

November 19, 2023

The Power of Thanksgiving (part 1) Crank the Gears of Gratitude

Thursday is Thanksgiving (a national holiday) but that isn't why we are doing this series. We are doing this series because it is our purpose as a church to help people take steps from wherever they are to where God wants them to be.

Expressing **gratitude and thanksgiving** is a powerful spiritual exercise.

What exercise is to our bodies, gratitude and thanksgiving is to our souls.

Physical exercise gets us in shape physically, making us stronger and healthier. Expressing gratitude and thanksgiving is a spiritual exercise to get us in shape, stronger and healthier mentally, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually.

THANKSGIVING isn't just one step along the way *from wherever you are to where God wants you to be* but a permeating practice for the entire journey.

This past Thursday morning, I thought my message for today was mostly prepared. **There was just one problem.** I was grumpy.

- Have you ever been in the **GRUMP SLUMP!** Don't answer this for anyone else! Just for yourself.
- When I'm in the GRUMP SLUMP **I usually call it something else.**
 - I say things like "*I'm sorry, there's a lot of stuff I am stressing about.*" I excuse myself saying, *it's not my fault!*
 - But my circumstances are not what tied me up to the **grump slump stump.** (Sorry about that...I guess I've read too much Dr. Seuss.)
 - **It wasn't the stress but the way I process the stress that ties me up!**
 - There's a better way! **Crank the gears of gratitude.**

And I knew it... so I decided to work what I knew when I didn't feel like it! I went to go pray under the stars ANYWAY!

I put on all my gear and got in the car and off I went. Then this grump noticed that there was total cloud cover... no stars!! What's a grump to do? Crank the gears of gratitude ANYWAY! I went through the motions anyway. I cranked on two gears, my walking gear and my talking to God gear, then I decided to stop at the same spot I stopped on Tuesday under the stars.

I shut off my headlamp, and I noticed something... the clouds did not make the pre-dawn night sky darker... it was brighter. That was puzzling. Were the clouds a lit ceiling because they were high enough to catch the ambient light of a sun that would rise later? Were the clouds acting like a diffuser capturing all the starlight? I didn't know.

Then it hit me. **There is light on the other side of the clouds.** The clouds may block my view but there was still light on the other side. In fact some portions of the clouds were brighter than others, there was definition and shape.

There was light on the other side of every stress, every problem I faced. My clinched heart was softened by cranking the gears of gratitude.

A new development in science is “the Science of happiness”. I love it when a new discovery in science “reveals” something God already revealed thousands of years ago!

Dr. P. Doraiswamy, head of biologic psychology at Duke University Medical Center, says giving thanks is good for your health. Dr. Doraiswamy says,
“If it were a drug, it would be the world’s best-selling product with a health maintenance indication for every major organ system.”

I believe it! Are you ready to hear more about . . .

HOW TO BE GRATEFUL WHEN YOU AREN'T FEELING IT

1. ***Practice coaching YOURSELF***

This morning we will look at a couple of Psalms of David, to see how he did this. The first one is...

Psalm 103:1-2 (NIV) Of David. ¹ Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—

Did you notice how David was coaching himself? He’s telling his own soul (his mind, will, and emotions) what to do when he isn’t feeling it!!

Telling himself “*Praise the Lord, my Soul*”, underscores the importance of self-reflection. This kind of coaching can be a powerful tool for self-awareness and personal growth.

Here is another one...with a slightly different approach.

Psalm 34:1–2 (NIV) I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. ² I will glory in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

Here, David is making Positive Affirmations: *I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.* His positive affirmations (based on God’s revealed word) was a way of coaching himself!!!

The hardest person to lead is yourself. If you can lead yourself well, you begin to influence others. David knew that only by coaching himself can he adequately lead others! David was intentional about putting praise on his lips even while afflicted.

I will glory in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

He knew if he led himself well, others would be influenced also. If he could rejoice while afflicted, they could also!

He sounds just like Paul in the New Testament (ex: Philippians 4:4 ...)

I've been practicing David's practices: I will literally say out loud: *"Now Jim, it's been too long that your lips are shut. Open them and put praise ALWAYS on your lips!"*

Try it! It helps. Crank on the gear of gratitude!

GRATITUDE brings encouragement in difficult times: David's self-talk gave him strength and resilience during tough times, and would often refresh and restore his positive outlook.

How do you choose to be grateful when you are not feeling joyful?

1. *Practice coaching YOURSELF*
2. **Don't wait to EXPRESS it**

Gratitude is a choice. You don't need to wait to feel grateful before you express gratitude. The fact is you will feel more grateful when you practice gratitude.

It takes intentionality and focused energy to crank on the gears of gratitude!

Let's be real here. Living in a fallen world often feels like a grind doesn't it? It's so ... daily. It's work. Sometimes in the grind we want to wait till the clouds disappear. There's a problem with that!!

- Jesus said, *in this world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*
- **We can't afford to wait for the clouds to disappear.** Or the stress... There's work to be done. And work is called work because sometimes you just have to crank on the gears!
- It's hard, but that doesn't mean wait till you feel like it!! **Real life is NOW** and can be found in the middle of today's grind. **Be grateful in the grind.**
- Even in the best of jobs, work is a grind! That's why it is called work!

How do you choose to be grateful when you are not feeling joyful?

1. *Practice coaching YOURSELF*
2. *Don't wait to EXPRESS it*
3. **REHEARSE his benefits**

Psalm 103:1-2 (NIV) Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—

By directing his soul to *bless the Lord and remember His benefits* **DAVID** told himself what to do to **RE-align** his thoughts and actions with higher values.

It isn't merely REMEMBERING his benefits. David "**rehearses**" the benefits.

- **He sang out the benefits**

- **He memorized them.**
- **He thought about them.**
- **He spoke them,**
- **He prayed them.**

FORGET NOT ALL HIS BENEFITS!

Author, and counselor: Paul David Tripp often says, we are often GRACE amnesiacs!!

We slip into GRUMP SLUMP precisely because we are forgetting all the amazing benefits God Has supplied us, is supplying us, and will supply to us.

In the rest of this Psalm David gave us **a short list (as an example)** of what benefits to REMEMBER!

- Forgiveness of sins
- Healing from diseases
- Redemption from the pit
- God's love and compassion
- His supply of satisfaction with good things
- Renewal lifting us up like wings of an eagle
- God's righteousness and justice
- His Compassion and grace
- His patience and abounding in love
- His Faithfulness to and through generations

REMEMBERING and GIVING THANKS makes us happier people! THIS IS THE POWER OF THANKSGIVING!

It **shifts your perspective** away from what is lacking and while valuing and focusing on what is already ours now, and what is soon coming to us.

Here's something else to consider! We have a huge advantage over David! We have JESUS! We have access to MORE than DAVID could experience!

Colossians 2:6–7 (NIV) So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

We have access to HIS resurrection power, and the HOLY SPIRIT in us—everything we need to be overflowing with thankfulness!

SO ... let's CRANK THE GEARS OF GRATITUDE...and be overflowing with thankfulness!!!

1. *Practice coaching YOURSELF*
2. *Don't wait to EXPRESS it*

3. *REHEARSE his benefits*

- What steps can you take to be more intentional about expressing gratitude? What steps can you take to be more intentional about remembering all God's benefits?
- Will you take a few minutes each day this week to reflect on and write down one or two things you are grateful for?
- Will you take a few extra minutes preparing for your "Thanksgiving" celebration to include thanking God and sharing your grateful thoughts with others.

Talk It Over

The Power of Thanksgiving
Part 1
Crank the Gears of Gratitude

SMALL TALK

1. Share a specific moment from the past week when you felt genuinely grateful. What happened, and how did it make you feel?

VIEWPOINT

2. **Read Psalm 103.** What phrases or verses stand out to you regarding gratitude?
3. What self talk does David use in this Psalm to crank the gears of gratitude even when he does not feel like it?
4. How does David describe God's character in relation to gratitude? How does understanding God's character impact our ability to be thankful?
5. How can the awareness of God's forgiveness enhance our gratitude, both towards God and others?

GETTING PERSONAL

6. How can you be more intentional about expressing gratitude? How can you be more intentional about remembering all God's benefits?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

Action Step Challenge. Take a few minutes each day this week to reflect on and write down one or two things you are grateful for. Take a few extra minutes preparing for your “Thanksgiving” celebration to include thanking God, and sharing your grateful thoughts with others.