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## Try Giving Thanks

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Free media and discipleship resources for pastors, leaders, and growing disciples.

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I've learned that God often shows up strongest when I am weak or afraid. But if I will trust Him and step out in faith, I'm likely to discover a new dimension of God's goodness. Or as a friend of mine once said, we experience God's power when we step beyond our capacity and into our calling.

On my first missions trip to Africa, God reminded me He can be trusted to lead and guide us. This story happened many years ago and tells of an opportunity I almost refused. And no wonder. It was the early 1990s. Ethiopia had just gone through a bloody civil war in which revolutionary freedom fighters had finally overthrown the Communist government. Christians had been cruelly persecuted during their seventeen-year regime. The country was still not considered safe for travelers.

David and I had friends who served as missionaries in Ethiopia. We were invited by SIM, their missions organization, to speak at the first Christian gathering since the Communist takeover of Ethiopia in 1974. Many missionaries vividly remembered the last gathering where local leaders had been arrested by the Soviet-backed forces, imprisoned, and tortured for their faith.

At last, after decades of oppression, Ethiopia was finally free!

During our time there, one missionary and I became immediate friends. I'll call her "Gloria." Gloria was fun, stylish, and always joyful. She often laughed even when she was talking. Gloria and her husband had raised their four amazing, now adult children in Ethiopia. This was decades before cell phones or the internet allowed families to communicate when separated by distance. Children often attended boarding schools several hours away. Gloria had endured hard places, but through God's grace, she and her family had flourished in this far away land.

Gloria confided with me how once, in the early years of their assignment, she nearly hit bottom. The heat, the isolation and loneliness, the pests (including snakes), the scant medical care, along with worries about her children, all came crashing in. Discouragement threatened to overwhelm Gloria, when she happened to notice a framed needlepoint picture in a fellow missionary's home. On it were three simple words: "Try Giving Thanks."

Try giving thanks. It became Gloria's "nuclear" weapon when she faced her most intense battles. She shared story after story of how God had miraculously come through during her toughest trials. I was inspired by Gloria to make giving thanks my "go to" strategy when facing my own stubborn problems. Time and again, I have discovered the power of that simple yet powerful prescription to drive away the darkness. Try. Giving. Thanks.

Our most powerful faith lessons often come through struggles. Trials challenge us to trust God more. To remain open to His plans—even if those plans look scary or out of our control.

Over the next several days, we'll look at the remarkable power of thankfulness to alter any situation and turn even our darkest trials into opportunities to trust God. To thank Him. In this way, our problems become the fuel for praise.

*[by Marilyn Chadwick, founder, SEEDS of Hope, Charlotte, NC]*