

**D**o you ever look around and see God's provision and blessing and wonder, *Why is God blessing me like this?*

As someone who has walked through many challenging seasons, I find it difficult to truly enjoy God's blessings and provisions for me. I either feel guilty for my blessings when so many are suffering around me; or I fail to acknowledge them, and I grow distant from God.

This past year has provided me with many blessings. I had my first child—one of the biggest blessings and most beautiful experiences (despite the sleepless nights). My business grew and thrived. My relationships with family flourished. My husband and I grew closer and loved every moment with our little family.

Yet the world around me seemed in turmoil. A pandemic changed the culture of society and affected many. The political atmosphere grew hostile, and friends and family turned against each other. And so many struggled emotionally, physically, financially, and above all, spiritually.

How could I possibly enjoy my blessings, knowing everyone around me was struggling? And how could I acknowledge the ways that these afflictions touched my own life without losing that feeling of joy and peace in the blessings I had?

## Praise Him First

The first thing I needed to remember is that believers are called to praise God always. No matter where we are—blessed or struggling, joyful or hopeless—we are called to praise God above all. We are called to praise Him with our whole being. Psalms reminds us over and over again of the overflowing praise that comes from those who are in the presence of the Lord.

First Thessalonians 5:16 reminds us, "Rejoice evermore." No matter where we are, we can stop and praise God. We can rejoice for the blessings that we have. And if we are struggling to find our blessings, we can rejoice in His sacrifice and in His love shown through Jesus Christ.

When I feel guilty for my blessings, I am still called to praise. Believers should never feel guilty for praising God.

## Serving from Our Overflow

I am called to praise God for the blessings I have, yet from that place of blessing, I am also called to go out and serve.

Believers are never to be stagnant, shutting the door to the world around us just to keep focused on our own comfort and blessing.

As much as I wanted to stay focused on where I was, I needed to answer one of the greatest commandments: to love others (Matthew 22:39). How can I love my neighbor if I ignore his or her struggles in order to protect my own blessings? This is a careful balance, one that can only be achieved through the working of the Holy Spirit inside us.

Being filled with the Spirit is powerful. We are filled with His love, joy, and grace; and we go out, then love others. We can shine the light of Christ to the world. And when we struggle, we can show God's power and love in our weaknesses. This has been the kind of service I've done most of my life, being a witness to God at work in me when life was falling apart. But now, when life is good, I can be a witness by how I respond to my own blessings. I can wake each morning with joy and use that joy to praise God and love others.

Part of my ministry now takes place in my home, where I can model this praise and service to my own family. But it doesn't stop there. My "neighbors" include so many more than my own family. Jesus taught, "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:35, 36, 40).

As I look around, I see others hungry—physically, but more so emotionally and spiritually. I see those who are naked, exposed, vulnerable. I can choose to walk past them blindly, or I can choose to step into the world around me and bring God's love to those who are struggling. This love comes from the overflow of my own heart and God's love and joy poured into me.

## Your Testimony as a Witness

Sharing our testimonies is a powerful way to spread God's love and hope. My story is powerful because of the immense redemption, healing, and restoration that God has brought from extreme brokenness. I see the power that comes from

sharing the brokenness, because it allows for others to see God's redemption and grace poured out.

But now I see the beautiful power of sharing my story out of the overflow of joy that God has blessed me with. There is power in praising God in the brokenness. But there is also power in shouting His praise in the blessing.

Paul was a great example of this when he shared his story with the Galatians. He didn't leave out the ugly parts. He didn't hide his brokenness for the sake of only remembering the parts where God had touched his life. Instead he shared openly about who he was and how far God had brought him. He shared openly about the joy God had blessed him with (Galatians 1:23, 24). Many people glorified God and praised God because of Paul's story.

When we share our testimonies, we share God's love. We share the power of God's healing, redemption, and grace. And we model His joy, peace, and hope to the world around us.

## Are You Feeling Blessed?

If you are feeling blessed, I want to encourage you to first praise God; that is, to offer your heart to Him humbly and joyfully, and to then go out and serve Him by loving others. Allow the overflow of joy to fuel you to answer God's call to love your neighbors, whether they are your family, your physical neighbors, your church, or people in your community. Allow the Spirit to work in you to be a witness and spread God's love. The apostle Peter said, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

Will you allow your blessing to fuel you to live as a powerful witness and servant of Christ? Start today by sharing your story with others around you. As you do, you will experience even more blessing and joy! ■

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*Nicole Kauffman is a wife, mama, blogger, and passionate follower of Christ. Nicole lives among the farms in Pennsylvania with her family. She is an aspiring author who loves to grow relationships, mentor, and explore the beauty of God's creation.*

