

THANKSGIVING

gratitude, grace, & generosity

THANKSGIVING

Series will look at Biblical thankfulness and giving.

- God wants everyone to be full of thanksgiving.
- And He wants everyone to give faithfully.
- Goal for series: increase tithing
- Challenge: additional 1% to Missions &/or 1% to Alms.
- **Vision:** Tithe provides for the ministry of the local church. 1% to mission = 1 full-time missionary for every 10 families; Alms - could do serious aid and outreach with this level of financial support (In house food bank here and Vandalia).

1 Thessalonians 5:18

NKJV “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

NLT ‘Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.’”

- Strong's: to be grateful, that is, (actually) to express gratitude
- To “be” grateful is a heart condition
- To “express” gratitude is thanksgiving - saying thank you is just one way...

1 Thessalonians 5:18

- Webster's: GRATEFUL, a. [from L. gratus. See Grace.] 1. Having a due sense of benefits; kindly disposed towards one from whom a favor has been received; willing to acknowledge and repay benefits; as a grateful heart.
 - Root word is Grace
 - “Having due sense of benefits; kindly disposed” = gratitude, heart condition
 - “Acknowledge” = Thanksgiving - the expression of gratitude
 - “Repay benefits” = a desire to reproduce what we have received = generosity

1 Thessalonians 5:18

- Command to be thankful “IN” every circumstance, even if we are not thankful “FOR” it!
- Verse does not say that every circumstance is God’s will for us - but rather in every circumstance its God’s will that we “be thankful.”
- What circumstances are you thankful?
- In what circumstances are you NOT thankful?

Gratitude is LIKE the soil

- The quality of soil determines the quality of crops
- In Kalamazoo the church is built on land that is all clay and rocks. When its wet it sticks like glue and when its dry its as hard as cement.
- Vandalia its like driving through the fertile crescent - fields and hills covered with all sorts of crops.
- Just like the natural condition of soil determines what comes out of that soil.
- What comes out of a person is determined by what's in their heart.

Gratitude is LIKE the soil

- **Matthew 12:34-35 NKJV** “... For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.”
- A heart filled with gratitude produces thanksgiving.
- How’s the soil of your heart? Is it fertile ground for gratitude or is it hardened?
- How can we change the condition of the soil of our heart?

Generosity

Generosity is the act that flows from gratitude. Thankfulness in return stimulates generosity.

- A person can GIVE for many reasons: pride, to attract attention; to manipulate others; fear; tradition; obligation; duty
- Generosity doesn't have a hidden motive. It gives out of gratitude.

Thanksgiving is:

Attitude of gratitude + Acts of generosity

- By God's design, our giving releases blessing and produces more thanksgiving.
- Thankfulness enables us to receive more thus enabling us to give more.
- Its called a "benevolent cycle."

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving can create (or transform) the atmosphere around you.

- William's teacher's heart was warmed by his simple "thank you."
- In a restaurant or store and the clerk/waiter is having a hard time. A simple, "thank you for helping me with this, etc." can change their spirit.
- Someone is upset or having a problem, just saying "thank you for sharing this" communicates value and can open them up to hear their heart.
- **Its the opposite of defensiveness**

Thanksgiving

- How's the atmosphere around you? How do people respond when you are in the room? When people are in a conversation with you, do you regularly have them "open up" and share, or do you sense people "shut down" around you?
- The atmosphere you are projecting is often a big part of why people act the way they do around you.

Colossians 3:17 NKJV

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

- Another command to be continually thankful
- This is a lifestyle that recognizes, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”

James 1:17 NKJV

Colossians 3:17 NKJV

- Thankfulness toward our heavenly Father is to have an influence upon “whatever you do in word or deed.”
- All of our action and words should communicate our gratitude toward our heavenly Father
- When people hear what you say, and see what you do -- are they aware of the Father?

The enemies of Gratitude

Enemy #1: Consumerism

- Recently saw an article titled, “How long does the ‘new gadget’ feeling last for you?”
- Constant bombardment to upgrade, to compare what we have with what’s new
- **World creates hunger - God gives contentment**
- I believe the ultimate antidote to consumerism is the belief that “in Christ” I am an heir to all things. I already own the world - therefore, I do not **NEED** anything.

The enemies of Gratitude

Enemy #2: Entitlement: all about “your rights”

- You cannot be thankful for something if you think it already belongs to you
- We must constantly look at the things of this world from a heavenly perspective.
- Are they gifts from our Father, or are they enticements from the father of lies?
- I believe the ultimate antidote to entitlement is the belief that I do not deserve anything, that as Paul says, Romans 7:18 NKJV “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells”

The enemies of Gratitude

Enemy #3: Poverty Spirit -

- Believing the lie that you do not have what you need.
- It is a demonic/fleshly accusation against the goodness of God as a Father.
- Almost always rooted in a wound from our past where we blamed God, other or ourselves for perceived lack rather than seeing Christ as our provider in that experience.

Hebrews 13:15-16 NKJV

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

- Our ability to be grateful and generous is **DEPENDANT** upon our relationship with Jesus.
- This is not about learning how to be nice. It's about living supernaturally dependant upon Jesus Christ to the degree that in **EVERY** circumstance you can “continually” be grateful and generous.

Hebrews 13:15-16 NKJV

- When your life is **CENTERED** in Jesus Christ - it becomes your nature to “continually offer the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of your lips, giving thanks to His name.”
- Demonstration:
 - Christian vs. Consumerism, Entitlement, & Poverty
- This can be a powerful witness to the world of the reign of Jesus - how living Christ like is the **REAL** answer to economic and social injustice. (Over consumerism, entitlement & poverty)

Hebrews 13:16

“But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

- “Do good and share” = acts of **GENEROSITY**
- Its a sacrifice to “share”
- If we do not “share” to the point that it is sacrificial, then it may be “tipping,” “gifting” or “social capitalism” but its not what this verse is talking about.
- “God is well pleased” because it’s the reproduction of His character **IN US!**

Hebrews 13:16

- Generosity is simply reproducing what we've received from God
- It is the expression of gratitude.
- The more generous you are – the more thankfulness you'll receive and the more gratitude YOU will possess.
- Giving increases gratitude in yourself and in others.
- **A benevolent cycle!!!**

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