

# Forget Not

## An Invitation to a Grateful Life

Rob Rogers                      November 3, 2019

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***Question: Is it possible to live through the ups, downs, and monotonous, mundane rhythms of everyday life with a consistent abiding joy? Is possible to attain true happiness? Is that even possible?***

And if our response is, “Well yes, of course...” let me push you a little bit...

- *when we're young*, we expect life to be joyful
  - when it's not, then without even knowing it, we start to think that something is wrong
    - *because joy, happiness, is the expectation*
  - when we're young and naïve, we view anyone that isn't happy, whether we admit this or not
    - we view them as someone that has just made poor decisions
    - it's their fault that they're not happy
    - if they just made better decisions, they would be happier than they are
- *when get a little older*, we get some life experience under our belts, we've weathered some storms
  - we come out on the other side of those experiences and look back on the happy people
    - *“Oh, you just wait... how naïve... we'll see how happy you are with just an ounce of what I've been through...”*
  - And without even realizing it, we begin to view genuinely happy people as those that are ignorant to the woes and ills of normal everyday life that most people have to live through
    - we think that they've by some fluke, bypassed the great misfortunes of life.

*Many of us, at the very least, are leaning into one of these two perspectives...*

**But here's where the rubber meets the road—**

**Question:**

If it IS possible to walk through life with a deep, abiding, consistent sense of fulfillment and joy...

Then why aren't you more joyful than you are?

Why does your joy seem momentary and fleeting?

Why does any sense of satisfaction in your life only last for a moment?

**Question:**

And why is it that the people that pursue happiness as a goal — the people that are at the top of the societal food chain rarely, if ever, find the happiness they're seeking?

Why is it so rare to find someone who is consistently at peace, overflowing with joy?

***Because when the Bible speaks of things like joy, peace, fulfillment, satisfaction... it never speaks of them as a goal, but as a byproduct of something else.***

**In other words, if happiness is your goal, you'll never get it.  
If satisfaction is what you're pursuing, you'll never find it.  
If peace is what you're striving for, it will always elude you.**

**But what the Bible gives us as the key to consistent abiding joy, peace, and fulfillment is one theme, one idea woven throughout the entirety of the scripture...**

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## **Gratitude**

This is the most repeated theme throughout the whole Bible — “Rejoice,” “Give thanks,” “Praise the lord!” “Offer prayers with thanksgiving,” “Be glad in the Lord,” “Sing praise to the Lord!” This command is a continual thread woven throughout the whole scripture, and it’s an invitation from God to us.

**PERSONAL from Pastor Rob:** I’m going to confess something to you. When anyone says the word “*gratitude*” in the month of November, there’s something in me that just cringes a little bit. There’s some part of my soul that is just like... “*Okay Great... here we go again, turn on the Hallmark channel, get out the cornucopia fruit basket and potpourri, it’s November and now everyone is supposed to be grateful and happy... blah blah blah...*”

*It’s awful, I know.... but I also know that I am not alone... I won’t ask you to raise your hands if you’re with me on this, but I know you’re out there.* But if you have that kind of response, like I do... here’s what that gut response tells us...

- It tells us that our understanding of gratitude is far too shallow and superficial
- It tells us that we think way too highly of our capacity to bring about good in our own lives
- And ultimately it tells us that our perspective on gratitude has been more influenced by culture than by Scripture.

So, in light of that... here’s where we’re going today —

### **WHAT GRATITUDE IS WHAT GRATITUDE DOES HOW GRATITUDE GROWS**

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## **What Gratitude Is**

Nearly every psalm has some invitation to give thanks to God — even the dark and gloomy psalms often have some declaration of praise, thanksgiving, or hope toward God.

*The Psalms even tell us that we enter the very presence of God with gratitude.*

- **Psalm 100:4-5**  
“Enter His gates with **thanksgiving**, And His courts with **praise!**”
  - In other words, if you want to experience more of God’s presence in your life, be grateful!

*And if you’ve ever asked the question, “What is God’s will for my life?” wonder no more because the Apostle Paul tells us...*

- **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**  
<sup>16</sup> **Rejoice** always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> **give thanks** in all circumstances; for this is the **will of God** in Christ Jesus for you.

*In fact, in 2 Timothy, Paul writes to Timothy and warns him...*

- **2 Timothy 3:1-5**  
in the last days there will come times of difficulty. <sup>2</sup> For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, **ungrateful**, unholy, <sup>3</sup> heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup> having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

- ***The lack of gratitude is on that list! According to Paul, ungratefulness is wickedness!***

**MISCONCEPTION ABOUT GRATITUDE:**

Many of us think a way we produce gratitude is by comparing ourselves with other people who are *less fortunate* than we are.

- “we don’t have it as bad as those people, and so we should be grateful”
- that might help you for a brief moment, but it actually undermines the thing that will ultimately help you grow in gratitude

If you compare yourself with those that are less fortunate, **comparison of circumstances is the foundation you’re building your gratitude on.**

- it will be that much easier *to compare with those that are more fortunate...*which can generate envy.

***If that’s your approach to gratitude, then your level of gratefulness will be completely dependent on your circumstances — and the moment your circumstances change, so will your gratitude.***

WHAT IS GRATITUDE THAT ISN’T CONDITIONAL?

WHAT IS A GRATITUDE THAT ISN’T BASED ON YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES?

**Gratitude is the recognition of the substance and source of every good thing.**

- 1. Gratitude is first a recognition of good in and of itself  
It’s a recognition that there is good in the world, and there is good in my own life**
- 2. And then it’s the recognition the Source of that good  
Where it came from**

- **James 1:17**  
Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights
- Is there good in your life? Praise God, because it’s from Him... that’s an expression of His love toward you... it originated with Him.
- Is there something that you want so bad in your life, something that you’re longing for that you don’t yet have?
- Then thank God that you don’t have it yet, because it must not be good... at least not yet — and you can trust His timing...

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## **What Gratitude Does**

After 400 years of slavery in Egypt, God raises up a leader and delivers 2 million enslaved Israelites from Pharaoh.

- God brings them out, to bring them up to the Promised Land, and Israel sends out spies to look at the land
- two come back trusting that God will fulfill His promise
- ten return fearful... and they spread their fear and distrust among the people of Israel...

- **Numbers 14:1-3**

Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the people of Israel **grumbled** against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?”

- From our perspective today, knowing the end of the story... we think... “Don’t grumble, Israel”
- If we were in their shoes... we would probably be grumbling too

**What happened as a result of their grumbling and ungratefulness?**

- God was ready, preparing to make them a great nation, a powerful nation, a nation with wealth and military strength, a nation to be reckoned with.
- A 40-year sentence of wandering in the wilderness. — until the entire generation of grumblers and complainers were rooted out from among the Israelites, before they entered the Promised land

**Grumbling blinds you to God’s goodness and guidance.**

**INTERESTING:** A recent Stanford article reported that if you complain, or are complained to for 30 minutes or more, your hippocampus, that part of your brain that affects problem-solving and intelligent thought, begins to shrink...

- In other words, what the Bible shows us in Numbers 14, and what modern psychological research shows us, is that **complaining makes you dumb!**

**Look at Joshua and Caleb’s report to Israel... they believed — look at their faith...**

- **Numbers 14:7-9**

“The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup>If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. <sup>9</sup>Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.”

How do they know that?

How do Joshua and Caleb know this?

How are they so confident in the face of such daunting odds?

How do they know God will be with them in the future?

Because He had proven Himself to them over and over and over and over again...

By miracle after miracle, God delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians...

They didn’t do that! Moses didn’t do that!

There’s no human wisdom or strength that could have brought that about — and Joshua and Caleb knew it...

They’re looking back saying, **“and if God did that then, we know He can do it again.”**

**Complaining blinds you to God’s past, present, and future goodness.**

**BUT GRATITUDE — recognizing the good that God has done —**

**enables, emboldens, and empowers you**

**to trust in what God wants to do!**

After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness... Joshua leads the Israelites to cross the Jordan, God dries up the water, two million of them cross, and for the first time, after 440 years of hardship, slavery, and suffering they step foot into the Promised Land...

**Question — What’s the first thing God tells them to do? What’s the very first thing?**

**Build an altar.** Each leader of each tribe, pick a rock and build an altar here...

...so that you'll never forget what I've done for you.  
You'll never forget how patient, and kind, and loving I've been toward you.

He told them to remember. To never forget what He'd done for them...  
"build an altar so that generation after generation will look back and remember that the God of Israel is with His people, that He's present, and mighty, and greatly to be praised."

***If gratitude, recognizing God's goodness in the past, enables us to trust Him for the future — how do we grow in gratitude?***

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## How Gratitude Grows

***God commanded it in Joshua 4. David wrote about it in Psalm 42. And David shouts it emphatically in this eruption of praise in Psalm 103...***

- **Psalm 103:1-2**  
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! <sup>2</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul, and **forget not** all his benefits...

***What are His benefits?***

- **Psalm 103:3-5**  
who **forgives** all your iniquity, who **heals** all your diseases, <sup>4</sup> who **redeems** your life from the pit, who **crowns** you with steadfast love and mercy, <sup>5</sup> who **satisfies** you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

**Church, how do we grow in gratitude?**

We remember His benefits... we remember what He's done  
We look back at the moments where God has moved powerfully in our lives... miraculously in our lives  
We remember that the Creator of the Universe, communes with us... and invites us to commune with Him  
We remember all of the times we've turned our backs on Him, and He's been nothing but faithful to us  
All the times we've raged against Him, and all the times He's comforted us

**How do YOU grow in gratitude? You remember. You... as David says, "Forget Not"**

If we're honest... it's easy to forget  
It's easy to forget all the moments that God has come through  
We get busy with life... we live under the tyranny of the urgent  
Our entire culture is geared toward making us discontent with what God's given us  
It's easy to forget  
It takes diligence and discipline to remember...

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## The Gratitude Journal

We have created a resource to help you: *The Gratitude Journal*. You can download an electronic copy at:  
[www.Gracechapel.net/gratitude](http://www.Gracechapel.net/gratitude)

When you open it up, there are four sections for each day... and each section gives you a prompt to get you started...

- **Section 1:** Today I'm grateful for... and you've got space to reflect and write
- **Section 2:** Has a Scripture reading for that day... Psalm 103

- **Section 3:** “One thing I’m believing God for...” So, we’re looking back, recognizing God’s goodness in the past and present, and bringing our hopes, our desires for the future, and laying those before Him... believing Him for big things!
- **Section 4:** “What went well today....” This is a reflection on that specific day, maybe right before bed, you look back and recognize God’s presence, His work in that day

***Here’s our challenge: Every day for the next 28 days... take 5 minutes a day... spend some time when you wake up, before bed... invite the Lord into it, and practice the power of gratitude.***

## **Think about this...**

### **YOU:**

What transformation might occur in your own soul if you did this one simple thing for the next 28 days? If you’ve been beaten down and anxious... do you think God might be using this as an invitation to pull you out of the pit... to lift your eyes to heaven... to get your sights off of yourself and onto Him?

And if it changes you... how might that change your interactions in your home, with your spouse, your kids, your friends, your boss, your employees, your coworkers....

If every day, you’re looking for God’s involvement, presence, and work in and around your life... and you’re thanking Him for it...

Do you think you might begin to experience a little more peace? A little bit more joy? A little more hope about your future?

### **WE:**

And imagine... if every single adult... every single high-schooler, middle-schooler, every family committed to this... did this for the next 28 days...

How might that change, not only our own lives...

How might that change our church and our capacity to perceive, lean into, and trust what God is doing in our midst?

## **Our Challenge**

***I think God knew a little something about human design when He gave us the Scriptures that are absolutely saturated with the invitation to grateful living...***

***I think God has given us a challenge, church.***

***And I think we ought to take Him up on it, don’t you?***

## **Discussion Questions**

1. What does *thanksgiving* have to do with discovering God’s will for your life?
2. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Why do you think being “ungrateful” is listed as wickedness?
3. What are the pitfalls when our gratitude is based on comparison?
4. If every good and perfect gift is from God, but you don’t have what you’re longing for, how can you thank God for it?
5. How can grumbling blind you to God’s goodness and guidance?
6. Has recognizing and remembering what God has done for you in the past, enabled you to trust Him for the future? Personal examples?

# NOTES