

Chances are that you have been blessed with a lot. We enjoy so many blessings everyday it is easy to take them for granted. We get out of our warm beds in the morning only to complain of a restless night. We stretch our muscles and fill our lungs with air that has been freely given and complain that our bodies ache. We select clothes from an abundance in our closets yet wonder why we don't have anything worth wearing. We drink our gourmet coffees longing for something hotter, something colder, with a bit more chocolate, slightly less cream. As we settle into the morning commute we see the bumpers and brake lights ahead but don't absorb the majestic landscape all around us. We get to work and complain about the boss, the unfair working conditions, the long hours, the strict deadlines, and the low pay; rarely taking time to be thankful to have a job. We fill up our calendars in response to the deadlines; we allow the pressures to weigh us down. Soon caffeine is our source of energy and not the love of life. We find ourselves pressed down so hard that genuine smiles are difficult and you can't remember the last time you really laughed. I am not talking about one of those polite gesture giggles but real laughter like when you were a child. Soon the weight of life becomes consuming and you do not think anyone else understands. You convince yourself that your spouse can't understand and neither can your children. It seems the only ones who know what you are going through are the ones who are complaining about the difficulties of their own lives. And so the downward spiral has begun.

I think it is interesting how every major life turn begins with something small. When I am driving my car, every turn begins with the slightest turn of the steering wheel. Runners know that every great race starts with the first step. Business people understand the same principle that every successful venture begins as a small movement toward the finish line. Often times, it is the little things that matter. It is the little turns in life that can lead toward getting our lives seriously off course. I believe it also can be the simple things that keep us on track. Jesus described the straight gate that leads to salvation. The problem is that as long as we are living blinded lives, we see no need to be saved from our current course. Then something happens that wakes us up out of our stupor. We suddenly somehow realize that we don't know the way and are lost in life. In comes Jesus. Jesus said "I am

the way", He is also that straight gate. If you have already come to grips with that, the next step is to live life His way. If it starts with a realization of the blessings God has already given you, it must continue with an appreciation and willingness to receive all of the blessings He still wants to pour out into your life. Our God pours out blessings, are you walking in that today? It starts with the little things. Take the time today to pray. Ask God if there is anything He wants you to know today, if there is any issue that needs to be addressed in your life today, if there is anyone He wants you to bless today. Because God has blessed you already, one of the best ways to get our lives back on track is to appreciate that by taking the time to find a way to bless others.

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. This article was published in 2005. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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**Sunday Worship:**

**9:00 & 10:30am**  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

**Mid-Week Study:**

**7:00pm Thursday**  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View