

Do you have a reason to GIVE THANKS?

■ by Mel Jonkman, MDiv, Chief Executive Officer



When paying attention to the things that are happening in our world, much of what is seen, heard and perhaps even experienced is profoundly negative: wars, persecution, earthquakes, tsunamis, economic turmoil, unemployment and that doesn't even take into account all the problems that we experience as families and individuals. As you witness the events happening in the world, as you think about the ramifications for your life and the lives of those you love, what are you feeling? Are you fearful, anxious, discouraged, or depressed? What is happening in our world can be overwhelming, especially when evil seems so strong.

I recall the words to the great hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*. The third stanza begins like this, "And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us," but it doesn't end there. It continues ". . . we will not fear for God has willed His truth to triumph through us." There are many things in this world that are troubling and frightening. Thankfully, for us as Christians what we see, feel or experience isn't all that there is. We know that our hope, our strength, and our comfort is God who is our Rock and our Salvation.

With all that is happening in our world and perhaps in your life,
can you give thanks?

It is for this reason that the Apostle Paul, who experienced so much difficulty in his own life, could write these words of exhortation: "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." As we approach the season of Thanksgiving, are you able to give thanks? With all that is happening in our world and perhaps in your life, can you give thanks? There are times when thanksgiving doesn't flow naturally out of me. However, when I remember what God has done for me, when I remember that I belong to him, when I remember that Jesus has already defeated all that is evil and that I stand with him in victory, I can again give thanks. God doesn't call us to give thanks FOR difficult or evil circumstance; he calls us to remember what he has done and to give thanks for him.

As I think about this season of thanksgiving, I acknowledge that I have much for which I am thankful: a wonderful family, the opportunity to work for this great organization, those who support the work of this ministry financially and in prayer, dedicated counselors and staff and board members, and so much more. Perhaps you have many things for which you are thankful as well. As I think about giving thanks I realize that most of all I'm thankful for what God has done. So no matter what I experience I have a reason to Give Thanks. Can you say that too? ■

Article taken from Nov | Dec 2011 issue of *PRESSING ON*, a Publication of Chicago Christian Counseling Center
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www.chicagochristiancounseling.org
800 | 361 6880 or info@chicagochristiancounseling.org

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