Dear Open Door Family,

There I was lying on the table waiting for the technician to try to stuff me head first into that tiny metal tube. Yep, you guessed it; I was getting an MRI. For the most part I am not claustrophobic, but there is something about being stuffed into a metal tube and being told not to move that gives me all kinds of abnormal feelings. As they started to push me in I had to roll my shoulders in because they would not fit, and when I opened my eyes and saw the top only an inch or two above my nose my feelings were screaming at me - this is awful you; will never be able to put up with this. At that point I had a choice - I could lay there and say over and over in my mind 'I hate this - when is this going to be over? Why does that awful machine have to be that close to my face?' OR, I could change my focus entirely. Admit to myself that though I would rather NOT being doing this - it had to be done. So rather than let my feelings rule and make me panicky, fidgety, or even ornery I started to focus my heart and mind on something completely different. I closed my eyes and started to review verses - then I tried to remember words to praise songs - then I prayed. I did not do any of those things exceptionally well but I was able to make it through the test. Don't get me wrong; I am not going to sign up to get this done again anytime soon. But there was a change in me. The moment I looked to God and sought His help rather than focus on my feelings and the external situation things changed. Let's look at these verses...

PSALM 13:1-6 (NLT) O Lord, how long will you forget me? Forever? How long will you look the other way? [2] How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand? [3] Turn and answer me, O Lord my God! Restore the light to my eyes, or I will die. [4] Don't let my enemies gloat, saying, "We have defeated him!" Don't let them rejoice at my downfall. [5] But I trust in Your unfailing love. I will rejoice because You have rescued me. [6] I will sing to the Lord because He has been so good to me.

What we Feel is NOT always the Truth. Feelings that we experience are not always based on the reality or the truth of a situation. Once when I was visiting an elderly person it became very clear that all they could see in their life at that moment was the bleakness of their surroundings and the hopelessness of their situation. I tried to give some encouragement but finally I challenged them to stop and honestly evaluate what was happening in their life. They needed to honestly look at ALL that was happening around them and then to start a Blessings List. I wanted to change their focus from circumstances and feelings - to God. The challenge was to start to remember the TRUTH that God is ALWAYS with us. In this Psalm David complained for four verses then stopped - and stated the truth in vs. 5. The Truth is that God is a God of UNFAILING LOVE. Then he goes on and makes two statements of purpose based on that truth. David says "I trust in" that amazing love of God which never fails. "I WILL sing" about the Lord's GOODNESS to me. Wow, what a contrast; all because of a shift in his focus. Rather than focus on his feelings - he focused on the Truth of God's Love and care for him. The old song reminds us to focus on God in this way.

> Count your blessings, name them one by one,
> Count your blessings, see what God has done,
> Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
> And it will surprise you what the Lord Has done.

PRAYER: Lord God, help me always to remember the TRUTH... You are a GOOD GOD. Help me to count my MANY BLESSINGS, before I start to count the troubles I am facing. Amen.

Pastor Mark Kieft
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