

**Joyful in Hope – 96 – July 28, 2020**  
**(thoughts and ideas to encourage and challenge)**

*“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”*  
*Romans 12:12*

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Greetings from Steamy North Carolina!

Janine and I are enjoying a nice, safe, masks on, socially distanced (as much as possible) visit with Janine’s parents, and her brother’s family. It looks like temperatures have cooled down a little bit there. Here, it’s a balmy 97 degrees.

My friend, Lynn Anderson, posted this note of encouragement from John Mark Hicks on his Facebook page. I thought we could all use some words of encouragement:

**Thankful – John Mark Hicks**

“In everything, give thanks.” So, the Bible says.

That doesn’t sound quite right. Are there not some circumstances in which gratitude is not only inappropriate but destructive? Does not this exclude lament?

I understand the misgivings; they make sense to me.

Nevertheless, I affirm, “in everything, give thanks.”

Let us not mishear this. Paul does not say give thanks for everything, but that in all circumstances, wherever we find ourselves in the ups and downs of life, there is space for gratitude.

I recall a moment several years ago when I loathed my life. I was filled with anxiety and despair. I preferred hating myself rather than forgiving myself.

A mentor, to whom I submitted myself during those days, challenged me. “Make a gratitude list of at least twenty items.” When I balked at the idea, my mentor suggested the list did not have to be grandiose but simply authentic.

I remember the first one on my list. “Number one: I am grateful I have indoor plumbing.” It was a simple start, but it reoriented me. I was empowered to see the little things in life as moments of gratitude.

I can’t prove it, but I believe there is always something for which to be grateful, even in a pandemic.

Gratitude reminds us that we are neither self-sufficient nor alone; there is still good in God’s creation; and we have resources to help others.

Practice gratitude. It will change your life. Make a list today, at least twenty items, and do it again tomorrow, and then the next day. That daily habit will rewire your brain.

*“You are my God, and I will give You thanks,”* Psalm 118:28.

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Hope you can join us tomorrow for our weekly Zoom meeting.