

Gratitude

Colossians 3:1-17;

Romans 1:18-23

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Community Bible Church

Pastor Bob DuPar

Initial Insights

Setting the table for gratitude & thanksgiving...

Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy, who bring us joy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.

Marcel Proust

This is your hesed/agape community!!

Pride cannot easily grow in the soil of Thankfulness!

Michael Ramsey

Gratitude drives out the toxic emotions of resentment, anger, and envy!

Psychologist Robert Emmons - [Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier \(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007\), p. 66.](#)

Gratitude is the first step to building joy into our lives (some have called it the on-ramp to joy); and, it helps us experience a more consistent attachment with God and others.

When we keep practicing gratitude with God our brain remembers what our connection with Him was like, making it easier for us to find our way back to Him.

Quieting ourselves allows us to digest the joy we build, much like resting after a hard workout allows our muscles to rest and build new capacity.

Jim Wilder

People forgot that the human soul can enjoy a thing most when there is time to think about it and be thankful for it.

G.K. Chesterton

Gratitude is what separates privilege from entitlement!

Brene Brown

When it comes to life the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude.

G.K. Chesterton

None is more impoverished than the one who has no gratitude. Gratitude is a currency that we can mint ourselves, and spend without fear of bankruptcy.

Fred De Witt Van Amburgh

There is hardly another quality that is so suited to reveal the state of our inner spiritual and moral health as our capacity to be grateful!

Otto Friedrich Bollnow

He who receives a benefit with gratitude repays the first installment on his debt!

Seneca (1st century philosopher - 4 BC – 65 AD), *On Benefits*, 2.22.1

The worst moment for the atheist is when he is really thankful and has nobody to thank!

It's easy to be grateful for a bonus! What about being grateful for a salary? Jack Hyles

The man who forgets to be thankful has fallen asleep in life.

"New Letters of R. L. Stevenson," in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, vol. 104, eds. Henry Mills Alden, Thomas Bucklin Wells, and Lee Foster Hartman (New York: Harper, 1902), 126.

If you're grateful, you act out of sufficiency and **not** scarcity, and you're willing to share. If you are grateful, you enjoy the differences between people, and you're respectful to everybody, and that changes this power pyramid under which we live. David Steindl-Rast

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.

Melodie Beattie

Defining Gratitude

The word *gratitude* comes from the Latin *gratia*, meaning *favor*, and *gratus*, meaning *pleasing*. All derivatives (words that come from these roots) have to do with "*kindness, generousness, gifts, the beauty of giving and receiving, or getting something for nothing.*" We're all familiar with the feeling of gratitude and thankfulness when someone gives us an unexpected gift!

The cornerstone of gratitude is the idea of *undeserved merit*. The grateful person recognizes that he or she did nothing to deserve the gift or benefit; it was freely bestowed!

The Greek word (*charis*) is translated as both '*grace*' and '*gratitude*.'

Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth. Grace **evokes** gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder & lightning!

Karl Barth - *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation* (London: Clark, 2004), pp. 41–42.

Colossians 3:1-17

Since you've been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. ² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. ³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all His glory. ⁵ So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. ⁶ Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. ⁷ You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. ⁸ But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. ⁹ Don't lie to each other, for you've stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. ¹⁰ Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like Him. ¹¹ In this new life, it doesn't matter if you're a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and He lives in all of us. ¹² Since God chose you to be the holy people He loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³ Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message about Christ (the Word of Christ), in all its (His) richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom He gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

As one person said, "Jesus wants our gratitude to increase more and more until, like a holy flame, it burns within us and we burst into songs and deeds of thankfulness to God and neighbor!"

Dr. Beauty Maenzanise

¹⁷ And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Death & resurrection imagery, baptismal imagery – throughout!

"Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like Him." Vs. 10

Put on = *sink into*! This isn't an external activity, like putting on clothes. It's more like dipping a vintage car/truck into stripping solution to free it from old paint, rust...

Renew = restoration from the frame!

Thankfulness/Gratitude is the result of Christ's...

1. **Reign**

"And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful." vs. 15

Rule = umpire!

God is in control, and therefore in EVERYTHING I can give thanks – not because of the situation but because of the One who directs and rules over it. Kay Arthur

Set-up:

We normally focus on the extreme behavior that constitutes & signals the End Times. We grieve over the fact that people choose to worship things that are created rather than the Creator of all!

But I want you to look at something else. Look at what precipitates this destructive behavior, this downward spiral of dehumanization. Verse 21: a refusal to glorify God and thank Him!

Romans 1:18-23

But God shows (reveals – apocalupto/apocalypse) His anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress (hold back, hinder) the truth by their wickedness. ¹⁹ They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious (evident) to them.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. ...And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed." John 1:5; 3:19-20

²⁰ For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature. So, they have no excuse for not knowing God. ²¹ Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship/glorify Him (doxa) as God or even give Him thanks (eucharisto). And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like (C. S. Lewis

– creating God in our image). As a result, their minds became dark and confused. ²² Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. ²³ And instead of worshipping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

“And **exchanged the glory** of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures!” NASB

God is... *Known* (vss. 19 & 21), *evident* (vs. 19), *clearly seen* & *understood* (vs. 20)!

But, despite this, people *suppress the Truth* (vs. 18), *refuse to glorify God & thank Him* (vs. 21), *choose darkness & deception* (vs. 21), and *exchange the object of their worship* (vs. 23)!

“*Resentment* indicates we’re still trying to fill the emptiness with something we think we deserve. Gratitude is the sign that God has filled the hole; indeed, that God has become the *Whole in Whom we live, move, and have our being!*” Acts 17:28 NIV Christian Author & Professor Steve Harper

Friends, we become what we worship! It’s not just that people switch the object of their worship from God the Creator to things created, but they also switch the image of their transformation from God to lesser things! *This is the dehumanization of sin!*

Going from being created in the image of God, to being recreated in the image of fallen creation!!

And, of course people stop giving thanks to God – because they glorify themselves rather than God. They thank themselves rather than God!

Worship of self is the heart, the core, of ingratitude!

The heart of wickedness and godlessness is a refusal to glorify God. It’s the refusal to thank Him.

Mark Buchanan - *The Holy Wild (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2005), 105.*

Cosmic ingratitude is living in the illusion that you’re spiritually self-sufficient. It’s taking credit for something that was a gift. It’s the belief that you know best how to live, that you have the power and ability to keep your life on the right path and protect yourself from danger. That’s a delusion, and a dangerous one!

We didn't create ourselves, and we can't keep our lives going one second without God's upholding power. Yet, the Apostle Paul says that we hate that knowledge, and repress it. We hate the idea that we're utterly and completely dependent on God, because then we would be obligated to him and wouldn't be able to live as we wish.

Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe & Intimacy With God*, 2014.

Thankfulness/Gratitude Results From Christ's...

2. **Indwelling**

"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." vs. 16

John 14:23 – Jesus promised that He & God the Father would indwell (**make their home in**) those who love Him & keep His Word!

"Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude." A.A. Milne

The presence of God in our lives enhances our capacity for gratitude!

Thankfulness/Gratitude Results From Christ's...

3. **Glory/Glorification**

"And whatever you do or say, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." vs. 17

In the name of = for His glory!

Remembering is at the heart of what it means to **glorify God!**

Thanks & lovingkindness (hesed) – 18 x in OT!! Remembering the hesed of God leads to thankfulness!

In his book *Gratitude Works*, psychologist and Gratitude expert Robert Emmons draws an important connection between the practice of gratitude and memory. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a great example: "Do this in remembrance of me!"

Gratitude is about remembering. If there's a crisis of gratitude in contemporary life, as some have claimed, it's because we're collectively forgetful! We've lost a strong sense of gratitude about the freedoms we enjoy, our indebtedness to those who lost their lives in the fight for freedom, and an appreciation for all of our material advantages. Furthermore, we don't even realize that we have become forgetful because we can't ever remember being different.

Grateful people draw on positive memories of being the recipients of benevolence, a giftedness that is neither earned nor deserved. The scriptures and sacraments-of-faith traditions inculcate gratefulness by drawing believers into a remembered relationship with God and with members of their faith community.

Taken from [Robert A. Emmons, Gratitude Works!: A 21-Day Program for Creating Emotional Prosperity, Jossey-Bass, 2013, pp.ix-x.](#)

Closing Comments

"If the only prayer you said was thank you, that would be enough!"

Meister Eckhart – 14th century German

theologian

To be always in a thankful state of heart before God is not to be considered a high plane of spirituality but rather the normal attitude of one who truly believes that **"all things work together for good to them that love God, who are called according to his purpose."**

William Law – 18th century English Priest

Gratitude results from the conviction that God is always working all things together for good and for His glory!

Tracy Autler's life changed in a very unexpected way on Thanksgiving Day, 1993. Tracy was a single mother, living in an apartment in a rough neighborhood, she was doing her best to raise a three-year old while preparing for the birth of her second child, at that point, 8 months pregnant. Living off of welfare and food stamps, her Thanksgiving dinner would certainly not be the feast that many other Americans were preparing. Hers would be primarily comprised of canned food.

While staring at the canned food on her shelf, Tracy heard a knock at the door. "Who could that be?" she wondered. She wasn't expecting any company. No friends, no family would be joining her and her three-year old. As she opened the door she was greeted by a man from a local restaurant, holding a full Thanksgiving meal, given to her by an anonymous donor. Tracy was so surprised; she spent the rest of the day crying. But more than anything she wanted to know who had given such a thoughtful gift.

Years went by and Tracy still hadn't figured out who had provided the mysterious Thanksgiving meal. After a period of time, she was able to move out of the apartment, and she began work-

ing as a nurse at a nearby hospital. Seven years later, an elderly woman named Margo appeared at the hospital. She had lived in the same apartment building as Tracy all those years back, and it was clear that she didn't have long to live. As Tracy greeted her, Margo took her hands, and whispered, "Happy Thanksgiving!"

In that moment Tracy knew who had given her that Thanksgiving dinner! She would never have guessed that Margot—the unassuming neighbor with multiple sclerosis—was behind that generous meal!

That one gift had a massive impact on Tracy's life. Moved by the anonymous donor's generosity, Tracy had purposed in her heart to do generous things for other people. The very day she got off assistance, she took a basket of gifts down to the welfare office to be handed out to anyone in need. The welfare officer was stunned. Who does something like that? And that was just the beginning!

Brad Formsmma, I Like Giving: The Transforming Power of a Generous Life, The Crown Publishing Group.

Gratitude begins through acknowledging (and appreciating) what God has already done for you through Jesus!

Every good & perfect gift comes from Him! **James 1:17**

In this crazy, hectic, stress-filled life that seldom makes sense - He's the anonymous donor! Can you hear Him whisper, "Happy Thanksgiving?!"

Do you know Him? Does He live in you?