"Time heals all wounds."

"Itis what it is."

"Everything happens for a reason." "There are plenty of fish in the sea."



How Can We Be Thankful After the Year We've Had?

Philippians 4:6-7: (NASB) ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.



Usually this time of year signals having a more festive outlook on things. Having the American holiday of Thanksgiving behind us and Christmas approaching signals cheerful, generous and pleasant interactions. Decorations, excitement and goodwill prevail - usually. Then there was the year 2020 which brought a pandemic to the world, the likes of which had not been seen in a hundred years. Good cheer is overrun by depression, happiness is crushed by anxiety and anticipation has turned to foreboding. We are all currently stuck in the mud of uncertainty and often spin our wheels in frustration, only to sink deeper. COVID-19 has brought our fears of what was unknown nine months ago into the light of what is known, and that feels even more terrifying. The answer to

this dilemma is in plain sight but not easily understood. It is gratitude. Seriously, gratitude properly understood and applied is life-changing! Stay with us and learn how.

Platitudes are easy. Gratitude is hard, as our circumstances and emotions will fight it.

Merriam-Webster:

Platitude: (noun)

1: the quality or state of being dull or insipid

2: a banal, trite, or stale remark

Platitudes are words that are empty things we say because we know we should say something, but they do not have substance. Emotionally, we gravitate towards platitudes because they are easy.

We will be referencing an article by Allison Hope from CNN.com at the beginning of each segment. This article is NOT a good advertisement for living a life of gratitude. We will then compare how gratitude SHOULD work in the life of a Christian.





You can serve up a portion of gratitude for your Thanksgiving this year, but don't expect me to join you. I am going to focus on eating my feelings with extra helpings of sweet potato pie that I don't have to share with anyone because no one else is coming to Thanksgiving. In a year when a once-in-acentury pandemic collided with social and political unrest, an unhinging economy and job market, and increasingly severe weather events, I vacillate between feeling something more akin to sheer terror. That's on the opposite end of the spectrum from gratitude. My cornucopia is impacted by supplychain shortages, global trade wars and an impending dark winter that is coming more quickly than I'd like.



There is no sense of gratitude, just a time to complain. My cornucopia is impacted by supply-chain shortages, global trade wars and an impending dark winter. We think her cornucopia is fine. Apparently, she is working on writing articles for a major news outlet. Has she gone hungry? Is she lacking shelter, money or security? A lot of us go through a lack of those things, and what do we do? More importantly, what do we do when we do NOT have a lack of those things, but we still do not have gratitude?

Our next speaker, Tanmeet Sethi, illustrates what true gratitude can actually do for us. Her family went through an enormously difficult experience.

The diagnosis, Two Words That Can Change Your Life, Tanmeet Sethi, TEDx

third child when my husband and I received news that transformed our lives forever. On that day our second son, almost three years old at the time, was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. DMD is a progressive neuromuscular disease that causes muscle weakness and wasting. It gives no muscle in the body mercy, affecting everything from the legs to the heart and the lungs. There's no cure. As a physician, I knew all too well what lay ahead. After the diagnosis, I was desperate for a way out of my anguish. I tried prayer. I tried reading all the self-help books you could think of. I tried gratitude for my many blessings, but none of it was working.

On a bright sunny September day eight years ago, I was pregnant with our

She approaches this difficulty with the attitude of finding the things that can help her cope, but we cannot blame her thoughts that "none of it was working." Her three-year-old child was suffering and is going to have a life of difficulty. How does this fit into gratitude? Stay with us as her story unfolds.

There was an article on Apple News by Bill Murphy Jr., titled: *People Who Can't Say They're Thankful for These 7 Things Will Have a Very Hard Time in 2021*. We will share these points throughout the podcast.

• Be grateful that you're alive! Can you imagine all of the highly unlikely things that had to happen in order for you even to have been born? So, be grateful that your parents met. Even though there are more than 7 billion people alive on the planet, that doesn't make this gift of life less unique. The gift of life is worth being very thankful for.



Choose gratitude! How? By choosing to serve and revere God. We will review 12 points of gratitude to help us focus on true, life-changing gratitude.

(Source: https://lisaappelo.com/the-power-of-gratitude-12-benefits-of-giving-god-thanks/)



1. Gratitude glorifies God

<u>1 Peter 2:9-10</u>: (NASB) ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of GOD; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light - that is gratitude!

The Christian calling is laser-focused on a transformation that glorifies God.

2. Gratitude helps us "see" God

Joshua 24:15-17: (NASB) ¹⁵If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. ¹⁶The people answered and said, Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; ¹⁷for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed.



The lesson: Whenever we forget the providence of God, we lose our grip on gratitude. The celebration of Passover was established to renew the gratitude of the Hebrew people each year. By being reminded of their nation's past, Israel was reminded of God's providence.

We should build on our "Ebenezer" experiences to remind us where we have been. That is what gratitude is. Ebenezer means "stone of help," a tangible reminder of the Lord's power and protection in our past experiences as described in 1 Samuel 7.



I carry with me a gratitude stone. It is a little smooth stone I keep in my pocket every day. A few weeks ago, I got dressed, went to my office and forgot my gratitude stone. I am never consciously aware of it, but for some reason I was really aware that I forgot it. It was very frustrating, and I had to be sure I stayed focused. We need to go back to things to help us remember to have gratitude be a sincere part of our lives. This little stone has walked with me for years in my left pants pocket because it reminds me of what is most important.



3. Cratitude puts us squarely in God's will

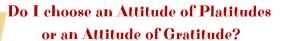
Hebrews 13:15-16: (NASB) ¹⁵Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. ¹⁶And do not neglect doing and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Pleasing God puts us in line for His continued providence.





Do I seek and have faith that His providence will continue?



Is my seeking to praise, honor and be thankful to God sincere or is it just on the surface?



The context of these next verses is a warning to Jerusalem:

<u>Isaiah 29:13-14:</u> (NASB) ¹³Then the Lord said, Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service (platitudes), But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, ¹⁴Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; And the wisdom of their wise men will perish, And the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed.

Repeating words by rote is not pleasing to God and is not gratitude. Gratitude is not as easy as just saying thank you to anyone and everyone, though that is a very good start!

We are seeing that God-centered gratitude keeps our priorities in order.

What else does it do for us?

One of the simple truths of life is that we need to see the big picture clearly before we can truly dedicate ourselves to the details. Having our view of life come through the eyes of God's providence enables us to have our gratitude become an actual *healing force* in our everyday experiences.

Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude. Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness. Thankfulness may consist merely of words. Gratitude is shown in acts. — Henri Frederic Amiel

Gratitude is a way of life. It is not just being thankful for our mom and dad, food that we have or house we live in. It is the way we *live* that shows gratefulness. Platitudes are shallow; gratitude is deep. We need to dig deeper and recognize gratitude, even in our struggles.

You Have Permission to Not Be Thankful This Thanksgiving, Allison Hope, CNN.com

• I have plenty to be grateful for, I know. I remain gainfully employed and am privileged enough to get to work from home. As of this writing, I still have my health, not having yet caught the virus (knock on everything) that has killed more than 1.3 million people around the world. While I know people who have died from COVID-19, including those my age in my extended networks, my immediate circle remains, for the most part, well. And yet, I am incapable of feeling the joy that has, for every Thanksgiving prior to 2020, accompanied me to the homes of friends and family. There will be no road trips, no extended family hugs, no old friends in town visiting and reminiscing over a tall cold one, no spontaneous moments featuring new characters. This year is all plot twists without the comic relief.



Ms. Hope says she is incapable of feeling the joy of previous Thanksgivings. She does not seem to understand true joy. She is talking about the excitement of friends and family, getting together with those we have not seen in a long time. Joy is a very different thing. There is joy in these activities, and we will delve deeper into joy in the next segment. It is a common human error to mistake joy for excitement, so that when the excitement dies down, we feel the joy has gone. It has not! Joy is deeper and stronger - connected to true, deep gratitude.

Let's look at the next part of the story from Tanmeet Sethi. She now has to decide what she is going to do with this tragic news of her son's illness and how she will cope.

(1))The challenge, *Two Words That Can Change Your Life, Tanmeet Sethi, TEDx*

• So, I picked up the phone to call one of my most trusted mentors who I knew would have some wisdom for me. Deborah was my most influential teacher in mind-body medicine; a brilliant integrative psychotherapist who taught me the foundational work I do with all my patients. And sure enough, she had an answer for me: To find



gratitude in this situation. And I'm not kidding, I was like, "Really? Are you serious? That's all you got? I tried that already," I told her. "I need something more powerful. Not gratitude for the good things in my life." She said, Gratitude for my son's illness. Now that made me angry. How can you ask a mother to be grateful that her child will suffer like this?

How could she get to the point of gratitude for her son's illness? The story profoundly develops as we see the challenge and depth of what gratitude requires of us.

Continuing with the article by Bill Murphy, Jr.:

 Be grateful for pain and longing. Good relationships are what makes us happiest and most fulfilled, and all good relationships depend on understanding. If you have never experienced pain and longing, you'd never be able to understand anyone else. But it is also about learning, growing and moving forward to fix the pain in our own lives.

4. Gratitude brings peace

Philippians 4:4-7: (NASB) ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.





Notice the steps that bring us to gratitude:

- Rejoice
- Live in a Christlike manner
- Minimize anxiousness
- Prayerfully and thankfully commune with God
- Once we put all these in order, we can experience peace

Do we take these steps?

Our victory is in the effort, not in the results. We need to work at being faithful. We will keep falling down, but as long as we keep getting up, we can find peace.

5. Gratitude draws us to God

James 4:6-8: (NASB) ⁶But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. ⁷Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

True gratitude towards God is not possible without a humble spirit. This humble gratitude brings submission to God and submission is the act of being drawn to Him.



6. Gratitude brings contentment

1 Timothy 6:6-9: (NASB) ⁶But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

a <u>gratitude-driven</u> characteristic that opens the door for true contentment.

a <u>sin-driven</u> characteristic that opens the door for <u>comparison</u> and <u>dissatisfaction</u>.

ЫWhich do I have?





Platitude.

My son Tim was visiting us a couple of weeks ago with his fiveyear-old daughter, Adrianna. He is in the Coast Guard and was deployed a few days ago. My nephew, Matthew, is about 14 or 15 years younger than Tim. He called me and said, "Uncle Rick, I want to get together with Tim because I want to thank him. When I was a kid Tim would spend time with me. He's like a

superhero to me, and I just want to tell him thank you." Matt is in his 20s and has gone through all kinds of troubles in his life. Tim and Adrianna got together with Matt. After Tim left, Matt called and said, "I got to tell Tim how much he meant to me, and how much of a hero he was to me in front of his five-year-old daughter." Matt's heart was so bent on being grateful for that experience. What a great lesson for us. If someone helps us, we should show them gratitude because it does wonders for them and us.



Is my personal peace, my standing with God and my personal contentment fueled by shallow feelings or deep convictions?

We all want to be at peace in our lives, but we generally do not base that desire on a strong foundation.

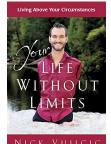
> So, gratitude can bring peace and contentment. What about its effect on our faith and our joy?

Without faith we cannot consider ourselves a Christian; therefore, any act of righteousness that can enhance our faith is of priceless value. Because gratitude is an authentic act of righteousness, it powerfully enhances our faith and also strengthens our joy!

Nick Vujicic is an Australian-American Christian evangelist and motivational speaker born with Tetra-Amelia Syndrome; a rare disorder characterized by the absence of all four limbs.

Often people ask how I manage to be happy despite having no arms and no legs. The guick answer is that I have a choice. I can be angry about not having limbs, or I can be thankful that I have a purpose. I chose gratitude. - Nick Vujicic

In one of Nick's YouTube videos, he adds, "if we lose love and hope, we give up. Find your purpose!" All of his videos are very inspiring.



Platitudes easily roll off our tongues and build upon one another. Gratitude is NOT self-perpetuating. Our human convictions seek to bar it from being planted in our hearts. Platitudes might be safe and feel protective, but gratitude is growth-oriented. With growth comes the breaking of new ground, which can be scary.



CQRewind (1)) You Have Permission Not to Be Thankful This Thanksgiving, Allison Hope, CNN.com

I have landed in a new place this year, one where it's perfectly acceptable to want people to take their gratitude and... Yes, I retain the right to feel fullon Scrooge this year, and I invite you to join me. After all, forcing yourself to feel happy or grateful - when you simply don't - isn't a helpful thing to do. Forced positive thinking, in fact, does not make you happier, according to experts. "The practice of gratitude has become popular in recent years, and it can be valuable, but not as a forced one," said Thandiwe Dee Watts-Jones, a clinical psychologist and faculty member at the Ackerman Institute - a family therapy institute in New York City.

Now she is quoting science to say, yes, be miserable; it's better for you than forcing gratitude. We can understand this thought about not forcing gratitude, but if we give up on gratitude and accept the misery, we are being defeated in our own existence. Let's go back to the story of the mother who is told to have gratitude for her son's disease.





So, I went to my son's bed every night after he fell asleep and I said thank you for this illness. But I wasn't feeling very thankful at all. So, I tried other things. Thank you for this life. Thank you for this path that we will walk together. I said those things night after countless night, through even more countless tears. And slowly something shifted. First, I felt a physical softening. I wasn't saying it through gritted teeth. Then I noticed I wasn't as resistant to being there. I started to stroke his hair as I said it. I started to lay there longer. I even started to look forward to it. And maybe just the act of trying to be grateful was working its magic on me because my resistance to this life was softening.

She became open to what was inevitably in front of her. Acceptance started to take root. We can close ourselves off to what is in front of us or be open. We want to be thankful we even have a journey in life. This creates meaning.

A few more points from Bill Murphy, Jr.:

- Be grateful for your needs. First, be grateful for your needs that are being met. The trickier part is to be grateful for unmet needs.
- Be grateful for forgiveness. We all mess up. We all have to ask for forgiveness sometimes. We all have reason to be thankful when it's given. Here's a twist - how about exploring gratitude for your own ability to forgive?
- Be grateful for your failures. They are also learning opportunities not just a chance to learn from your mistakes, or the times you fall short but a chance to learn how to fail.

There is something elegant about learning how to fail. Failure is inevitable and is okay if we seek forgiveness and try again. Deciding to live with gratitude means we will accept it as a new and higher way to live, no matter what life may bring. We will be open to the pathway that is inevitably in front of us.



7. Gratitude deepens faith

<u>Lamentations 3:22-23</u>: (NASB) ²²The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. ²³They are new every morning; Great is your faithfulness.

God's faithfulness knows no bounds; therefore, we show Him our gratitude:

<u>Psalms 118:21-24</u>: (NASB) ²¹I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me, and You have become my salvation. ²²The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone. ²³This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it.



Thanking God helps us to be stronger in our faith that He is the source of everything in our lives. The more we express our heartfelt gratitude to God, the more we will see His boundless care for us.



In August 2020, a tornado came through our home town that ripped part of the roof off the office building where I work. My office space is on the top floor on the side where the roof was missing. I had left the office before the severe

weather started and got a call to come back. It was raining inside my office! My electronics were swimming in water. Everything was wet. But I've been working really hard at trying to see God's providence in my experiences. I instinctively looked up and said out loud, "I am still the most blessed person I know." I really believed at that moment that whatever God had in store, I was good with. Of



course, my next thoughts were, how am I supposed to run my business? What am I supposed to do? There was a little bit of fear, but it was seeded in gratitude first. To this day, several months later, it is so much easier to deal with being misplaced. I can see God's providence all the way through. Whatever happens in our lives, just look up and be blessed! Then cope with what you have to do.

8. Gratitude leads to joy

Against all odds, rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, the people met to worship God:

<u>Nehemiah 8:9-10</u>: (NASB) ⁹Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep. For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. ¹⁰Then he said to them, Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.



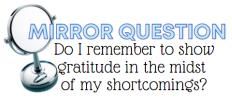
The Jewish people were building the wall with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other.

Nehemiah had stationed each wall



builder in front of his own home, knowing the wall would get built correctly if each one was defending his own possessions. The people were weeping because they realized how far they had fallen from God. Ezra and Nehemiah told them *the joy of the Lord* was their strength.

Even when we are confronted with our shortcomings, the joy of the Lord and His mercy and compassion are an *overriding* compensation.



Joy is not an emotion; it is a way of living. Joy is not dependent on what happens on the outside because it has a firm footing on the inside. The joy of serving God through trial and difficulty is impervious to outside struggles.

9. Gratitude defies Satan's lies

Psalms 121:1-4: (NASB) ¹I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come? ²My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. ³He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep.

When we latch onto our faith in God, we are thankful and grateful for all things and become impervious to Satan. How do we fight Satan? We put on the armor of God and let God and Jesus do the fighting for us. We have to be armed with spirituality to resist the devil. We do not do the actual fighting. We resist by being spiritually armed and by working with the co-laborers around us. Satan is trying to get us to doubt God's providence in our lives and His direction for us. Are we going to fall for it?

We can test to see if we are living a life of gratitude to God by where we look for help. Is looking to God
my instinctive reaction
when in need?

We need to develop the "spiritual instinct" that looks UP to find our help.

Do I choose an Attitude of Platitudes
or an Attitude of Gratitude?

Are my faith and joy secure as a result of my gratitude-based acceptance of God's providence?

If this security is in place, I am far more prepared to fend off the Adversary's attacks!



We have an instinctive human reaction to look around instead of up. We look to find an excuse or dive into a platitude rather than to develop the spiritual instinct to look *up* to find our help - that is what Psalm 121 is telling us.

We need to give ourselves a security check. What things are we truly using to protect our lives? Do we turn to God, or do we rely on our earthly abilities? We cannot rely on earthly things that surround us or our own abilities.

The deeper we go into our understanding of gratitude, the more powerful and life-changing it becomes!

With all that gratitude does for us spiritually, can it help us with some basic coping skills as well?

God-centered gratitude in some ways is limitless because God, His love and plan are limitless. While this is an astounding realization, it is not the end of the gratitude story. Gratitude is a powerful counterbalance to our natural tendencies towards things like envy and anxiety if we just dig in and apply what we are learning.

We want to rely on what can help us cope in a much greater, more powerful, more spiritual, more fulfilling way...gratitude!

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. - John F. Kennedy

Platitudes build strong, self-protective walls around our egos.



Gratitude is NOT a wall. It is an inviting pathway that always needs tending and refreshing.

Our human nature finds security in walls and repels the *vulnerability* of having an inviting attitude of gratitude. An attitude of gratitude invites disrespect, teasing, being misunderstood and seen as impractical.

But these are all Satan's lies. An attitude of gratitude actually says we believe in God's providence and want His providence as the overriding factor in every part of what we say, do and think. Do we really want to build walls with platitudes? Or do we want to move forward openly with gratitude?

You Have Permission Not to Be Thankful This Thanksgiving, Allison Hope, CNN.com

• We've all heard from any number of self-help research and books and podcasts and gurus that gratitude is a necessary embodiment to help us live fulfilling lives. But the truth is, sometimes gratitude just isn't possible. Still, we might try in small ways to attach to some hope before diving back into that apple pie. "As we approach the holidays dominated by losses, uncertainty and human depravity, we can still be open, in a gentle way, to noticing what is good in our lives, what or who is holding us, a child's smile, a poem, someone's love, perhaps spirit," Watts-Jones said. "We can allow appreciation for whatever beauty we may still see, even in the face of suffering, and if not, accept that at this moment, it is enough to be where you are." After our brief interlude with gratitude, feel free to snuggle back up to your inner bah humbug...



Sadly, Ms. Hope got close - she started talking about things for which we can truly be thankful. Then, she concluded by saying this need only be a *brief interlude* before going back to being miserable. We cannot agree because gratitude changes how we view the difficulty, it does not take it away. It does not take the trial and make it smaller, but it helps us navigate through the difficulty with more surety. It clears a path for us to follow when we can no longer see the way forward. That is what this is really about.

Tanmeet Sethi's powerful lesson of gratitude and its result is the contrast:

A life of meaning, Two Words That Can Change Your Life, Tanmeet Sethi, TEDx

• Slowly but surely, this nightmare situation started to feel like a life of meaning - a challenging life, but one full of meaning. Gratitude had created a buffer, a safe space in which I could take a breath with my pain instead of fighting against it. So, even in the midst of my emotional turmoil, small things - and even joy - had room to grow.



I could take a breath with my pain, instead of fighting against it. Do we see the profound change, even though the trial is no less? The pathway is sure because she now accepts that these circumstances are the things she has to deal with. There are a lot of people who have issues that will never go away. Many deal with problems like anxiety, depression, living in a disadvantaged area or being without food and shelter. If we can accept and embrace the path we are on, we will be able to take the next step. We can be grateful that God's providence is with us. What a practical, amazing experience she shared with us. She even brought joy into her life. That is beautiful.

Our last two comments from Bill Murphy, Jr.:

- Be grateful for your people. Not only your family, friends and coworkers, but also be grateful for your rivals and enemies. We get knowledge from even those relationships.
- <u>Be grateful for hope and faith</u>. They're prerequisites to optimism. Optimistic people are the ones who achieve the greatest success and happiness in life.



Gratitude plays a part in all of this. True gratitude is never forced. When we have difficult experiences or circumstances it is our challenge to find gratitude - not force it. Even if we do not "feel" thankful we can still "find" gratitude. How? By acknowledging that God is in the center of our lives and wants to help us with whatever we are facing. Then we can leave behind our perception-born fiction that we can handle this alone.

Take action by submitting to the daily discipline needed to keep gratitude fresh!



io. Gratitude guards against envy

1 Corinthians 12:14-20,25,26: (NASB) ¹⁴For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵If the foot says, because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body, it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear says, Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body, it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹If they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰But now there are many members, but one body. ²⁵so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

This is like the Three Musketeers story, "All for one and one for all!" That is what the apostle is describing here. We should be grateful for whatever part we are in the body - whatever job we have. Rejoice in that! It is easy to look around and see what we do not have. Gratitude tells us to see how what we do have is part of something much bigger!



We may not always get the big role, but what are RROR QUESTION we doing with what we are given? If we take it and rejoice in it, gratitude makes that small role more powerful. Gratitude guards against envy of other's roles in the body. It is a life-changer.

11. Gratitude helps us live in the present

Matthew 6:27-33: (NASB) 27 And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! ³¹Do not worry then, saying, What will we eat?' or What will we drink? or What will we wear for clothing? 32For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

If we live in the present and do not worry about the things we cannot control, we will accept and rejoice in what we have in front of us!



I really want to enter into every detail of life with those around me, so I made a commitment to live in the present. When my wife is trying to communicate with me, I shut off the distractions (television, music, etc.) and ask what she needs. I strive to focus and be in the present with her. Be vital in the experience. Be the blesser or the helper when possible because gratitude will result

from being in that moment. There is nothing in that moment if we are not present or have a lack of interest in being part of people's lives.

Let yesterday be. Let tomorrow come when the sun rises.



12. Gratitude is a testimony

We read the first part of this text earlier, but now we will read it to see how it leads to a testimony which is really the culmination of all of our points:

<u>1 Peter 2:9-12</u>: (NASB) ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Here is this incredible special calling for a true Christian that includes an incredible privilege of becoming a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. This promise is beyond anything we could imagine and is a cause for gratitude.

But now we have the testimony part:

¹¹Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. ¹²Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

It does not matter how our attitude of gratitude is received by others in this world today. The apostle is telling us if we strive with the greatest part of us to *keep our behavior excellent among the Gentiles*, we will show the goodness of God's plan. If we live with gratitude, this will happen! Our goal as Christians is to be a living testimony. Gratitude is the most easily understood part of our Christian testimony. People get it when someone has a lot of gratitude - they are able to see gratitude more clearly than they can see faith. What a great witness we can be.

Living with life-changing gratitude towards God is now and will be a powerful testimony to *all* around us!

What will my present life testimony say to others in the kingdom?

We are living in this world now and we are developing our testimony. What does it look like? Even if not fully appreciated, if we are truly convicted by God's providence, His will and His plan, and if we have gratitude for those around us despite our circumstances - we CAN make an impression. We may not find out until years later that we have had this effect.

Do I choose an Attitude of Platitudes or an Attitude of Gratitude?

Do my daily expressions of gratitude have
life-changing strength or are they just a veneer?
Where there is envy and anxiety, there is room
for deeper gratitude. Seeking this deeper
God-based gratitude is a testimony to God's love!



Gratitude is so important! We want to focus on it because it can change everything in our lives and in the lives around us. Are we willing to change everything by getting rid of the platitudes? To do this we need to be honest, humble and sincere in looking to God's grace and latching onto it. This will enable us to live that deepest gratitude with passion, thereby being a witness to Jesus Christ. There is no better way to live.

To live our best lives for now and for the future, we have to make sure we have gratitude every day, no matter what.

So, how can we be thankful after the year we've had? For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!



Join us next week for our podcast on December 7, 2020 Ep. 1155: Is it Faith or Works that Gets Us to Heaven? (Part I)

Bonus Material and Study Questions

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us. — Albert Schweitzer

Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world. — John Milton

Gratitude is the most exquisite form of courtesy. — Jacques Maritain

Here are several gratitude texts:

<u>Psalms 69:29-31</u>: (NASB) ²⁹But I am afflicted and in pain; May Your salvation, O God, set me securely on high. ³⁰I will praise the name of God with song and magnify Him with thanksgiving. ³¹And it will please the LORD better than an ox or a young bull with horns and hoofs.

<u>Psalms 66:8-10</u>: (NASB) ⁸Bless our God, O peoples, and sound His praise abroad, ⁹Who keeps us in life and does not allow our feet to slip. ¹⁰For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined.

<u>Psalms 55:22</u>: (NASB) Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

<u>1 Chronicles 16:31-36</u>: (NASB) ³¹Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; and let them say among the nations, The LORD reigns. ³²Let the sea roar, and all it contains; Let the field exult, and all that is in it. ³³Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD;



For He is coming to judge the earth. ³⁴O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting. ³⁵Then say, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us and deliver us from the nations, to give thanks to Your holy name, and glory in Your praise. ³⁶Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting even to everlasting. Then all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD.

Colossians 3:15-17: (NASB) ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶Let 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. ¹⁷Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

<u>2 Corinthians 9:10-15</u>: (NASB) ¹⁰Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; ¹¹you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. ¹²For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. ¹³Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, ¹⁴while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

<u>1 Thessalonians 5:15-24</u>: (NASB) ¹⁵See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. ¹⁶Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit; ²⁰do not despise prophetic utterances. ²¹But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil. ²³Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

<u>Psalms 28:6-9</u>: (NASB) ⁶Blessed be the LORD, because He has heard the voice of my supplication. ⁷The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart exults, And with my song I shall thank Him. ⁸The LORD is their strength; and He is a saving defense to His anointed. ⁹Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; be their shepherd also, and carry them forever.

<u>Psalms 50:14-15</u>: (NASB) ¹⁴Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High; ¹⁵call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.

<u>Psalms 107:4-9</u>: (NASB) ⁴They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region; they did not find a way to an inhabited city. ⁵They were hungry and thirsty; their soul fainted within them. ⁶Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He delivered them out of their distresses. ⁷He led them also by a straight way, to go to an inhabited city. ⁸Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! ⁹For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.





Ep. 1154: How Can We Be Thankful After the Year We've Had?

https://christianquestions.com/character/inspiration/1154-gratitude/

ee: CQRewind

SHOW NOTES

- 1. What is a platitude? Why do we tend to gravitate towards them instead of true gratitude?
- 2. How does true gratitude help us remember our priorities? (See Joshua 24:15-17, Isaiah 29:13-14, Hebrews 13:15-16, 1 Peter 2:9-10)
- 3. How can gratitude help us find peace and contentment in our lives? (See Philippians 4:4-7, 1 Timothy 6:6-9, James 4:6-8)
- 4. What is gratitude's effect on our faith and joy? (See Nehemiah 8:9-10, Psalms 118:21-24, Lamentations 3:22-23)
- 5. How can gratitude be used to combat the lies of Satan? (See Psalms 121:1-4)
- 6. In what way can gratitude help guard us against envy and live in the present? (See Matthew 6:27-33, 1 Corinthians 12:14-20,25,26)
- 7. How can gratitude help our lives become a testimony for God? (See 1 Peter 2:9-12)
- 8. What are you grateful for during this troubling year? What can you do to grow your gratitude for the Lord?
- 9. Do you look to Lord first whenever you are in need? Do you look back and embrace His deliverances? How readily do you express true gratitude to Him?
- 10. Do you choose an attitude of platitudes or one of gratitude? What are some questions you can ask yourself to help develop an attitude of gratitude?

