

November 26, 2023

The Power of Thanksgiving

part 2 - Grateful to the Giver

The gifts we enjoy and give thanks for lead us to better know and enjoy the Giver. We don't have to choose God or the gifts. We can find joy in both. Together. Thanksgiving links the two as we better understand God through His gifts. It begins with identifying blessings, but these must point us to Someone or else we're not giving thanks.

A God-centered life produces a praise-filled life. Believing all things come from God lays the foundation for biblical thanksgiving. God is the source of our gifts and the object of our gratitude. Since God is the source of whatever comes our way, we can trust and thank Him, whether it's in a trial to make us like Christ or a blessing to lift our sunken spirit.

We receive everything we have. When God receives the praise for giving us all good things, it removes any grounds of personal boasting. Gratitude humbles us. It decimates pride and sweeps away entitlement. The more we give God credit, the less we take credit.

The humility served up through gratitude is matched by the joy that follows. As we experience self-forgetfulness, our hearts find the space to wonder and worship at the sight of God. It just takes us getting out of the way to make room (John 3:30). As we give more time to recognize and reflect on God, it leads to joy in Him. His heart abounds with the generosity of a wonderful gift-giving Father concerned with both our provision and our pleasure.

God not only knows what we need, but He knows when we need it and how to give it. We give thanks for what God does and gives, and when and how He does it.

God filled our world with His fingerprints, some unmistakable and others less apparent at first glance. Take the time to look, observe, and connect the dots. As you notice God at work, thank Him. Identify God's involvement and activity. Think about blessings you take for granted. Any gift from God should lead you to God. Allow the gift to teach you about the character and heart of the Giver.

Take a few minutes to list five gifts from God, actions of God in your life, or attributes of God on your mind. Consider what those tell you about Him. Then give thanks to Him.

James 1:17 (NIV) Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Romans 11:36 (NIV) For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Don't Forget His Benefits

Sometimes we forget how good we have it. We fall for the “grass is greener somewhere else” lie. Or like children bored with their toys, apathy for God’s blessings sets in. Boredom with blessings sets in and we want more.

This could be true of material or spiritual things. Gratitude for answered prayer fades. Spiritual lessons learned through God’s curriculum of truth and trials must be learned again. The gifts we have through Christ, the adoption as sons and daughters of the Father, and power through the Holy Spirit become old news.

To combat this, we must remember all God has done and all the benefits of life with him. Forgetfulness will happen unless we intentionally keep memories fresh. When your heart grows stale, go into the closet of your memory and pull out past examples of what God has done for you. Rinse and repeat until the pleasing aroma of gratitude replaces the stench of ingratitude.

David seeks to do this by taking a spiritual inventory for Israel. A retail-store employee might walk through each aisle, noting what’s on the shelf. In Psalm 103, David begins a series of Psalms taking stock of God’s love and faithfulness by strolling through Israel’s history. He reminds them what God has done for them and all they have in Him.

You and I need spiritual reminders. If we’re not careful, familiarity with biblical truths can lead to a calloused heart. The shine of God’s gifts wear out if we’re not regularly polishing them through refreshing our memories. For hearts that grow cold because they’re not warming themselves over the fires of gratitude, Psalm 103 supplies the oxygen to stoke the flames. Consider again who God is, what He’s done for you, and all that you have in Him. “Forget not all his benefits” (Psalm 103:2).

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—

Talk It Over

The Power of Thanksgiving (Week 2) “Thankful to the Giver of Gifts”

SMALL TALK

1. What is the best Thanksgiving food to eat for leftovers?

VIEWPOINT

2. **Read Psalm 103:1-5**

- What specific aspects of God's character and actions are highlighted in this passage? How do these attributes connect to the idea of blessing and thanking the Lord for what He's given?

3. **Read Colossians 3:15-17**

- In these verses, what is the relationship between peace, the Word of Christ, and thankfulness? How does expressing thanks to God relate to doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus?

4. **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

- According to this passage, what three commands are given to believers? How is thanksgiving specifically mentioned, and what is its significance in the context of rejoicing and prayer?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Share a time when you felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for something in your life?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

6. How can you this week show gratitude to Jesus?