
FAT, SLOW AND GRATEFUL IS A BEAUTIFUL COMBINATION

“God has not withheld from me because of all that I am not; rather He blesses me because of all that He is.”

Marveling at one's lot in life is a worthwhile daily undertaking. Ideally such ponderings pulsate far beyond that one dedicated calendar day, commonly known as Thanksgiving. In fact, healthy individuals recognize that gratitude is as crucial to them as breathing; it is in fact, oxygen to the soul.

Jordan Eglseider is a stellar example of this soul-gratitude. The seven foot, 280-pound football centre described to Sports Illustrated his thought process after receiving a scholarship offer from Northern Iowa University: “I was like, ‘Let me think about this. No other schools have shown any interest in me. I'm fat. I'm slow. And let's be honest, I'm not very good.’ O.K. Sign me up.”

The big lad inadvertently lays out a game-plan for gratitude worthy of emulation.

He begins by awakening to the grandeur of the offer received. We have each received a cornucopia of blessings -- houses with heat, vehicles that whisk us to destinations, nourishing food, relaxing holidays, available healthcare (even if we have to wait awhile for it) and an educational system available for all. We are surrounded by friends and family and natural beauty. We have the freedom to serve God without persecution. We are ridiculously wealthy even when our bank account hovers near the break-even point.

Yes, typical North Americans do not suffer from lack of blessing, just lack of awareness.

Secondly, Jordan recognizes that he is unworthy of the extended offer. What a refreshing perspective, especially in the world of elite athletes who feel entitled to ever-increasing measures of recognition, fame and money. In reality, who among us is worthy of all we have received? Why were we born in this country instead of an impoverished nation where mere survival *is* success? Why did God invest in us the measure of health, influence and possessions that we enjoy? Face it -- we did nothing to deserve it.

Lastly, Mr. Eglseider engages fully in the opportunity presented, accepting the offer from Northern Iowa. Now I want you to notice the order in which the event happened. This accepting is not the first step, but the final one. We typically reverse the order, accepting the blessing without reveling in the miraculous nature of that blessing.

In considering Jordan's response to Sports Illustrated, I wonder what my response would be if asked to describe how I felt about the abundant life that is my daily experience. Perhaps something like, “I'm amazed -- I mean I'm skinny, balding and certainly not the sharpest knife in the drawer. But God has not withheld from me because of all that I am not; rather He blesses me because of all that He is. It's astounding, wonderful, miraculous and somewhat perplexing. But I love it!”

What would your response be? For the sake of our soul-health, this is a vital question to consider. We are as healthy as the transparency with which we evaluate our lives and the enthusiasm with which we express thanks -- to others and to our God, from whom blessings ultimate flow.

It's a principle that holds true for all -- fat, slow football players, skinny, balding pastors and (insert description of self here).