

Positively Black Count Your Blessings

by Junious Ricardo Stanton

Sometimes when I'm talking with an acquaintance, I find myself caught in a gripe session, a pity party or ventilation exercise. You know what that's like. The person uses you as a listening station to vent their frustration or displeasure about whatever's going on in their life. I've found if you interject something positive or encouraging you may be able to change the direction of the conversation or they will move on, looking for someone with a more sympathetic ear.

One thing I used to hear older folks say was "count your blessings." That's something we need to make a conscientious effort to do more of, acknowledging the good in our lives. Count your blessings. Yes, times are full of change, but there are numerous opportunities and blessings inherent in all of this. We just have to open our minds and our eyes to recognize the good that is around us. That's your assignment for this week, count your blessings. I'm seri-

ous. Find a secluded place, get quiet, take out several sheets of paper, get a pen or pencil and review your life. Look at all the good things, all the blessings that have come your way. Even if you are going through rough times, emotional upheaval and major changes, count your blessings. There is a message in your mess, a lesson in every loss and in every ordeal there is ordination. In other words, there are blessings in what on the surface seems to be disaster. Go below the surface, take a serious look at your life and count your blessings.

If your life is a mess, isn't it a blessing that there are messages in that very situation that will, if you seek them out and do what is necessary, lead to resolution and putting things right? One of the meanings of the word ordination is the act of settling, arranging or establishing. Isn't it a blessing to know that in the midst of our trials, tribulations, pain and anguish we can find ways to settle, arrange and establish a more positive

lifestyle?

Take a thoughtful, in-depth and honest look at your life. Things aren't always what they seem. What you once thought was a disaster may, after reassessment, turn out to be a redemptive situation, a major turning point in your life. The dissolution of a toxic relationship may be painful, but it will get you out of a stifling, abusive and destructive situation. The solution to the problem is not to attract or be attracted to that type of person again. It's like the man who goes to see his physician and says, "Doc, it hurts when I do this." The doctor examines him and says, "Well, don't do that." If what you are doing is causing you pain, the prudent thing to do is stop doing it. The pain is a signal for you to stop doing what you are doing. It is a clarion call to do something different. Your pain is a blessing!

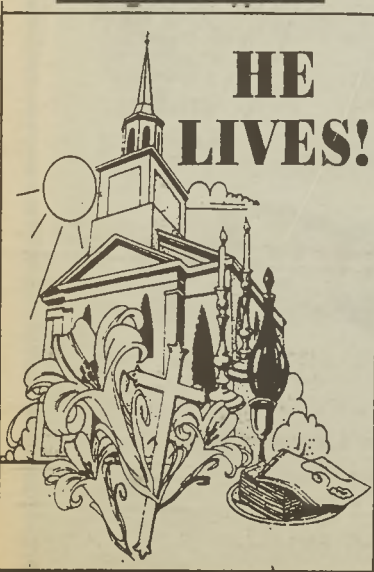
It goes without saying that each of us should be thankful for our health, for positive, supportive and nurturing

friends, and for being as the ol' folks say, "clothed in my right mind." If you are clothed in your right mind, you will act accordingly. You will do what is right and in your best interests. You will cease and desist from doing what is harmful and detrimental to yourself, your family or our community. Be thankful for the opportunity to change. It is a blessing to be able to alter negative habits and substitute life-enhancing patterns in their place. It's a blessing that we don't have to remain stuck in ruts of foolishness, ignorance and self-destruction. We can change, we can learn from our mistakes, we can grow wiser and be better. Count it a blessing that you have grown, you are wiser and you are better than you used to be. If you aren't or you haven't, count it a blessing that you don't have to remain the way you are. Count it a blessing that change is always an option that improvement is ever possible.

Count your blessings.

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