

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Life of Thanks

Some Faithful Thoughts from *The Life of Pi*
By Paul Asay

What Happened

Thanksgiving is a time to express our gratitude to God and others for all the blessings we've been given: our families, friends, the food that sits in front of us. What about when things go wrong? Are we able to be thankful then?

Pi is *The Life of Pi*—a book by Yann Martel and a soon-to-be-released movie directed by Ang Lee, chronicles the amazing journey of Pi Patel, an Indian teen whose ship was sunk, family killed and now is adrift on the Pacific Ocean with a Bengal tiger.

This is not a position most of us would volunteer to fill. Pi struggles with hunger, thirst and some horrific storms—not to mention the tiger (named Richard Parker) which would very much like to eat the Indian boy. It wouldn't seem Pi has a lot to be thankful for in this situation.

Yet, Pi repeatedly offers thanks for what he's been given—form a fish that unexpectedly lands in his boat to the beauty all around him (which he appreciates in spite of his dire situation). When he feels his strength is waning and he's about to die, Pi thanks God for the wonderful life he's been given. Throughout, the film features elements of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.

For what is Pi most grateful? The same beast that would love to make a meal of him. Without the tiger, Pi insists, he would've died long ago. "My fear of him keeps me alert," Pi says. "Tending to his needs gives me purpose."

Talk About It

Instinctively, we know hard work, even suffering, is necessary to grow and thrive. Our bodies grow stronger through exercise. Our minds grow quicker the more we use them. "No pain, no gain," we often hear—an adage that applies to the soul, as well—but it's hard to remember that when we're in the midst of pain.

For which painful experience can you be thankful? When have you learned something from a trying time? Were you thankful for it at the time?

Are you going through a painful experience now? Are you learning from it? Do you think God can work through that pain? Help you grow?

Not all pain seems to have purpose; but even then, we sometimes can find things to be thankful for, such as people who helped us through or the fact we got through it at all.

Have you ever suffered through something needlessly? Did it feel unfair? How did you get through it? Were there people who gave you help and hugs when you needed them?

What the Bible Says

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

“My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long” (Ps. 35:28).

“We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Rom. 5:2-5).