

Thinking Aloud . . .

I am remembering one of the most powerful telephone calls I ever received.

Working as President and CEO at Bethany Community Services for 24 years, I sometimes felt overwhelmed: seven corporations; 120 employees, and 650 apartments represent a huge responsibility. Dealing with multiple capital improvement projects, changing specifications, and slow vendors frustrate our efforts. But this one call erased all of my frustrations.

I felt at once both encouraged and hopeful.

Believe me! Some days unfolded as an endless stream of bureaucratic hurdles: insurance forms, audit certifications, resident income documentation, regulatory agency compliance, and changes in reporting forms. But this one telephone call assured me that we were doing the right thing.

I was energized and proud to be a part of Bethany.

Other phone calls came: news of a death, a contractor would be delayed, a promised meeting canceled. Someone called to complain about a broken window. I learned that an important contribution would not be forthcoming. Had I fallen into a black hole? Would there be no end!

But then THE CALL came. Suddenly I felt certain that I was in the right place.

Now this call was not required. The idea of calling might never have occurred to the caller. Or, they could have said, *"I'm too busy to call."* Or, *"They are only doing their job."*

"Thank you. Thank you, very much!" she said.

She actually had called to compliment a Bethany staff member. A little extra effort on our part had prompted her to say, *"Thank you!"*

This is David Thomas thinking aloud that Moses encouraged Israel before they came into the Promise Land not to forget to say thank you (Deuteronomy 8). The Psalms are filled with expressions of gratitude to God. Paul's letters almost invariably begin with Paul saying thank you to God and often for friends or companions in ministry. To his friends in Ephesus he wrote ***"I never cease to give thanks for you"*** (1.8).

What a wonderful goal: to never stop saying thank you!