

3. Wonder leads to Gratitude

When we become complacent about who God is and what He has done we can lose our wonder and our gratitude. But when we allow ourselves to wonder in awe at God and His creation, we naturally give thanks and worship the Creator of all things. Reflect on how David expressed his wonder over God and His creation in Psalm 8 and allow his words to inspire wonder and gratitude in you.

Psalm 8:3-9 NIV - 3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? 5 You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. 6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: 7 all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, 8 the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. 9 LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Take time with your group to pray aloud prayers of thanksgiving and gratitude to the one who holds the stars in His hands and who calls you beloved.

WRAP-UP

Gratitude is our act of worship. It is God's will for us and His command to us. Our gratitude is not based on our circumstances but on the truth of who God is and what He has done for us.

MEMORY VERSE.

Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN) Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge – Take time this week to write out the things you are thankful for. Rather than just a list of words, make it a letter to God, thanking Him for all that you are grateful for.

“Gratitude in All Seasons”

Gratitude is Greater- #1

INTRODUCTION

In November we have come to expect that everyone will at least attempt to be grateful on Thanksgiving Day for something. Although some will even find that difficult. But as a follower of Jesus, we should speak the language of gratitude every day. Living with a heart of gratitude is a sign that we are focused on Jesus and His Kingdom rather than on ourselves and our own desires. And so, during this sermon series we will reject the grumbling and complaining that is so prominent around us, and instead seek contentment and gratitude for all we have been blessed with.

Ice Breaker

What is the last thing you remember hearing someone complain about? What was the last thing you heard someone give thanks for?

Key Passage

16 Always be joyful. 17 Never stop praying. 18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NLT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Thankful Always

In our key passage above (1 Th 5:16-18), Paul lists some of the characteristics of a Jesus follower. We are to be joyful, prayerful, and thankful. You might notice these are not dependent on the situation we find ourselves in. We are to always be joyful, never to stop praying, and be thankful in all circumstances.

What is the difference between being thankful for all circumstances and being thankful in all circumstances? According to verse 18 who does this apply to?

Those of us who belong to Jesus should have a different perspective from the world around us, because no matter what else happens, we are secure in Christ's love and care. But when we lose sight of Jesus and His Kingdom, we can return to grumbling and complaining just like those around us.

Numbers 11:4-6 NLT - 4 Then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the Israelites began to crave the good things of Egypt. And the people of Israel also began to complain. "Oh, for some meat!" they exclaimed. 5 "We remember the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic we wanted. 6 But now our appetites are gone. All we ever see is this manna!"

For years after they had been set free from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites traveled in the wilderness. Along the way a mixed crowd had added themselves to the Israelites. This passage refers to them as foreign rabble.

What did the rabble focus on and how did that affect the Israelites? In focusing on the food they craved, what did the Israelites fail to remember about their circumstances in Egypt? What was their complaint about the manna? What do we hear from the "rabble" around us today that might make us discontent and ungrateful?

God had faithfully provided the Israelites with bread from heaven that tasted like wafers made with honey. But the rabble had convinced the Israelites that they needed something else. They seem to have forgotten God's recent response to their complaining in Taberah.

Numbers 11:1 NLT - 1 Soon the people began to complain about their hardship, and the LORD heard everything they said. Then the LORD's anger blazed against them, and he sent a fire to rage among them, and he destroyed some of the people in the outskirts of the camp.

Ingratitude and complaint can arise when we focus on our cravings rather than God's blessings.

What things do we tend to crave that can take our focus off God and His Kingdom? What are some of God's blessings we take for granted?

When we crave more than God and what He has given us, we are saying that He isn't enough, and God's provision is inadequate. We are saying we know better than God what we need and deserve. Of course, this is foolish and untrue. Our gratitude is an act of worship. We must repent of our ingratitude before we can be truly grateful.

Romans 1:21 NLT - 21 Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.

What does Romans 1:21 tell us results when we refuse to worship and give thanks to God?

2. A Life of Gratitude

Paul not only taught that believers should be thankful, but he also lived his life in that way.

Philippians 4:12-13 NLT - 12 I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. 13 For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

Many of us have heard Phil 4:13 quoted when people are facing a difficult task. But Paul used this truth as his explanation of his unwavering contentment. Paul was equally content in good and bad situations because his strength came from Christ, not himself, and not his circumstances. Paul was content when he was well-fed and taken care of, and he was equally content when he was shipwrecked and hungry.

Why are people discontent when they have an abundance? Have you heard of sports or entertainment icons who end their lives poor and miserable? Have you known anyone who would be considered financially poor yet was able to worship and give God thanks?