

BEING THANKFUL

It has been said that it is the nature of man to be self centered and selfish because it is mankind's function and responsibility in life to take care of self and family. It is not that we are deliberately negligent or really ungrateful. Often we focus so much on the challenges of life that we don't pay attention to all our blessings that give us the reason for a thankful heart.

Because of our faith, a Christian reaches outside of self to be thankful and appreciative to the Lord for those blessings.

Gratitude is not an option it is an obligation. We are commanded to be a thankful grateful people.

Psalm 100 *A Psalm of Thanksgiving.*

1 Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

2 Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing.

3 Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations

Psalms 103:4-6 Praise the Lord who

- Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
- who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;
- Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things;
- so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

You would think a Christian would be overflowing with gratitude and thankfulness. But in truth many times we are just the opposite, dissatisfied and ungrateful.

What causes ingratitude?

- Pride we see our success and prosperity as a result of our own ability. Deut 8:11-17 "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest—*when* you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell *in them*; and *when* your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, *in which were* fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end— then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' Everything we have is a gift of God.
- Too busy - How do you feel when you give someone a gift and they do not send you a thank you card? It seems to have fallen out of favor today to send thank you cards so how do you feel when they don't even express any kind of thankfulness.

10 lepers came to Jesus for healing and as they went they were healed and made whole. Then one returned to thank Jesus. Think about this – 1 out of 10 returned to thank Him. He expected all 10 to come back but only one did. And He spoke to the one who returned – go your way and be made whole. 10 were healed of leprosy but only one was made whole in his spirit, in his soul as well as his body.

We are often like the nine who were so caught up in the joy of good fortune that they simply forgot to say "thank you".

Recognizing the efforts of others helps them to feel appreciated and so it is with our Heavenly Father.

William A. Ward said, "Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."

Remember to take the time to say thank you as soon as possible. James 4:14 whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

- Focus. Are we dwelling on our problems instead of our blessings? Do you see the cup half full or half empty? There are some that just seem to always see the negative then there are those who see the bright side of everything because they see God in their lives. It is a choice you make where you will fit, somewhere between the eternal optimist and the doom and gloom pessimist is the grateful Christian. We see this negative focus in the Israelites when they were delivered from the Egyptian captivity. Numbers 14:1-10 they were delivered from captivity and slavery, they were led safely across the wilderness, then they were offered a land of richness and opportunities. Instead of praising God, they focused on the difficulties that lay ahead and began to complain instead of being grateful.

When our focus is on our problems we can become unhappy, bitter, we complain or worry. If you are unhappy with what you have now, it is unlikely you will be happy when you have more.

A family had twin boys whose only resemblance to each other was their looks. If one felt it was too hot, the other thought it was too cold. If one said the TV was too loud, the other claimed the volume needed to be turned up. Opposite in every way, one was an eternal optimist, the other a doom and gloom pessimist. Just to see what would happen, on the twins' birthday their father loaded the pessimist's room with every imaginable toy and game. The optimist's room he loaded with horse manure. That night the father passed by the pessimist's room and found him sitting amid his new gifts crying bitterly. "Why are you crying?" the father asked. "Because my friends will be jealous, I'll have to read the all these instructions before I can do anything with this stuff, I'll constantly need batteries, and my toys will eventually get broken." answered the pessimist twin. Passing the optimist twin's room, the father found him dancing for joy in the pile of manure. "What are you so happy about?" he asked. To which his optimist twin replied, "There's got to be a pony in here somewhere!"

- Adversity.

At times we find it hard to be thankful and pray

When there is not enough money to do the things we need to do.

When things just don't seem to be going our way.

When we lose a loved one,

When the economy is so hard and we are in danger of losing a job or a house, etc

We all face difficulties.

2 Cor 7:4 Paul was joyful even in tribulation

- It is just a fact of life that problems will come.
- It is just a fact of life that storms will arise. A storm is just a showing that you are a member of the human race. One day we are up and another we are down.

One day we are on the mountain, another we are in the valley. Storms can wear us down, but is the manner in which we come through the storm that is important.

- Struggles and trials have their purpose. A man once watched a butterfly struggling to get out of its cocoon. In an effort to help it, he took a razor blade, and carefully slit the edge of the cocoon. The butterfly escaped from its problem ... and immediately died. It is God's way to have the butterfly struggle. It is the struggle that causes its tiny heart to beat fast, and send the life's blood into its wings.

James 1:2-3 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

There is no trick to showing gratitude when you have everything and everything is going well. We do not have to be thankful for trouble but in our trouble we should look for ways to be grateful

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us

When we are not being thankful is that really so bad.

- Can we consider lack of gratitude as a form of rejection of God? It was in a spirit of ingratitude that man turned away from God to worshipping idols.
- If ingratitude is at the heart of rebellion can we take it lightly? Romans 1:21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Some will say, how can I be really thankful, I don't have that much to be thankful for.

< You have life, you have blessings, you have mercy –
if you need forgiveness and pardon, He is good His truth endures.

Scriptures stress the importance of showing gratitude and being thankful

Colossians 3 15:17 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 4:2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Philippians 4:6 in nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

THANKSGIVING IN EVERYTHING

James Coffman explained In everything ... It appears that Paul saw prayer as the fitting human response to every conceivable situation that might arise in life; and the position of this phrase at the beginning of a long clause would make it applicable throughout the clause, with the meaning that "thanksgiving" should characterize every prayer, no matter what unusual or extreme life-situation might have triggered the prayer. But how can anyone be thankful "in everything"?

George Henry Stephenson for a sermon delivered at Highland congregation in Memphis, Tennessee observed -

- In youth one may thank God for the brightness and prospect of life beckoning to the future.
- In age one may thank God that life has extended so long.

- In health one may thank God for the greatest of physical blessings.
- In illness one may thank God for wise physicians, kind nurses and the tender concern of loved ones.
- In wealth one may thank God for having been made the steward of such large accounts.
- In poverty one may thank God for him, who though he was rich became poor that he might make many rich, and for his special promise, "Blessed are ye poor."
- In the event of great loss one may thank God for blessings he is yet permitted to retain.
- In death itself the Christian can thank God for the hope of eternal life.
- At all times and places, in all circumstances and situations, the Christian will thank God for Jesus Christ our Lord, for the Father who gave him, for the life he lived, the death he died, his resurrection from the dead, and for his everlasting gospel which we have received.

In America we have a day dedicated to being thankful and reminding us of all the things we have to be thankful for but for a Christian every day should be thanksgiving.

- Being thankful is not - something we should do, - it is an attitude we should develop – an attitude of gratitude because we have every reason to be thankful.
- Besides it is good for our health. (McCollough, Emmons 2003). In this study, one participant group recorded a diary of daily events, another group wrote down unpleasant experiences, and the third group wrote down a daily record listing things for which they were grateful. The gratitude group was more likely to help others, exercise, and complete personal goals, while reporting more determination, optimism, alertness, energy, and enthusiasm. It is interesting to note that this study also found people who take time to deliberately record their gratitude were more likely to feel loved, and found more kindness reciprocated to them as they sent out an increase of kindness from their attitude. Also, grateful people were grateful regardless of whether special events happened in their day or not. In other words, they did not just have moments of gratefulness, but grateful attitudes.
- We trust God and know He is taking care of us therefore we should be the most positive grateful people in the world. But a thankful attitude does not come naturally so for thankfulness to be an attitude, it must become a habit that that is cultivated and developed.

Make it a conscious decision In the middle of every circumstance; find the way to look to God, to see where you are blessed, where you can thank Him.

Change from griping, complaining, to rejoicing and thanksgiving in all circumstances

- To recognize how blessed you really are and focus on all the things we should be thankful for. Name them, draw them, count them. Eric Hoffer said "The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings."

Song we sing – Count Your Blessings

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, when you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,

Count your many blessings-name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

When you look at others with their lands of gold, think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;

Count your many blessings' money cannot buy Your reward in heaven nor your home on high.

So amid the conflict, whether great or small, do not be discouraged; God is over all.

Count your many blessings; angels will attend, help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

Count your blessings, name them one by one; count your blessings, see what God hath

done.

Count your blessings, name them one by one; count your many blessings, see what God hath done.

- Make it a concerted effort to focus on all the things we can be thankful for and see what God hath done.

The marvelous works of His creation

The guidance and instruction He has given in His Word

God's righteousness and holiness

Hope for salvation through His Son

Remember David's Psalm of Thanksgiving. Psalm 100

1 Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

2 Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing.

3 Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations

We have every reason to be thankful. God gave you a gift of 86,400 seconds today. Have you used one to say "thank you?"