

Memorable Event! Debbie Hoffman's sister, **Cheryl Bridges**, was baptized December 24, 2013! She's also our sister now...her address is 209 Maxwell, Oakdale, CA 95361; her phone number is (209) 605-7840.

Psalm 100

“Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the Lord Himself is God. It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations.”

January Birthdays

5 John Aguiar 14 Juanita Small 21 Kelly Peña

January Anniversaries

8 Bob and Debbie Pescador 24 Al and Sara Peña

(Note: if anyone is “missed” here, let Jim know)

Regular Meeting Times

Sunday.....9:45 a.m.
Sunday.....10:45 a.m.
Sunday.....6:00 p.m.
Wednesday.....7:00 p.m.

Preacher
Carlos Peña

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2014...May it be filled with love
and gratitude...

Must we give thanks if we are in difficult circumstances?

By Bob Prichard

When the world seems to be closing in on us, or when we feel like we have our backs up against the wall, giving thanks may be the last thing we would ever think of doing. We may reason...If I am in difficult circumstances, then I have no responsibility or need to be thankful. After all, we are to be thankful for blessings, not difficult circumstances. This reasoning is not correct, however, because all of God's children need to be thankful.

To be thankful in the midst of difficult times is very hard, yet Paul said, *“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18). How is this possible? Sometimes when we think the situation cannot get any worse, it does! But we must remember that when we belong to and serve God, no situation is hopeless. God's children can count on His providential care, and His never-ending love. In the midst of our difficulties, we sometimes have a sort of spiritual amnesia. We forget all that God has done for us, and the difficulties He has helped us through. The psalmist reminded Israel of his wonderful works that he hath done. *“For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments”* (Psalm 78:5-7).

The difficulties most of us have faced pale into insignificance compared to the pain and suffering Job faced. His response to the loss of all of his possessions, and all ten of his children was to

worship God. *“Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD”* (Job 1:20-21). Job was able to do this because he was a man totally devoted to God. God described him... *“there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”* (Job 1:8). When the difficult times came, Job was ready to trust in the Lord. He did not understand why he was suffering as he was, but He knew that God is worthy to be praised, even in the midst of the most trying times.

The attitude of gratitude, the spirit of gratefulness, must mark those who would follow the Lord. As Paul and Silas sat in the depths of the jail at Philippi, their feet in the stocks, having been beaten for their testimony of Christ, they *“prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them”* (Acts 16:25). They would not allow the circumstances to keep them from offering praise to God. In the midst of so many things we cannot understand or do not like, we must thank Him for those things we can understand, and the blessings He so richly gives us. Looking back, we should thank Him. Looking ahead, we should trust Him. Looking around, we should serve Him. He is worthy of all the praise and thanksgiving we can give Him.

An Open Letter to the Teachers of My Children (Author Unknown)

Two or three times a week I trust you with my most prized jewels, and those two or three times a week, you live up to that trust and return them to me - though not quite the same. Somehow you manage to take them and gradually, week by week, polish them to make them shine a little more than I sometimes think possible. You are patient and wise enough to see the potential for riches in what others may see as only rough ore.

I know you spend much unnoticed time in preparation to teach my children about Jesus. I've seen the literally hundreds of objects they bring home to remind them of your object lessons. You always win when I prematurely suggest discarding certain Bible class memorabilia. Much of it has a lot of your TLC, not to mention time and creativity, behind it.

I saw a note one of you wrote to one of my children, challenging her to be the great Christian leader and example you expect her to be. You even promised to pray for my daughter and reminded her that you are always there if she needs to talk. Thank you for the time, the love, the prayers, the expectations and the support you devote to my children. And thank you for being a constant reflection of Jesus. They notice. And when they do, so do I.

Please resist the temptation to feel unappreciated. You're not only appreciated but needed - and not just by my children but by me. And please don't underestimate your influence or your teaching role on them or me as a parent. My children echo much of what you teach them, probably more than you think they hear. In fact, they remember some of your stories and illustrations long after they are promoted to another class.

As a Bible class teacher, you give my children Christ and yourself. You can't give a greater gift. I can't give you enough thanks.

From the Heart (from Housetoohouse.com)

A desert wanderer found a crystal spring of unsurpassed freshness and decided to bring some to his king. Barely satisfying his own thirst, he filled a leather bottle and carried it many days beneath the desert sun to reach the palace. By that time the water had become stale due to the old container in which it was stored. But the king tasted it with expressions of gratitude and delight, and sent away the loyal heart filled with gladness. After he left, others sampled it and expressed their surprise at how bad it was. Ah! said he, It was not the water I tasted, but the love that prompted the offering.

What we bring to God is marked by multiplied imperfections, but He looks beyond that to our motives. We may think our singing voice is stale and rank, but God listens with delight. Our prayers may not be filled with eloquence but God wants to hear what is on our hearts. Could our worship be better sounding, better looking? Perhaps! Yet God is primarily looking for the love that prompted the offering.

“...the LORD looketh on the heart”
- 1 Samuel 16:7