



November 26, 2017
The Gift of Thankfulness

Day 1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Think about everything that is going on in your life this week. How's the family? The job? Is the budget tight? Are you fighting addiction or self-doubt? Are you sick or exhausted? Give thanks. Wait, what? In all circumstances give thanks. No, that can't be right. But yes, this is what Paul is telling us. If you are or have ever walked through hard times, remember that these times give us opportunity to discover God in ways that we otherwise could not. James expands on this when he writes in James 1:2-3 *"...when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow..."* If this is where you are, don't lose hope! God is bigger than any circumstance! He is the light in your dark place! So, take a deep breath, and as you breathe out, exhale a prayer of thanksgiving to the one who is transforming you!

Day 2. Read Mark 10:17-22. When the young man came to Jesus, what was he looking for? He was looking for how to *earn* eternal life. While it seemed that the man had everything, Jesus said, "one thing you lack..." In our blessed and prosperous culture, Jesus reminds us that our desire for more can get in the way of our contentment and therefore our attitudes are not thankful. We assume that to be blessed means to have more, but sometimes the biggest blessing comes in the form of subtraction. Think about that. What would you do if God called you to give away the things you most valued to pursue Him? What is your biggest obstacle towards gratefulness and contentment?

Day 3. Read John 4:7-30. The Samaritan woman's interaction with Jesus was very different from that of the young man in Mark 10. Where he was a religious and disciplined man, hoping to earn God's favor, she was seeking avenues of finding her own self-fulfillment and worth. She was looking for meaning in places that true life cannot be found. Yet Jesus,

in the midst of her brokenness, saw past her circumstances and invited her to experience real life in Him. What are the things that you tend towards to find fulfillment? Where do you go to find life? Think about those things for a minute. Do they lead you towards a heart of gratitude or do they leave you wanting more? What are the negative effects of this type of life? Jesus offers us a life fulfilled in Him. Pray that God would give you the strength to receive it.

Day 4. Read 1 Corinthians 15:57. At the very center of our faith is the reality that Christ died on our behalf and was raised to life again in victory over death. Because of what He did for us, we can be thankful, for we share in His victory! If we are in Christ, we are not bound by rules and regulations that no man could accomplish as the young man in Mark 10 sought. And we have grace for when we sin as the Samaritan woman learned. Jesus' desire for us is to give us real life, a better life, eternal life. Are we so stubborn in our do-it-yourself perspective that we cannot simply receive His unearned grace? Thankfulness comes from understanding and accepting that every breath of life is grace - undeserved and unearned - from the Father. And living a life of thankfulness to God spills over to gratitude and generosity with others in our life. Think about that as you go about your day today. God loves you even when you don't deserve it! Let that sink in and permeate every thought, action, response and attitude. Allow yourself the freedom to be thankful!

Day 5. Give thanks to God. What does gratitude look like as a lifestyle? If a child receives a gift that is disappointing, cries about it, and then says thank you, is the child truly grateful? We cannot will a thankful heart into existence, but we can practice the remembrance of what He has done. This centers our focus on Christ, and can soften our hearts towards legitimate Holy Spirit transformation. If you have a journal, consider this next step. Every time you find yourself unsatisfied, stop and write it down, and then write a few things next to it for which you are thankful. If you're not a writer, practice it in thought or say it out loud. For example: "God, I am feeling discontent with my job, but you have given me life, you have provided for my family in this, and you have given me opportunity to share your love with those around me. Thank You!"



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Thankfulness is a big deal; It's our _____ to the life we have _____.

Jesus' love sees past our _____ and _____ what we are _____. Are we thankful for that?

The biggest obstacle to the gift of thankfulness is the _____.

David Platt, in his book Counter Culture, writes about the young rich ruler, "In the end, Jesus is not calling this man _____ from treasure; he is calling him _____ treasure."

What is your more? What is your biggest obstacle to the gift of thankfulness and contentment? What would grieve your heart if Jesus asked you to leave it?

Jesus' love sees past our _____ and _____ us into a new life. Are we thankful for that?

Thankful hearts are out of _____ for what was _____ not by what was _____.

Next Steps:

1. What sea are you drowning in?
2. Share your thankfulness with someone next month.
3. Give thanks to God.