

SAVOR EVERY MOMENT AND GIVE GOD THANKS

5 Exercises to help shift your focus
from challenges to blessings



■ by Debi Mitchell, MS, LMFT

“God is glorified not only by his glory’s being seen, but by its being rejoiced in.”

Jonathon Edwards

Does your daily life mimic a juggler trying to keep multiple plates spinning? Our lives become busier with each passing year. We take blessings for granted and become problem-focused. We eventually lose our joy. Our marriages wither under negativity, and we find little time or reason to praise God.

We become happier, our marriages improve, and we give more praise to God when we intentionally savor every moment.

What does it mean to “savor every moment?” When we savor something, we take delight in it. We appreciate it. It becomes more significant. When we focus on good or happy bits of our lives, we become happier. When we become happier, we become more pleasant; we become someone with whom others enjoy spending time. When we focus on God as the giver of good gifts, we thank him. To savor every moment means being grateful for blessings found in each and every moment.

We begin this journey when we practice refocusing from challenges to blessings. Here are five exercises that will help our focus. We need to SMILE:

- S** – Stop and appreciate the world.
M – Maximize our gifts.
I – Identify the silver linings in our clouds.
L – Look for good in the people around us.
E – Exalt God.



Stop and appreciate the world

God gave us this world. This statement can morph into a sobering obligation, instead of a reason to appreciate the gift and the Giver.

Many people savor some things already. We might relax into our soft bed with an “Ahhhhh.” Some will delight in the first sip of good coffee. Instead of hurrying past life, consider all we can enjoy. Consider the softness of rose petals. The colors of fall. The glitter of fresh snow. Every time we practice paying attention to enjoy the world around us, we increase our gratitude. And we praise our God.

Maximize our gifts

God gives each of us gifts. He gives us talents and purposes (1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11). Adam named all the animals (Genesis 2:19-20). Was Adam stressed about finding the *right* name for every single animal? I imagine he felt purpose because God entrusted him with the job. I also imagine he savored the moments--taking the time to laugh at monkeys' antics and feeling awe watching a jaguar run. I imagine he truly savored spending that time with God.

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What are your talents and passions? What is your work? Paul said, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the LORD Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:17, NIV). When we use his gifts, we bless others and are blessed in return.

Identify the silver linings in our clouds

James wrote, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds” (James 1:2, NIV). That sounds ridiculous, doesn’t it? At the very least, it sounds almost impossible, but it isn’t.

We identify silver linings easier using intentionality, practice, and faith. Finding and focusing on any bit of goodness in hard times brings reason and depth in times of trouble. At the very least, we can appreciate that any of our trials will help us grow closer to God, if we let them. King David wrote, “Those who look to [God] for help will be radiant with joy....Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!” (Psalm 34:5, 8).

Look for good in the people around us

Sometimes we need to refocus on the good in the people in our lives. We struggle with this when we focus elsewhere—like keeping our plates spinning or staring into our storms.

Many marriages struggle because the spouses can no longer see—or even remember—anything good in the partner. When did we last delight in our spouses? We see past problems much easier when we see more of the blessings. And thank God for the gift of friendship and love.

Exalt God

We miss the point when we enjoy the good gifts without thanking the Giver. Paul said, “Finally, my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don’t ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise” (Philippians 4:8, CEV). The more criteria our thoughts meet, the better off we are. The only focus that meets all the criteria? God himself.

So practice your **SMILE**. Remember we travel a *life* journey; don’t expect perfection in a day, or even a week, or month, or year. It’s important to not give up or shame ourselves because we can’t find a silver lining. Be careful to not slip into idolatry. Keep your focus on the Giver, while delighting in his gifts.

Become happier, improve relationships and give praise to God by intentionally savoring every moment. ■

***Please understand that this is not a cure for significant depression. Looking for the good in our spouses will not heal abusive relationships. Please seek help from a qualified, Christian professional.*



Debi Mitchell is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and sees clients in our Schererville, IN location.

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