

A Testimony of Praise

Christmas in Lamoni

When I was a Sr. at Graceland, I lived off campus in a little apartment downtown. It was tucked behind a store and didn't even have windows. Because I had just graduated in December, I decided not to go home for Christmas because of the expense. My parents lived in Oregon and that was too far and too expensive at that time in my life. I planned to work at my job in town as long as I could and then go to Independence to my grandparents' house for Christmas. However, I did not have a car. I would have to take a bus.

The night before I was going to leave, it snowed. A LOT! There was so much snow; the busses to Lamoni were not running. I had no way to get to Independence and all of my friends had left town for the holidays. I didn't know anyone in town well enough to invite myself over! It looked like I was going to be stuck in a little apartment for Christmas.

I was feeling very sorry for myself and feeling like it was hopeless. Of course, it was not a matter of life and death, but I had never been away from home at Christmas time, let alone by myself! It seemed like a very dark hole to me.

I was having a nice little pity party when I thought of my mother's words, "Praise the Lord in all things." I certainly didn't FEEL like praising Him. I couldn't see any thing to be praising Him about. (I was still confused at that point about the difference between praise and thanksgiving.) But, I started in slowly. The only thing I knew to do was to sing. So I started singing "Praise ye the Lord, tis good to raise..." through my tears. I moved on to other songs and the tears had stopped and a feeling of peace and hope had taken their place. Pretty soon, I was skipping around my apartment, praising the Lord with a loud voice and joy in my heart!

As I stopped to think of another song, a thought occurred to me, "Call Charlie". Hmm. I didn't know why I should call Charlie. He was a friend of mine living in St. Louis, the other side of Missouri from I where I needed to go. But I gave Charlie a call. Charlie didn't answer the phone. My friend Mark did. I was surprised. We chatted and I told him my little sob story. Then he told me something amazing! He was going to be heading to Kansas City from St. Louis the next day, but had forgotten all of his Christmas presents in his apartment in Lamoni. He was going to have to come through Lamoni on his way back!!! Obviously, I asked for a ride, and he was happy to give me one.

I believe that because I was able to take my mind off of myself and focus on The

Lord, that I was able to hear His voice. When we are so focused on ourselves it blocks our hearing and our vision. It is kind of like those reflective sunglasses. When we focus on our selves, all we can see is our own self staring back at us. But when we turn around and focus on Jesus, then we can see clearly and can hear his gentle directions and feel His love.