

Have you ever wondered if you have really been blessed? It is easy enough to do. When we focus on all the things that are going wrong in our world, in our nation, our state and in our personal lives, it is easy to wonder if God has really blessed us. We've been told to count our blessings, but that is hard to do when we don't feel blessed. Do you call high unemployment, a potential swine flu pandemic, and escalating conflict in the Middle East being blessed? I doubt it. How about unresolved medical issues, mounting credit card debts and family conflict? I didn't think so. When life is out of control, when doubt, depression and fear are the orders of the day, it is hard to feel blessed. Maybe you feel like Tevia in "Fiddler on a Roof." (Play scene 24 up to "I don't need to tell you what the good book says.")

We are not alone. The good news is that God promised to bless Abraham. The bad news is God also told Abraham, "**Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you.**" (Genesis 12:1 NLT) Do you think Abraham felt blessed when he had no home, no family to help or support him, and no real idea where he was going? I'm not sure He did. God promised Abraham a great family. But Abraham was an old man and didn't have a son. It is easy to see why there were times when Abraham questioned God's blessings and even took matters into his own hands.

Sometimes we don't feel blessed. But that doesn't change the fact that we all want to be blessed. Do you remember Jacob and Esau, the twin sons of Isaac? They didn't exactly get along very well. Esau was the oldest who sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentil soup. When Isaac was getting ready to bless Esau, he sent his son out to hunt and prepare his favorite meal for him. Before Esau could get back, Jacob deceived his father into believing that he was Esau and stole his brother's blessing. When Esau came back, he begged his father for a blessing saying, "**Oh, haven't you saved even one blessing for me?**" (Genesis 27:36 NLT) Children want to be blessed by their fathers. Dads, that is one of the most important things you can do for your kids, let them know that you love them and give them your blessing.

We want to be blessed by God the Father, too. Sometimes we don't recognize his blessings because of how we define them. How do you define blessings? Do you think you have to be wealthy to be blessed? People have considered wealth a sign of God's blessing for a long time. But is it? Jesus said, "**It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!**" (Matthew 19:24 NLT) How about fame? Fame is fleeting! Why else would so many people who have been famous in their own fields be willing to be on "Dancing with the Stars?" They want to stay in the bright lights. Maybe you would just settle for being comfortable. As we all know, to many people have had to give up some of their comforts in these tough economic times. Fame, fortune and personal comforts don't last. While we may want them, they are not a sure sign that we are blessed.

God has a different definition for blessings. James 1:17 tells us, "**Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.**" The blessings of God last.

Jesus doesn't teach us to ask for wealth, but for daily bread. There is a reason that many people call the prayer they offer before they eat a blessing, because they are thanking God for the blessings they receive. We are blessed with our daily bread. Many of us have been over blessed and have the waistline to prove it. God promised Abraham, **"All peoples on earth will be blessed through you."** (Genesis 21:3 NIV) Sometimes we forget how much better the world is because of God's people. Look at all the schools and colleges that have been started by Christians. How about all of the hospitals, relief and social service agencies that exist because Christians and Christian Churches saw a need and met it? Jesus says that His followers are the light of the world. That is why he has scattered around the world to bring the light of His love to all people.

God kept that promise when Jesus Christ entered our world. Jesus is a direct descendent of Abraham. Jesus came to forgive our sins, to restore us to God's family, and to give us the peace of God and peace with God. God loves us. God forgives us. God puts himself on the line for us. God reaches out to us. God embraces us and welcomes us back into His family. We are indeed blessed. 2 Corinthians 1:20 tells us, **"For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!"** (NLT) Jesus Christ is God's "YES!" to the world.

God told Abraham, **"You will be a blessing to others."** (Genesis 12:2 NLT) And he was. Because God has blessed us, we are to be a blessing to others too. And boy does our world need that right now. Blessings come in many different shapes and sizes. When it comes to blessings, one size doesn't fit all. We try to create opportunities for you to be a blessing to others. You can bless others by bringing food next Sunday for the Faith In Action food bank, or you can bless a student by helping to keep the Dexter High School library open for a couple hours after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays, or you can sign up to take a family shopping as part of the Warm the Children project. You can be a blessing by donating blood to the Red Cross. If you have been blessed financially by God, you can give to the Future is Now campaign to help support new churches, students going into full time ministry, and missions in other nations.

I think the best way we bless others is very personal. We bless others when we take the time to listen to them, when we pray with them, when we give them a break by watching their kids for them, when we take food to the house of someone who is ill, when we visit someone in the hospital or nursing home, when we mentor someone new in our profession, when we tutor a student. But the greatest blessing of all comes when we introduce someone to Jesus Christ, when we help them grow in their faith. Never forget this. God has blessed you to be a blessing to others. Amen.