

# THANKFULNESS

## SCRITURE:

**(JAMES:1:17) Every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (NKJ)**

**(1THESSALONIANS 5:18) In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (NKJ)**

At times, we may find ourselves in wintry spiritual seasons, when a frost settles on our hearts and our sense of gratitude freezes over. During these times, we learned that gratefulness is a habit to be cultivated, a labor of the soul that seeks God. As with the other virtues, we can't employ a mechanical technique to make us thankful. But we can learn to direct our attention to those things that draw us to God in appreciation for who He is and what He has done.

In that regard, here are some lessons on being thankful that we can discovered along the way:

### **1. Give thanks as a holy discipline independent of feelings.**

True gratitude involves the heart as well as the lips. But sometimes when our hearts are cold our words can be sparks that kindle our gratitude. That's why the Bible repeatedly commands us to thank Him (Ps. 136, Eph. 5:19-20, Col. 3:17).

### **2. Give thanks for the small and ordinary things.**

With blessings, as with relationships, familiarity often breeds contempt. We should keep in mind how the world would have seemed to that grateful leper Jesus healed. Ever after that miracle, he must have given thanks for all 20 fingers and toes, for the power to run and leap again, for the smiles of children who once would have hid in horror. ( Mark 1:40-45)

### **3. Look for the hidden blessings.**

Paul told the Colossians to be "watchful and thankful" (Col. 4:2). Sometimes we must keep ourselves alert to the graces God gives subtly or indirectly.

Sometimes we grumble that the gifts we have are different from the gifts we would have chosen for ourselves. For example, we hear people complain about their physical appearance or other natural endowments, wishing they were prettier or stronger or smarter. Sometimes we fail to realize that not every gift we seek would be to our benefit.

#### **4. Thank God especially in the midst of adversity.**

God doesn't ask us to be thankful for the sorrows that come our way, but He does want us to demonstrate trust in His care by thanking Him in spite of them. The Apostle Paul said, "Give thanks in all circumstances," not for all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:18).

#### **5. Turn your attention from your problems to God's priorities in your life.**

We may have to take a step back to see the big picture if we want to be grateful for what God is accomplishing in us.

Jesus gave the Father thanks for His last meal just hours before the horrible death He knew was waiting (Matt. 26:26). Jesus was grateful because He saw the bigger picture of God's plan – that "the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God" (Jn. 13:3).

#### **6. Give your attention and care to those whose lives make your blessings stand out by comparison.**

Have you been grumbling that you can't afford a new couch for the living room? Go serve in a soup kitchen for the homeless. Have you found it hard to thank God for your boss? Talk a few minutes with the folks in the unemployment line. Do you complain about minor aches and pains? Pray for someone with a terminal illness. Your gratitude to God is sure to grow.

#### **7. Set aside time daily to express thanks to God.**

In ancient Israel, a daily habit of thanksgiving was so important to the life of the nation that the Levites were officially appointed to stand in the temple every morning and evening to thank God (1 Chron. 23:30). In a more private context and a later generation, we find Daniel kneeling to thank God three times a day (Dan. 6:10).

### **8. Keep a record of God's faithfulness to you.**

"Count your blessings," as the old song says. Try listing them in a regular journal that you review periodically. One family I know keeps a "Thank You Book," complete with pictures, dedicated exclusively to recording answers to prayer and other blessings from the Lord. (James 1:17 ,Psalm 118:1,5-9 )

### **9. Show gratitude toward others as well as God.**

Make it a point to tell family and friends how grateful you are for their kindness. Stock up on thank you notes and use them generously, even for small favors. The more you appreciate people, the more you'll appreciate the One who put them in your life.

### **10. Give generously to those in need.**

Giving can be a concrete expression of gratitude to God and it leads others to thank Him as well. Paul told the Corinthians that such generosity "is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God" (2 Cor. 9:12).

If we cultivate the discipline of thankfulness, we can overcome the temptation to turn our backs on the Lord in self-absorption. Instead, we'll be sure to run toward the Lord, fall at His feet, and whisper often the words He delights to hear: *Thank you.*