

OPENING REFLECTION

In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6, emphasis added). Really? In every situation pray with thanksgiving? Even when that punk takes your parking spot? Even when there is no more creamer in the fridge, your toddler is screaming bloody murder, and all you want is a cup of coffee? Even when she says, “I have cancer,” or he leaves after decades of marriage? Surely not! Surely the original Greek translation of this verse means “in most situations pray with thanksgiving.”

In her book *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom tells a remarkable story about gratitude. During World War II, she and her sister Betsie lived in three different concentration camps. The entire ten Boom family had been arrested for providing a safe haven to Jews and Nazi rebels. It’s estimated they saved eight hundred lives before being caught and sent away.

Corrie describes how the barracks of the Ravensbruck concentration camp in Germany was infested with fleas. The sisters were forced to sleep on wooden platforms with straw on top, but the straw was dirty, smelly, and crawling with the skin-biting pests. Corrie writes:

I sat up quickly and bumped my head on the platform above. “Fleas!” I jumped down to the floor. “The place is crawling with fleas! I . . . I don’t know how I can cope with living in such a terrible place!”

“Corrie, I think God has already given us the answer,” my sister Betsie said. “What was that verse we read from the Bible this morning?”

I pulled out my Bible from the bag I wore on a string around my neck. In the dim light, I read from 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18: “‘Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.’ Oh, Betsie, that’s too hard in a place like this!”

“No, come on, Corrie—let’s try. What are we thankful for?” my sister asked.

“Well . . . if we must be in this awful place, I’m thankful that we’re together.” . . .

“That’s right!” Betsie’s eyes danced. “And thank you, God, for the fleas—”

Corrie goes on to say that the flea infestation kept the guards out of their barracks, allowing Corrie and Betsie to read the Bible aloud twice a day for any woman who wanted to hear. More and more women found the light of Christ in the darkest of places because of fleas.

Yes, there is a reason to be grateful in every circumstance.

Lucado, Max. *Anxious for Nothing Study Guide* (p. 56). Thomas Nelson.