

Living a life of Thankfulness

Nov 20th 2022 Pastor Clint Highfill

Think: I don't deserve anything good that comes my way in life. I have not earned anything.

Feel: Jesus has the power to transform my life and when I respond with gratitude, my attitude reshapes my heart.

Do: Intentionally consider the small and big things in your life that are good. Take time to record them and thank God for each and every one.

Outline

Intro

Why is it easier to think of the things we don't have rather than the things we do?

Why is it easier to complain than it is to praise?

Why is it easier to be disappointed than it is to be content?

What if it is because our attitude is largely connected to our gratitude?

Something happens within us when we take time to say, "Thank You", that removes the focus from ourselves and places it on others.

In the end, it is an act of faith to be grateful, and it makes us more like

Jesus. Isn't it a shame that often we only take time to be grateful at

Thanksgiving? This is the reason we want to take some time today and visit the importance of living a life of thankfulness, each and every day.

24/7 and 365. The truth is we would live more fulfilled lives and experience so much more joy if we simply took time to be thankful.

Point #1 THANKFULNESS AND ATTITUDE ARE DEEPLY CONNECTED

There Are Endless Connections Between Thankfulness And Attitude
To be honest we are not naturally thankful people. More often than not, we see the glass as half-empty and live with a certain level of pessimism.

Living a life of thankfulness requires a conscious choice in your heart and mind

To intentionally seek out the good that exists all around us and allow it to reshape the way that we see the world. The truth is that we all have plenty of reasons to be down, anxious and disappointed. Life is hard. Circumstances can often cause us to be sad, angry, overwhelmed, stressed, and even depressed. The Bible teaches us that these situations are not to have control over our attitude.

Philippians 4:6-7 NLT

6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

The Apostle Paul is writing to a group of people who, because of persecution, had every reason to feel anxious. Their lives were in danger. Their families were under pressure. Their faith had made them a target. There was in-fighting inside the church. But, Paul says, do not let these things be a reason for anxious attitudes. Instead, lift them up to God in prayer and trust that He hears your requests. God hears your prayers!

Let that be encouragement this morning. Paul instructs his listeners to present their prayer in a certain way. He tells them to pray with **“thanksgiving” in their hearts.**

The result of this kind of trust in God is a peace that would guard their hearts and minds.

Point # 2 WHEN WE ARE LIVING LIVES OF THANKFULNESS, WE EXPERIENCE PEACE.

Raise your hand if you want peace in your life, your heart, I do, and in those times when life is hard I feel desperate for it. God says he can provide it if we ask, if we talk to Him about everything, not just in the moments where we feel like we are drowning, when life is falling apart. But in everything.

Illustration

Have you ever had a friend that is always stressed, always in a crisis, always needing advice or help, full of drama, or gossip? We probably all know someone like that. Maybe their social media is one long vent, or disaster post after another. Are those friends your favorite people to be around? Or ask yourself, if you were tired or had a rough day and they called, would you answer? Those friends can suck the peace out of our lives. We call God up through prayer, and our prayers sound like venting, needy, crisis prayers 99 percent of the time.

Think of the Psalms, they are often prayers that are written as songs. We put the Psalms into categories. The easiest breakdown of them are these three:

Psalms of praise. Psalms of Praise, otherwise known as hymns, are songs of pure praise to God. ...

Psalms of Lament. Psalms of Lament are songs and prayers given to God in times of pain. ...

Psalms of thanksgiving. Psalms of Thanksgiving are similar to Psalms of Praise, in that they celebrate God.

The good news is God doesn't ignore our calls or unfollow our posts when our prayers are real and raw. It was true about the Psalmist and it is true now for you and me. God wants to hear our deepest darkest feelings and requests. But He also wants to celebrate with us. He wants to hear “**thank you**” when He works in our lives, or in other people’s lives.

There is a direct correlation, according to Paul, between our grateful prayers and God’s gracious peace. Our willingness to practice gratitude can literally shift our attitudes. The Gospels give an account of a miracle that Jesus performs that absolutely transforms the lives of 10 individuals forever. However, they don’t all respond the same way.

Luke 17:11-14 NLT

11 As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria.

12 As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance,

13 crying out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

14 He looked at them and said, “Go show yourselves to the priests.”

And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy.

Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem when he finds himself in a region that borders both Samaria and Galilee. There was a group of people that lived in Samaria that were known as Samaritans. The Jews living in Galilee made conscious efforts to avoid such people. Jesus would have been expected to follow suit. However, in this passage, Jesus finds himself at a short distance from a group of 10 men who were Samaritans. Not only were they to be avoided because of their ethnicity, but they were also suffering from leprosy.

Leprosy is a very painful skin condition that is highly contagious. The individual's skin would literally rot off. Someone with leprosy lived a miserable existence. Everywhere they went, they would have to call out, "Unclean, Unclean," to make sure people could keep their distance and avoid contact. This is the reason these 10 men stood at a distance from Jesus and begged him to have mercy on them and to heal them.

These men had every reason to be frustrated, angry, sad and desperate. Life had not been kind to them, and I am certain they felt that they had very little to be grateful for. Maybe you can relate to this. Maybe you have never suffered from a debilitating disease, but you have felt the guilt of sin, the shame of mistakes, or the pain of regret. You too have found yourself crying out to Jesus, "Have mercy on me."

Point #3 A TRANSFORMED LIFE BEGINS WITH OBEDIENCE TO GOD

In this story, even at a distance, Jesus responds. He tells them to go to the priests to show themselves. This was the normal way of seeking healing. But as they go, in obedience, they experience healing along the way. Even before they make it to the priests, they have been restored. Many of us struggle to find things in our lives to be thankful for, but if we are

honest, many of us refuse to live in line with the ways of God. What if simple obedience could unlock a litany of blessings?

Obedience can change addiction to freedom.

That is something to be thankful for!

Obedience can change anger to forgiveness.

That is something to be thankful for!

Obedience can change pride to humility.

That is something to be thankful for!

All 10 of the men were healed because of the grace and mercy of Jesus. All 10 of the men would have known that the miracle they had experienced was because of the power of Jesus. They had been hearing stories of his incredible healing power. It was the reason that they stood at a distance and cried out to him in the first place. Their transformed lives are a result of their encounter with Christ. Something shocking happens next.

Luke 17:15-19 NLT

15 One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, "Praise God!"

16 He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine?"

18 Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"

19 And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you."

There were 10 healings, but only one of the men came back to say, "Thank you." We are not told why the other nine neglected a return to thank Jesus as well. Perhaps they were so eager to get back to their families now that they were clean. Perhaps they believed they deserved the credit for their healing because they followed Jesus' instructions. Either way, Jesus is amazed that only one man comes back, and a Samaritan at that. He tells him to rise up and go because it was his faith in Jesus that made him well.

BE GRATEFUL, EVEN IF YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE

STORY:

I read a story about a ministerial student in Evanston, Illinois named Edward Spencer, who was part of a life-saving group of people. In 1860, a ship went aground on the shore of Lake Michigan near Evanston, and Edward Spencer waded again and again into the frigid waters to rescue 17 passengers. In the process, his health was permanently damaged. Some years later, at his funeral, it was noted that not one of the people he had rescued ever came to thank him.

How sad. While I was writing this, I wondered how many times I didn't say thank you to someone. I felt ashamed. Then I thought about all the things that I neglected to thank God for over the years and I couldn't help but tear up and ask him forgiveness for my ungratefulness. Unfortunately, We live in a culture where being grateful is the exception rather than the norm.

There is such a focus on what we don't have that there is no thought given to what we do have. What might happen if more people in the world began to take note of the things that God has done around them? So today, I want

to invite you to do something that you may seldom do. I want to invite you, just like this Samaritan man, to let God know how grateful you are for all the blessings in your life. **(see reflection section for activity)**

Conclusion

My hope is that this message causes us to do three things.

Think: I don't deserve anything good that comes my way in life. I have not earned anything.

Do: Intentionally consider the small and big things in your life that are good. Take time to record them and thank God for each and every one.

Feel: Jesus has the power to transform my life and when I respond with gratitude, my attitude reshapes my heart.

Jesus. His sacrificial life, death and resurrection has given us the opportunity to have our lives transformed. If we have no other reason to be thankful, this is one. Being grateful recalibrates us. It reorients us. You have a choice today to either be ungrateful or to be grateful. Let's purpose in our hearts to choose to live a life of thankfulness.

Reflection

- 1. Why is it easier to think of the things we don't have rather than the things we do?**
- 2. Why is it easier to complain than it is to praise?**
- 3. Why is it easier to be disappointed than it is to be content?**
- 4. Write down four things in your life right now that are a cause of anxiety, pain, disappointment or frustration.**
- 5. Write four things in your life that you are thankful for today.**

6. How do you feel after you reflect on the four blessings you wrote?