

## **SLIDE 1. Thanksgiving**

Teaching: Say THANK YOU

Sunday October 8, 2023

"Say 'Thank you' "says a mother to her child. "Thank you," says the child.

Don't forget to say 'Thanks'" reminds a father. "Thanks!" says the child.

Why is it that so many parents of young children prompt their children to say -  
THANK YOU?

Is it because they want their kids to be likeable?

Is it because they know that our tendency – as children, youth, and adults – is towards selfishness and criticalness and thanklessness?

Is it because they know how it feels to be thanked – and not thanked?

Lots of social commentators bemoan how rude people are these days. They lament the bygone ways of being grateful – of - just - saying THANK YOU.

Even though – by and large - we have observed, and we have intuited the super-power-ness of saying THANK YOU.

In fact, in *Talk to the Hand: The Utter Bloody Rudeness of the World Today* – author Lynn Truss makes the case that the humble THANK YOU is one of the major weapons essential to stemming the tide of everyday rudeness.

"The fact is," suggests the THANK YOU DIVA, "'thank you' has something truly magic about it. Like 'sorry,' it's just words, but they act as shorthand for so much more.

**SLIDE 2 + 3. 'Thank you' shows our appreciation and conveys our gratitude. But more than that, it is a sign of respect to the person who has helped you (or given you something). It is an indication you do not take them for granted, and an acknowledgment that they matter."**

<https://www.thankyoudiva.com/saying-thank-you.html>

For every day... in the big and the small...

THANK YOU for gifts. THANK YOU for a special favor. THANK YOU for help in a time of need.

THANK YOU to the worker at the MacDonald's Drive Thru window who takes my order for a sausage and egg McMuffin, punches it into point of sales, kindly tells me to move forward to the first window for payment – who – all the while – is also taking payment from the person in front of me for their order – and who – on occasion – is also giving or taking direction from a co-worker.

They are like the air-traffic controllers of fast food!

THANK YOU to someone who holds the door open for you.

THANK YOU to that person who says, "Bless you," when you sneeze.

THANK YOU to your friend who passes you the salt.

Now – if giving thanks – this Thanksgiving weekend – and all throughout the year means - showing appreciation and gratitude and respect – to other someones, people, friends – who have given us something as a gift or done us a special kindness or helped us when we most needed help - then how much more does it make sense to THANK God for who He is and what He has done for us?!

#### **SLIDE 4. Why is giving thanks to God so important?**

**A. Because not giving thanks hurts us.**

**B. Because giving thanks helps us.**

**A. Not giving thanks hurts us.**

i. It hurts us physically. The bible says: *A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones* (Prov. 17:22).

A cheerful heart is a thankful heart. According to medical research – cheerful people resist disease much better than gloomy ones.

God knew this long before science supported it.

ii. It hurts us socially. When we are negative – it catches. When we are thankful – it too - catches. Nobody says, "I love being around negative people."

But we all benefit from being around people who are regularly thankful.

Maybe this is why the bible encourages us to speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19-20) and to only say things that are helpful for building others up according to their needs (Eph. 4:29).

Selfishness and criticalness and thanklessness drags us and others down. Being thankful lifts us and others up.

iii. It hurts us spiritually. Not giving thanks to God spirals us *away* from Him and *towards* deeper and deeper sin.

This is the spiritual digression Paul observed in Ro. 1 that leads to the wrath of God...

*For although they knew God* (speaking of those who knew *about* God), *they neither glorified him as God nor gave him **thanks**...* (Ro. 1:21a).

Instead – and as a consequence of not being thankful – of not showing appreciation, gratitude and respect to God – *their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened* (Ro. 1:21b).

Thanklessness can lead us to thinking too much of ourselves and too little of God. And if you follow that to its extreme – you factor God out of your life – which is lethal.

So, *God gave them over* to their sinful desires, to shameful lusts, and to a depraved mind (Ro. 1:24-32) – so that they might see the folly and ruin of their ways vs. a wise and fruitful life with Him.

And turn to Him!

### **B. Giving thanks helps us.**

By contrast (to not giving thanks) - **giving thanks often leads to an extended physical life, the building of positive friendships, and the healthy maintenance of our relationship with God.**

This said – giving thanks is not our default attitude setting. We *are* prone to be selfish, proud, and arrogant.

And our tendency to complain is deeply rooted in our nature.

Yet the bible says that we can, and we ought to give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:17) – because in all circumstances we can find something to be grateful for!

Giving thanks is a command of the Scriptures.

And so it must be a choice – something we can choose to do even when we aren't "feeling" particularly thankful.

But it takes discipline and practice – for it to become a spiritual habit – when we feel like it and when we don't.

So – here are some ideas to help us have more gratitude in our attitude towards God...

**SLIDE 5 + 6. 1. Memorize this verse.** *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows* (Jas. 1:17).

Material gifts – food, clothing, shelter (good gifts), and spiritual gifts – salvation, sanctification, and glorification (perfect gifts) – none are self-generated – not even the material gifts we might think are ours to brag about – even those are only possible because of the life and skills God has given us – even more so those gifts that only God could ever accomplish – saving us from sin, training us in holiness through His Spirit, and sealing us for that day when all we be made new – when we will live in a new earth and heaven.

From the Father of all light – the sun, moon, and stars – the moral light of angels and men – the light and grace of those who are in right relationship with him – and he of himself – the eternal light – and the Son who is the light of the world.

He does not change. He will not turn to darkness or evil. There is no shadow in Him.

And so – we can always trust that He will be at the root of all that is good and perfect in our world – and that He will always be looking to give these gifts to us.

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

This is the anchor verse for a thankful heart. Memorize it – if you haven't already :)

### **SLIDE 7. 2. Thank God when times are tough.**

Thank God for those good things in your life that are always true + find something to be thankful for within your circumstances.

It's possible.

Jonah gave thanks for the salvation of all - in the belly of a whale. And after he did – God commanded the great fish to spit him up on dry land.

Paul gave thanks in the middle of a 14-day-long storm. Imprisoned on a ship for Rome – bashed about by a hurricane – and without food for as many days – Paul took what bread they had - and gave thanks to God. The next day – all 276 aboard made it safely to shore.

Jesus gave thanks before there was enough. He was tired and weary. He needed time to himself. He had just learned that his cousin, John the Baptist, had been beheaded. Yet the crowds followed Him. So, he, with great compassion, taught them for hours and fed them at twilight. He took 5 loaves and 2 fish – and – looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves – which fed the 5,000 – until they were satisfied – with 12 baskets of leftovers!

Jonah gave thanks for God's salvation. Paul gave thanks for what he had in hand. Jesus gave thanks to Jehovah-Jireh - the God-Who-Provides – because God lives up to His names. Unchanging truths in the middle of tough times.

What are some unchanging truths in the middle of our tough times?

That God is for us not against us (Ro. 8:31). That he is and has been faithful to us (Lam. 3:22-23).

That we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus (Jn. 16:33). That we can overcome our difficulties because of our relationship with Jesus – who has overcome the world.

That the Spirit of God lives in us and will strengthen us in our inner being (Eph. 3:16) and will lead us to truth and wisdom when we seek it (Jn. 16:13; Jas. 1:5).

That God will sustain us through our tough times – even to getting us beyond them – and sometimes – ironically – and by faith - just after we give thanks!

Let us also try to find things to be thankful for during our difficulties – even apart from those truths that don't change.

Matthew Henry, the famous bible expositor, was once accosted by thieves and robbed of his wallet. He wrote these lines in his diary: "Let me be thankful, first, because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my wallet, they did not take my life; third, because, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."

There are always things to be thankful for – not at the expense of toxic positivity – but to keep ourselves grounded in the faith-based reality that God is our Provider.

Can I be honest?

Since I have come to SLC – we have lost 5 of 9 staff members, we have been constantly under financial pressure, people have left our church, and Pastor Bryan and I – as much as we empathize with you – we also carry the burden of leading a church with a limp.

And yet – God has given us a vision to be a people and a place who share the gifts God has given us in service of our neighbors and our community, we have reduced our expenses and God has brought us rental income, people have left – but others have come, we have a great staff, we have made connections with families in our community through our Athletes in Action Camp, our Pickleball Camp, and our Fun Fair – and we will continue to do so, we are making more and more spaces available for ministry and rent in our church – because – though we might be tentative about some of the changes we might make – we are not fearful!

And so – I thank God for these things – in the middle of tough times.

I also thank Him for my beautiful wife, my fantastic grown-up kids, my somewhat reliable transportation to and from work, my home, the clothes I get to wear, the Bluetooth speaker that plays the music I love, books, and almost anything covered in milk chocolate.

It's as Erma Bombeck once wrote...

"An estimated 1.5 million people are living today after bouts with breast cancer. Every time I forget to feel grateful to be among them, I hear the voice of an eight-year-old named Christina, who had cancer of the nervous system. When asked what she wanted for her birthday, she thought long and hard and finally said, 'I don't know. I have two sticker books and a Cabbage Patch doll. I have everything!'

The kid is right." — Erma Bombeck, quoted in [\*10,000 Sermon Illustrations\*](#)

What can you be thankful for in the midst of your troubles?

### **SLIDE 8. 3. Thank God when times aren't tough.**

This sort of seems obvious doesn't it – to thank God when things are going well. But we forget.

Our heads are down – into school or work or retirement – life is running smoothly – which is a time we don't tend to see as God's gift to us. We can tend to take God for granted!

But what a perfect time to show our Lord appreciation, gratitude, and respect!

23,000.

You and I take approximately 23,000 breaths every day, but when was the last time we thanked God for one of them?

The process of inhaling oxygen and exhaling carbon dioxide is a complicated respiratory task that requires physiological precision.

As one writer put it: "We tend to thank God for the things that take our breath away. And that's fine. But maybe we should thank him for every other breath too!"

<https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2013/november/3111813.html>

Maybe – I would wonder - this is how we could start our days – by acknowledging that we don't get up – our feet don't even hit the ground - unless God wills it – and that every breath we take thereafter is a life-giving gift.

Let's practice: Deep breath! THANK YOU, Lord.

And that is how we'll end...

### **SLIDE 9. 4. Say THANK YOU.**

Don't just learn about giving thanks. Don't just think about it.

Say THANK YOU out loud to God when you are *on your own*. It's good for you! Truthful external declarations can change your muddy and mixed internal dialogue. It keeps you awake. And it's practice for when you are called upon to pray out loud in public.

Say THANK YOU out loud to God when you are *with others*. It's good for them! It sets an example. It encourages. And sometimes – it is part of the process of someone placing their faith in Jesus Christ.

Such a story is told... A preacher had made several attempts to bring a university professor to faith in Christ, all without success. The professor continued to come to the church and then one Sunday he stepped out and came to the front of the church following the message and stated that he was coming to profess his faith in Christ as his Savior. After the service the preacher asked the man what in his message had prompted the man to finally take the step of faith.

The professor said, "Preacher, it was not your message, but a little boy who touched me. Last week as I was leaving the service I bumped into this boy. The boy looked up at me with a big, beaming smile on his face and said, 'Mister, ain't it good being a Christian!'

I nodded, but I knew I wasn't really a Christian. I've thought about that little lad all week. The joy on his face, the thankfulness on his lips - touched me. When I come to the end of the way I want to have that kind of peace and happiness." *J. Mike Minnix*

Say THANK YOU – out loud – or in an email – or in a text.

THANK YOU, Jesus.

Give credit where it's due.

It's not cheesy. It's not too charismatic.

It's just good practice.

So – let's end there – together.

**SLIDE 10 +. Congregational Thanksgiving Prayer.**

**Dear God, I hate to say it, but I have been guilty of grumbling and griping about all my problems and trials. I have failed to be thankful and to remember that You are at work in my life, even through all the troubles.**

**Please forgive me. I want to be a person who keeps my eyes on You and praises You, no matter what may come my way. So, thank you for all that is good in my life and thank you for all the challenges in my life that help me grow closer to you. I choose to believe that You are in control of all things.**

**Teach me to give thanks in all circumstances and to say so to you – out loud.**

**In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.**