

Cultivating Gratitude

Dave Buehring November 26, 2017

Opening

- Thanksgivings Past
 - Some good, some not so good
 - Time of year to reflect on things we are grateful for
-

What Do the Scriptures Say About Giving Thanks?

- 1) I will give **thanks** to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. Psalm 9:1 (*All God has done for us*)
- 2) “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness...I will give **thanks** to you forever!” Psalm 30:11-12 (*Our response when God does something on our behalf*)
- 3) “Enter his gates with **thanksgiving**, and his courts with praise! Give **thanks** to him; bless his name!” Psalm 100:4 (*Starting point of entering His Presence*)
- 4) Oh give **thanks** to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Psalm 106:1 (*God’s character; His attitude towards you!*)
- 5) “All your works shall give **thanks** to you, O Lord, and all your saints shall bless you!” Psalm 145:10 (*Everything within creation, all He has done*)
- 6) “Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave **thanks**...So both choirs of those who gave **thanks** stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me... Nehemiah 12:31,40 (*Dedication of Nehemiah’s wall in Jerusalem*)
- 7) “He (Daniel) got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave **thanks** before his God, as he had done previously.” Daniel 6:10 (*Amid challenges; spiritual warfare*)
- 8) And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given **thanks**, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. Mark 8:6 (*Jesus, thanks is a gateway to faith which brings breakthroughs*)
- 9) Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in **thanksgiving**. Colossians 2:6-7 (*Abounding in thanks!*)
- 10) First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and **thanksgivings** be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 1 Timothy 2:1-3 (*Part of our prayer life*)

- 11) And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and **thanksgiving** and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” Revelation 7:11-12 (*Snapshot of happenings in Heaven*)

~ **Giving thanks is a core part of our walk with Jesus!** ~

Three Realities of Gratefulness

- **It Is Rooted in the Grace of God**

- Thanksgiving Day – “who’d like to say Grace?”
- “For it is all for your sake, so that as **grace** extends to more and more people it may increase **thanksgiving**, to the glory of God.” 2 Corinthians 4:15
- Greek word for grace is “charis” (“kha-res”)
 - Greek word for thanksgiving (eucharisteo; “yu-kha-re-ste-a”)
 - Thanks is rooted in the same word as grace!
 - When you encounter God’s grace the response that bubbles up from within is thanksgiving, gratitude
- So, what is Grace?
 - Grace is God’s undeserved love and favor towards us.
 - It comes our way because of God’s initiative. Not earned – nor deserved!
 - The bestower of loving-kindness towards us (connect the dots).
 - Looks at you with eyes of favor!
 - Grace is a dramatic statement (the cross) of God’s intervention in our human condition: helpless, hopeless, trapped in sin. Redeems us!
 - A triumphant announcement that God has acted on our behalf!
 - Grace is a way of life for a follower of Jesus.
 - *Relying completely on the work of Jesus on the cross – Ephesians 2*
 - *Training us to live godly lives in the world around us – Titus 2:11-14*
 - *Giftng us to advance His Kingdom in the Earth – Romans 12:6-8*

When your life is rooted in the grace of God you understand that there is absolutely nothing you have earned nor deserve. Therefore, everything coming your way every day is received as a gift from God, for which we can offer thanks!

- **It Reveals What’s in Our Hearts**

- Gratefulness – *or our lack thereof* – reveals what we really believe about God’s character and ways!
 - Who He is.
 - What He is willing to do on our behalf.
 - Exposes gaps between Who He really is and how we are living our daily lives!

- Gratefulness – or our lack thereof – reveals how we view and value the people in our lives. *Paul – 1 Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:3-6; 1Thessalonians 1:2*
 - Do we recognize the significant contributions of others in our lives? Or are we ultimately “users” of those around us?
 - Reality is, part of us is who we are because that is who God has made us – but part of who we are, is the sum of people’s input in our lives!
 - Who taught you what?
 - Who helped you step out in an area of strength?
 - Who encouraged/helped you in your skill sets?
 - Who has consistently been there for you in tough times?
 - Who prayed for you before you came to Jesus?
 - Who led you to Jesus? Poured the things of God into you?
 - Do you recognize the contribution of others in your life?
 - When was the last time you expressed gratitude to them?
- Consequences of a Lack of Gratitude

“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Romans 1:21

 - Discontentment – not satisfied, restless, always want/need more
 - Cynicism – cynics are those who don’t trust others; they want to believe that people are only motivated by self-interests; suspicious, which leads to an unbelieving heart. Can’t see others’ contributions in their lives.
 - Criticism – not grateful for other’s contributions, not done right
 - Entitlement – not getting what’s owed me; focus on what don’t have, rather than what do have!
 - Bitterness – anger and disappointment, treated unfairly
- Jonah 2:8 – those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs

- **It Releases Faith in Our Lives**

- “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, **give thanks in all circumstances**; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
- When you choose to give thanks:
 - *You are reminded that God is your ultimate source.*
 - *It allows you to reference your current challenges through eyes of God’s past provisions for you.*
 - *It takes things out of your hands and places them in God’s.*

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with **thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7

 - *Thanks → Faith → Breakthrough*
- Rehearse God’s provision through the lens of thanks → faith builds → breakthrough comes (*first within us!*).

Discussion Questions

1. Out of all the thanksgiving verses mentioned, which is your favorite and why?
2. Examine how “thanks-giving” is rooted in the grace of God.
3. Does our attitude about gratefulness reveal what we really believe about God’s character and ways?
4. Share with the group someone who has made a significant contribution to your life spiritually.
5. How does giving thanks in *all circumstances* release faith in our lives?