

IT'S WHAT MAKES YOU, 'YOU'

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Thanksgiving is the time we reflect on all the good things we have. In New Zealand, where I come from, there is no celebration called "Thanksgiving." This is because the 'Mayflower' didn't sail on down to the Southern Hemisphere. I very much appreciate that here in this country we have created a time to pause and appreciate all the great things we have - our freedom, our country, our families and the opportunity to dream big and succeed. When I think of the devastation of war and weather around the world, I am truly thankful for safety, security and the willingness of our forces and emergency services to go to the aid of those in need.

Then there are more personal reasons to be thankful. We have a niece, Jodi, who moved to India with her husband and six young children in February of this year. Her blog details the ups and downs of their journey thus far. I was particularly impressed by her tenacity during some very worrying times. She has a strong faith that keeps her focused especially when things are going wrong. She has a thankful spirit. I was particularly moved by her last blog where she publicly gives thanks to each of her children. One by one, she detailed all the aspects of their personalities and behaviors that she loves. At the end of each paragraph she ends with, "It's what makes you, you." It really is an amazing list of special attributes each child has that contributes to the whole family's happiness.

I wonder if we, as parents, really take time to appreciate all the wonderful aspects that make up our children? It seems like we spend a lot of time pointing out the frustrating things. What our kids want most is to be told they are loved and valued for who they are right now. Perhaps we could take a lesson from Jodi. Here are her blog entries on just two of her children.

"Princess 1 (aged 14) - I love how your dreams are so big that I can't contain them. I love your creativity and boundless energy and that you don't care what others think about you. I love the way you use words and I am sure that one day we will be reading your book. I love how you need us to know everything about you, every scratch, hurt, idea and joke, every newfound skill. It makes you, you.

Prince 1 (aged 9) - I love the way your brain works, mathematical and clever. I love how you strive to do things the right way and stand back and watch until you are sure of how to do something. I love how you tackle your brother and play rough. I love how you like a goodnight kiss and follow me around all day just for the sake of it. I love how you like to cook with me in the kitchen. I love how you always have questions about everything. It's what makes you, you."

What awesome words these are - words of encouragement and love, written by the grateful heart of a parent to each child. Do you notice Jodi not only appreciates the great things, but also aspects that could be seen as frustrating. What a great way for each child to be told that his unique identity is treasured! What a confirmation that each child has such worth within this family!

Yes, this is a time to be thankful for one another and to one another. It is a time to show that we value our families and are thankful to God for his provisions. As a believer you have a unique identity in His family and He appreciates it. In fact, I am sure He is saying, "All of these things make you, you."

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.