



"Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone..."

Joni Mitchell from the song, "Big Yellow Taxi"

Dear Friends,

Do we appreciate what we have, take things, people or places for granted as if they'll always be there, or focus on the "newest shiny object" in front of us?

Unfortunately, as far as the focus on the "newest shiny object", we are not helped to counter these tendencies by our consumption-based society that tries to persuade us through various forms of advertising to get the "next best thing". New Car advertisements are especially good at trying to persuade us to abandon our current vehicle for the newest model. The funny thing is most of the time these new vehicles really don't differ too much from the year before unless they go through a significant model change. I confess one of the "downfalls" of my life has been being enticed by those commercials for the "newest model", which can be an example of my focus on the "newest shiny object".

"Taking things for granted" or "focusing on the newest shiny object" can also be about people, relationships, or institutions as well.

Perhaps the most jarring moment for me as to how important it is not to take things for granted is when my father died suddenly of a heart attack in 1997. (He had his first major one in 1985 and was doing well up until then). In those days long distance phone service was expensive, and we agreed to call my parents and Pam's parents once a week. I had already talked with my folks on an earlier day than usual that week. When I got home after having a mid-week service at one of my churches in my two-point charge, I started dialing my parents number. After realizing what I had done, I hung up before the call was completed and said to Pam, "I don't know why I did that, I already called my parents this week". It was the next day late in the afternoon I got a call from a hospital that my father had suffered a major heart attack and to come as soon as possible. When I got there, he was dead. Upon reflection I often wondered if God was tapping me on the shoulder the night before to have one more conversation with my dad.

The Bible is full of stories of those who took things for granted or went after their "new shiny objects" like the nation of Israel's relationship to God or to Peter taking his loyalty to Jesus for granted until Jesus' trial when Peter denied him.

May we ask God to gently show us when we don't appreciate what we have, or take things, people, or places for granted or perhaps focus on the "newest shiny object" in front of us. May we then ask God to fill us with thanksgiving and love for what we have NOW.

Your Brother in Christ,
John



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