

☞ **The Power of Gratitude**

Some women wrote that they were especially thankful:

- *For automatic dishwashers because they make it possible for us to get out of the kitchen before the family comes back in for their after-dinner snacks.*
- *For children who put away their things & clean up after themselves. They're such a joy you hate to see them go home to their own parents.*
- *For teenagers because they give parents an opportunity to learn a second language.*

Gratitude is a big deal! We can think in a worldly way or a Godly way. Worldly thinking leads to all kinds of depravity. One of the ways we combat this kind of thinking is through gratitude. We should be grateful people!

A thankful heart is not only a virtue, but the parent of all other virtues.

A thankful heart enjoys blessings twice--when they're received and when they're remembered.

☞ **Five things that keep us from being thankful:**

☞ **1) Conceit.** This is the attitude that says, "Nobody ever gave me anything, I worked hard for everything I have." "I deserve all the good things I have and none of the bad things."

--Henry Ward Beecher... Pride kills thanksgiving, but a humble mind is the soil out of which thanks naturally grows.

☞ **2) Critical spirit or constant Complaining.** Instead of being grateful, this person will always find something to complain about.

"A lady known as an incurable grumbler constantly complained about everything. At last her preacher thought he had found something about which she would be happy, for her farm crop was the finest for miles around. When he met her, he said with a beaming smile, 'You must be very happy Mary. Everyone is saying how healthy your potatoes look this year.' 'True they're pretty good, but what am I going to do when I need bad ones to feed the pigs.'"

The Feeling of Gratitude... At some point I grew up and made a simple discovery. "The emotion of feeling grateful doesn't happen naturally. It is a result of the deliberate choice of demonstrating gratitude." In other words, you don't show gratitude because you feel
☞ **grateful, you feel grateful because you show gratitude.**

☞ **3) Carelessness.** Growing accustomed to God's blessings in our lives.

The Israelites grumbled because they had no food so God miraculously sent manna to cover the ground each day except the Sabbath day. Then they started to grumble because it was the same thing every day. They had a miracle - straight from God every day, but were no longer satisfied.

☞ **4) Consumerism.** Never having enough and thinking we ought to have even more.

Ecclesiastes 5:10

Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.

☞ *Don't grumble because you don't have what you want – **be thankful you don't get what you deserve.***

☞ **5) Covetousness.** This is envy and jealousy of others. It occurs when we have our eyes on others instead of on God.

--Sweet Comfort Band

*I can recall when I was quite young
I had it all except for the one I wanted
Well that's envy and jealousy
Envy and jealousy; They make me so small
Envy and jealousy; They're there when I fall*

Proverbs 14:30

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

Because of conceit, carelessness, consumerism, covetousness, or a critical spirit we will never be truly thankful for all that God has given us.

Ephesians 5:19-20

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in ☞ your heart to the Lord, **always giving thanks** to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

☞ "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks **in all circumstances**, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

--Charles Allen... *I've seen a picture of the pilgrims at the first American Thanksgiving. Do you know half of their number died the first year they were here? They had a hard time, and it was a cold winter. Dangers lurked everywhere, but those pilgrims didn't think of the death of their loved ones and the dangers and the cold weather. They didn't let that*

obscure the blessings of God. They went together, and they thanked the Lord for the blessings they had received. Sometimes we need to tally our assets alongside our losses. Every one of us is more blessed than we are hurt.

--Benjamin Franklin... The sentence which has most influenced my life is, "Some people grumble because God placed thorns among roses. Why not thank God because He placed roses among thorns?"

How can we have this attitude of gratitude continually, especially "in all circumstances?" To be thankful in all circumstances, we need a proper perspective of our circumstances and of our God. Only then we will be able to give thanks to the Lord always.

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. **9** "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

☞ When we really understand that God is far above our ways of thinking and that he really does have our best interests in mind, we can always be thankful.

☞ Gratitude produces contentment. When we express gratitude for what we already have, we tend to be more at peace with our current condition. Scripture ties gratitude and peace together...

1 Timothy 2:1-2

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone- 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

☞ Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

☞ Gratitude produces compassion. When we are truly grateful for God's provision and work in our lives, we tend to be more caring to others that may be struggling.

☞ 1 John 3:1, 16-18

(gratitude) How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! ... *(compassion)***16** This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. **17** If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? **18** Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

☞ **Gratitude produces confidence.** When we take time to focus on what God has done, it strengthens our faith for what God can still do.

☞ **Psalms 77:11-14**

I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. **12** I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds. **13** Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God? **14** You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.

☞ **Gratitude produces connection.** **Psalm 95 and 100** speak of coming into his presence with thanks. If we are not grateful and do not express our thanksgiving, then it can have the opposite effect...

Romans 1:21

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

This passage implies that people who are ungrateful to God will soon fall away - their hearts will become hardened.

☞ There are numerous passages of scripture which indicate that **gratitude and fellowship with God are closely related.**

He who forgets the language of gratitude is not likely to be on speaking terms with God.

Feeling distant from God? Try expressing gratitude!

☞ **Gratitude is the mark of a growing Christian.**

For example, a baby is ungrateful. You can take a little baby when it has colic and walk the floor with them for hours and when you put that baby down - they don't say, "Thank You." More than likely, they will just yell a little louder. A child has to be taught to be thankful. It just doesn't come naturally.

When we realize how blessed we are by others and by God and express that - we are growing. God expects his followers to be growing and to be grateful. If you are thankful you will not be constantly critical and pessimistic. Conceit will be less of an issue and so will covetousness. Though there will be difficult times - they will not break you.

☞ The Psalmist was right, **'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.'** (Psalm 92:1)

Ephesians 5:20

☞ always **giving thanks** to God the Father **for everything**, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In southern Alabama is the town of Enterprise, in Coffee County. There they have erected a monument to an insect, honoring the Mexican boll weevil. In 1895 the boll weevil began to destroy the major crop of the county, cotton. In desperation to survive, the farmers had to diversify, and by 1919 the county's peanut crop was many times what cotton had been at its height. In that year of prosperity a fountain and monument were built. The inscription reads: "In profound appreciation of the boll weevil and what it has done as the herald of prosperity, this monument was erected by the citizens of Enterprise, Coffee County, Alabama." Out of a time of struggle and crisis had come new growth and success. Out of adversity had come blessing.

- ◆ *Be thankful that you don't already have everything you want. If you did, what would there be to look forward to?*
- ◆ *Be thankful when you don't know something, this gives you the opportunity to learn.*
- ◆ *Be thankful for the difficult times. During those times you grow.*
- ◆ *Be thankful for your limitations, because they give you opportunities for improvement.*
- ◆ *Be thankful for each new challenge, because it will build strength and character.*
- ◆ *Be thankful for your mistakes. They will teach you valuable lessons.*

Colossians 2:6-7

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 rooted and ☞ built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and **overflowing with thankfulness**.

--Leslie Flynn... In Vermont a farmer was sitting on the porch with his wife. He was beginning to realize how much she meant to him. It was about time--for they had lived together forty-two years, and she had been such a help, a very willing worker. One day as they sat together, he said, "Wife, you've been such a wonderful woman that there are times I can hardly keep from telling you."

I heard Joyce Meyer talking about gratitude just the other day. She was careful to stress the act of thanks-giving rather than just thankfulness. We need to actually express our gratitude. Say the words. Name the reasons. Give thanks!

Brief testimonies...