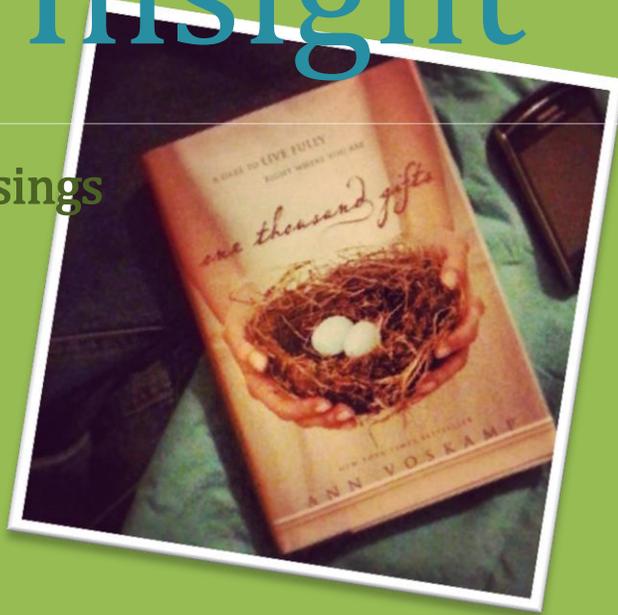


Your Insight

Wake up to a thousand blessings

Hazel Maltby

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Counting Blessings

- #131 Listening to Daniel laugh
- #132 Secret hand squeezes with Hannah as we walk home from school
- #133 Ironing Hope's tiny clothes
- #134 Daisy chains



Recently, a lovely friend of mine gave me a book. I don't know about you, but sometimes I start reading a book and it just speaks directly into my life and heart. Perfect timing. Well, this was such a book! What I read in the pages of that book changed me and is continuing to change me. Here I'll do my best to explain why!

The book is called 'One thousand gifts – a dare to live fully right where you are' and is written by a lady called Ann Voskamp. Ann was dared by a friend to start counting one thousand things that she loved. One thousand blessings in her life. She took the dare and began to keep track of one thousand things, one thousand graces in her everyday life. She writes about how accepting this challenge opened her eyes to so much blessing all around her. This daily hunt for God's blessing ushered her into a fuller, richer life – a life of joy! She says,

"I didn't start with any specific steps, but through this intentional, daily practice of giving thanks, I found myself on a transformative journey that affected every aspect of my life – including all the broken places. God began showing me the graces, the love gifts, that were right before me, waiting to be noticed, waiting to be received. This easily overlooked stuff. The small – and especially the hard - became for me a life-giving stream of joy in Him."



This idea of being grateful for each and every blessing in my life is something I've known about in my head. I think at some point in my life I've probably even memorized verses like:

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5 v 18)

"Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5 v 20)

Unfortunately, knowing what these verses say about giving thanks doesn't make the gratitude automatically flow in my life. I

knew I was meant to give thanks for everything, but I just didn't really know how. In fact not only did I not say thanks to God for the gifts but I often didn't even notice the gifts. So many times the blessings were missed. In her book, Ann talks about how slapping a sloppy brush of thanksgiving over everything in her life actually left her deeply thankful for very few things in her life. Really learning the language of "thanks in all things" takes practice. A favourite quote of mine has, for a long time, been - "Contentment is not having what you want but wanting what you have." My life is so so full of blessing but I often miss it because my eyes are focussed elsewhere.

We've all heard the phrase 'you don't know what you've got til it's gone'. This is so true. How often do we only learn to appreciate something when we've had to spend time without it? An easy example of this is when our dishwasher broke (and I don't mean Phil!). All of a sudden it was so easy to appreciate that beautiful dishwasher (again, I don't mean Phil!). Another personal example is when Phil recently took our oldest 3 kids camping for a weekend leaving me on my own with 5 month old Hope. As much as I thought I'd savour every quiet moment and love not having 3 other busy, messy and loud kids to run around after (not to mention

"Contentment is not having what you want but wanting what you have."

Phil again!), everything about that weekend reminded me of how much I actually love being a busy (and ever so slightly stressed) mum to a busy family! The reality is that day to day life is hard work and tiring, but I'm so grateful that God has blessed me with such an amazing family and I love this season of life that I'm in.

So how has reading this book changed me? At the end of April, after I finished reading the book, I decided to start my own 'one thousand gift list'. I bought a notebook (yes, another one - much to Phil's amusement - I don't think I could ever have enough pretty journals and notebooks!) and I began making a list of all the blessings I could see around me each day...



The list includes simple things like

#131 Listening to Daniel laugh

#132 Secret hand squeezes with Hannah as we walk home from school

#133 Ironing Hope's tiny clothes

#134 Daisy chains

#135 A comfortable home to relax in

Three months later and I'm only on number 294, but I feel a million times closer to God's heart already! Becoming intentional about naming and counting the gifts I find every day in my life has begun to open my eyes to God's blessing all around me. Not only in the good times, but also in the hard times. If we open our eyes and look through God's lens it is possible to see God's blessing and His faithful hand on us even in the midst of suffering. For me personally, it has just taken a bit of practice. This counting and writing down the gifts is just the practice I've needed. On those days where I've woken in a grump (let me assure you, it happens often!) and could have easily missed everything even remotely good, it's been a choice to look for a blessing. Some days the blessings are easily seen. Other days I have to choose to search really hard. But eventually I'm trusting that this 'giving-thanks-in-all-things' will simply become second nature. So why not try this gift-hunting for yourself? Be creative in how you do this. Maybe keep a journal with you and keep jotting down God's gifts as you see them through the day. Or if you're at home, leave the journal somewhere visible as a reminder to keep adding to it through the day. If you love pictures why not give thanks using a camera? As you walk through

your day capture the 'thank you moments' with a simple photo (This one's for all you Instagram lovers out there!). Maybe start a blog and give thanks this way. Why not include the whole family? Start a family thank you journal. Kids are brilliant at noticing all those little things that we so easily miss. We have started doing this and some of the kids' entries include things like:

#11 Thank you for Isla's crazy hair

#31 Thank you for jam and syrup and chocolate spread

#43 Thank you for cute chubby feet

#47 Thank you for Jesus

If children can do it then surely we all can too! Maybe we just need to slow down and give ourselves time to notice God's blessings all around us. Once we start looking we will discover that His love, His blessings, His gifts are everywhere. Let's wake up to thousands of God's blessings

Let the gift-hunt begin!

With Lots of Love,

Hazel x



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Leaving heart prints on our world

Beloved: Transformed

Hi Lovely Ladies,

Just a reminder to keep your

diaries free and book your

tickets for our next conference:

25 & 26 October 2013

Early Bird price: £15

We hope you're excited to come

and share in the Word and be

transformed. We know that this

event is going to bless you and

that as City Church Women, we

are ready to grow to a new level

in God's grace!

Hope to see you there!

With Lots of Love

The City Church Women Team x