feet though. "Dory" ran right under me while I was walking down the stairs carrying a bowl from lunch and an open laptop. As I went down, both items flew into the air and landed hard; the porcelain bowl surprisingly remained intact, my laptop screen was not so fortunate.

Yesterday, the same Lab, took a large tube of our son's expensive prescription Tacrolimus ointment off his dresser and ingested the entire remaining 50 grams. Later that night, I was monitoring her in her crate, when she vomited, so I quickly sent her outside. While I was cleaning up her vomit at 11pm, she was sprayed by a skunk in our backyard. (Insert all the exasperated emojis here and commence de-skunking.)

You guys, this morning I am "Beauty Hunting"! I am not *feeling* grateful. But I am looking for glimmers.

Our neighbor had been trying to catch that skunk for weeks in a live trap she had borrowed from us. When I texted her about what happened, she replied, "I'm coming over to help you bathe her!"

The time we spent neighboring while lathering the dog was beauty. And I told her that.

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So, now as I write this on my new laptop, with a clean dog (ready to be adopted by any of you), I am grateful. Not because the lingering stench in my nostrils makes me *feel* grateful, but because I'm *looking* for things to be grateful for instead of waiting for them to knock me over like the caustic odor of a skunk.

The Message version of Psalm 23:6 speaks of God chasing us with His beauty:

*"Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life,  
I'm back home in the house of God for the rest of my life."*

The word grateful comes from the Latin "gratus" which is also the root for "grace." Here's the thing, when we look around and struggle to find beauty, feel grateful, or believe that God is good, we can remember that we always have Grace to be grateful for. None of us deserve God's unending love that He proved by Christ's death on a cross. It is a gift that we will never adequately appreciate; but one that we can lean on to posture our hearts toward Him and seek His beautiful face.

How fitting that the NIV translation of Psalm 23:6 parallels Psalm 118:1 where we began:

*"Surely Your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." -Psalm 23:6*

Whether we're paying attention or not, God's goodness and love are following us, His beauty is chasing us. And knowing we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, is enough to make us grateful, even on the smelliest of days.

- 1) **How does it make you feel to know that God is chasing *you* with beauty?**
- 2) **Is it possible to "Beauty Hunt" without dismissing the pain of very real trials?**
- 3) **Do you have a story of when you were overcome with gratitude? Or share a time when circumstances did not lend themselves toward gratitude, but you were intentional to practice being grateful anyway.**



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