

Count your Blessings

I had an opportunity to pray and think about what to share in one of the Abundance Care Group devotional sessions a few weeks back. Then, the phrase, "Count Your Blessings", kept appearing in my mind. I was hit by many realisations when I was in Japan. The scenarios ranged from family to friends and work.

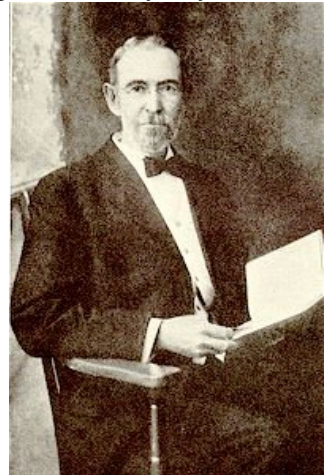
Before my melancholic nature took over again, the reflective self realised that we sometimes forget to count our blessings. God is sometimes forgotten in our lives where our planned activities take over the centre stage and we glorify ourselves; taking the credit for all the good things that have happened. But wait, when things do not go our way and circumstances are tough and the tough does not get us going, we fall into a deep trance wondering where God is and why certain things happened.



When you are feeling low, would counting your blessings make you feel better? You probably would because God is great when you remember that He provided the air that we breathe and we could see another day when we wake up every day. He gave us the life that we took for granted every day. We forget that it is a gift to be alive and be able to live it. This is a blessing from God!

As I looked through the internet on the lyrics of the song, "Count Your Blessings", I learnt that this song has an origin with a meaningful past. Taking reference to the Staugustine.com, (The St. Augustine record), posted on 20 November 2014 at 6:46 p.m., the story extracted from this article goes like this.

"Johnson Oatman, Jr., born April 21, 1856, was a citizen of Lumberton, N.J. His dad was a local merchant and just happened to be the best singer in town, with a rich, powerful voice. Young John-



son could not sing as well as his father, yet he grew up wanting to make some musical contributions of his own. However, for a time he worked in the family business, but soon gave up those opportunities and began to study for the ministry. After finishing school and ministering in the Methodist Episcopal churches for a time, Johnson continued to hope that life surely held some other plans for him.

At 36, he realized that he did, without question, have a musical talent after all. He could write songs for other Christians to sing. So, every year some 200 songs flowed from his pen. He eventually had written 5,000 songs and was happy that in his musical compositions he had found a way to “preach the Gospel.”

Of all the songs Oatman wrote, he seemed to claim as his own favourites, “No, Not One” and “Higher Ground.”

However, people everywhere seemed to adopt another of his very special songs, “Count Your Blessings,” written in 1897. Almost immediately it began its meteoric journey.

All too often, in this great land of America, we seem to lapse into a state of ingratitude, taking for granted all of the blessings and comforts we enjoy. We revert into an attitude of self-satisfaction, expecting that peace and bliss will always follow us. During those times we should, with sincerity of heart, count our blessings!

In this story our attention is called to three things: a very special song, a delightful season of the year and a wonderful celebration observed in America. Thanksgiving or Thanksgiving Day, is a holiday that we celebrate on the fourth Thursday in November. It became an official Federal holiday in 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed it a national day of “Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.”

Oatman died in Norman, Okla. in 1922. Through his songs he continues to minister to millions.”

Count Your Blessings was set to music by E. O. Excell, the gentleman who arranged the melody that we use when singing “Amazing Grace.”

And this is the song that we know and sing this day.

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Chorus:

Count your blessings, name them one by one.

Count your blessings, see what God has done.

Count your blessings, name them one by one.

Count your many blessings see what God has done.

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?

Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?

Count your many blessings, ev'ry doubt will fly.

And you will keep singing as the days go by.

So amid the conflict whether great or small

Do not be disheartened God is over all.

Count your many blessings, Angels will attend.

Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

It was encouraging to know that many songs were written and with a story behind it. We give thanks to God for the many Christians who put their belief and expressed their faith in the mighty God through songs and music.

Start counting your blessings and you will feel much better knowing that God was here before and He is here now with you. He will be in your future blessings because He is a blessing.

Joyce Tan