30-Day Gratitude Challenge

Revive Our Hearts

We're so glad you've decided to accept the 30-Day Growing in Gratitude Challenge! Your decision means that you truly want to learn to recognize and express appreciation for all you have in life.

Each day you will be challenged to grow in gratitude through our devotional challenges. We encourage you to keep track of what God does in your heart over this next month. Cultivating a heart of gratitude is the beginning of your journey to joy!

Your Challenge: For thirty days, ask God to show you the many ways He has blessed you. Keep track of what He shows you and express gratitude to Him and others daily for specific praises.

Day One: What's Your Gratitude Quotient?

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."—Colossians 3:17

I've often said that gratitude is learning to recognize and express appreciation for the benefits we have received from God and from others.

This means constantly being on the lookout for blessings, making each day a treasure hunt. It means being intentional about thanking God and others for the blessings that come our way.

To discover your Gratitude Quotient, see which of these statements is most true for you:

- I look at the world through grateful eyes and consistently express my gratitude to God and others.
- I know I've been greatly blessed, but I don't often stop to actually express my gratitude to God and others.
- To be honest, I had not thought a lot about gratitude until starting this challenge. I've got a long way to go to develop a lifestyle of gratitude.

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- I'm a whiner! I tend to focus on my problems, and I frequently express them to others.

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:12–17

Action Step: Confess ingratitude.

Ask the Lord to cultivate in you a more grateful heart over these next thirty days. If you have realized that your Gratitude Quotient is not what it should be, confess your ungrateful spirit to the Lord. Ask Him to forgive you and to transform you into a truly thankful person.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Heavenly Father, I confess my Gratitude Quotient is not what it should be. Please forgive me for my hardened heart and blinded eyes. In the next thirty days, cultivate in me a grateful heart that eagerly praises You for every blessing. I choose to thank You now for all You will do!

Day Two: the Source of Our Joy

"May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." —Colossians 1:11–12

The central theme of Colossians is Christ. He is exalted and worshiped for His divine nature; for being the Creator and Sustainer of all things; for His preeminence over all creation and over all cosmic rulers and powers; for His redemptive, reconciling work on the cross; for defeating the powers of darkness; for being the Head of the Church which is His Body; for being the fulfillment and substance of Old Testament types and figures; for being the believer's life and hope of glory; and so much more!

As those who have "died" with Christ, "been buried with him in baptism," and "raised with him through faith," our joy and hope do not emanate from any earthly source or from our religious practices, but from Him. Within the four chapters of this short epistle, Paul calls us to be sexually pure, compassionate, kind, humble, meek, patient, forgiving, loving, peaceful, obedient, just, wise, gracious, and thankful!

For all that Jesus is, He calls us to a life of faithful obedience and heartfelt gratitude.

Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:3, 11–12; 2:7; 3:15–17; 4:2

Action Step: Meditate on Jesus

Read through the following passages from Colossians, meditating on them, praying them back to God, and using them as a basis for giving thanks to Him:

• 1:12–14

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• 1:15–22

• 2:9–15

• 3:1–11

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, You are the source of light and life and all joy—show me who You are and open my eyes to see You rightly. Overwhelm my heart with Your power, goodness, love, and glory, that my heart would default to praising You in every moment. Thank You!

Day Three: Repeat the Thanksgiving Chorus

"Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!"—Psalm 107:1

The theme of Psalm 107 is giving audible thanks to God for His goodness (vv. 1–2). The verses that follow give four "personal testimonies"—illustrations of those who have been redeemed by the Lord and have reason to give Him thanks. Each testimony includes a similar progression: distress over the straits people found themselves in; a desperate cry to the Lord for help; and Divine deliverance. The passage is punctuated by a response—a "thanksgiving chorus" that is repeated at the end of each testimony.

How does this progressive pattern shown up in your life? Have you developed your own thanksgiving chorus in response to all the ways God has seen your distresses, heard your desperate cries, and provided Divine deliverance?

Scripture Reading: Psalm 107:1–32

Action Step: Craft your testimonies of thanks.

Today, write out your personal testimony of God's saving grace, following the progression found in Psalm 107:

- What was your life like before He redeemed you?
- How did God bring you to the end of yourself, to the place where you cried out to Him for mercy?
- What has changed since He delivered you from your slavery to sin?

If you have time, write another brief testimony of a time after your initial salvation, when you were in distress, you cried out to the Lord, and He came to your rescue.

Then share your story (His story) with someone else today. Tell them how grateful you are to the Lord for saving you—eternally, as well as in your daily distresses.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

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Father God, I am so very grateful that You see my distresses, hear my desperate cries, and willingly provide Divine deliverance. Thank You for Your goodness, for Your steadfast love that endures, for me, forever.

Day Four: Your Spiritual Benefits Package

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."—Psalm 103:2

When was the last time you considered the benefits package you have received from the Lord? These would be the many little things in life, the gifts that make each day a true blessing.

As we recognize and identify the specific blessings we have received from God and from others, we discover countless reasons for expressing gratitude. The psalmist took time to bless the Lord for specific benefits—he didn't want to forget even one of them! As you open your heart to Him in prayer today, ask God to reveal to you just how great your "benefits package" really is.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 103:1–5

Action Step: Develop a benefits inventory.

Make a list for each of these headings: "Gifts from God" and "Gifts from Others." Write down everything that comes to mind.

Take some time to walk through your list line by line, thanking God for each of these benefits. Then, read Psalm 103 aloud. Try memorizing and meditating on at least the first five verses over the next week or so.

Add to these lists for the rest of the challenge to see how large your spiritual benefits package truly is!

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Heavenly Father, I thank You for the many gifts you have bestowed upon me. You have been a generous and loving Father, giving me more than I deserve or even know. For all that You've given, I now turn back to praise You and bless Your holy name. Thank You!

Day Five: Grateful for the Little Things

"Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."—Ephesians 5:20

Is your heart becoming more in tune to the many reasons you have to be grateful? We are surrounded by so many blessings, it is easy to overlook the multitude of little things God gives every day.

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I remember hearing a friend tell how, while brushing his teeth and meditating on Ephesians 5:20, he was struck by the word “everything.” He was reminded of the importance of thanking God for even those “little things” that we often overlook. It made him pause and be thankful for, well … his toothbrush. And his toothpaste. And, while he was at it, he thanked God for his teeth for probably the first time in his life.

This may require another separate list from the ones you made yesterday, but it’s definitely a category worth considering. Since everything is a gift from God (James 1:17), “everything” is something to be thankful for. My friend told me he also asked himself, If tomorrow’s supply depended on today’s thanksgiving, how much would I have tomorrow?

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5:15–21

Action Step: Be thankful for the little things.

What “little things” can you add to the gratitude lists you’ve started? Throughout your day today, observe how many little things you have been blessed with and be sure to thank God specifically for them.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Father God, You have blessed me with an abundance of little things. Open my eyes to what You’ve given me so that I might specifically thank You. Grow a grateful heart in me so that in all things—in everything—I might find how You are blessing me. Thank You!

Day Six: Your Top Ten Blessings

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"—Romans 11:33

Robertson McQuilkin, former president of Columbia International University, tells of a time when, following his wife’s diagnosis with Alzheimer’s and the death of his eldest son, he retreated alone to a mountain hideaway. He wanted time to reorient his heart and recapture a love for God that had slowly evaporated in the heat of personal, tragic loss.

After a day devoted to prayer and fasting, he began writing God a love letter, enumerating the gifts he had received from the Lord’s hand. He identified ten particular blessings from God that just absolutely exceeded his imagination, things he could hardly find words to express how invaluable they were, how impossible life would be without them.

Even in the worst of circumstances, God’s hand is generous in blessing.

Scripture Reading: Romans 11:33–36

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Action Step: Name your top ten blessings.

Follow Robertson's lead and identify your top ten blessings. For ideas, flip back through the lists you've been making and ask God to show you how His blessings sustain you. List the spiritual blessings that are so big, you could never generate enough gratitude to express what they mean to you and what they tell you about your Savior.

The next time your mind is troubled by sad or worrisome thoughts, pull out your top ten and consciously transfer your focus from whatever is weighing you down to the things on your list and begin to give thanks.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, because of You, I have every spiritual blessing I need. Thank You for rescuing me from the domain of darkness, transferring me into Your Kingdom, redeeming me, and forgiving me. Even in the worst of times, what You have done for me is beyond comprehension! Thank You.

Day Seven: Three Lessons in Gratitude

"Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice."—Luke 17:15

Today's reading from Luke's Gospel tells us that Jesus healed ten men of leprosy. There is much we can learn from one man who returned to give thanks to the Lord for His blessing.

First, he came loudly. He couldn't contain his gratitude. This occasion called for an unrestrained, extreme, public display of thanks.

Second, he came close. The ten lepers "stood at a distance" (v. 12) from Jesus—lepers were ceremonially defiled and weren't allowed to come close to those who were "clean." The healed leper, however, "fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks" (v. 16); he was the only one of the ten who ever got close to Jesus. Gratitude places us in close proximity to Christ, where we experience the fullness of His redeeming power and enjoy the blessing of His presence.

Third, he came from a distance. "He was a Samaritan" (v. 16). This man had never known the true God until Jesus came into his world and transformed his life. After being separated from Jesus by a religious, cultural, and physical gulf, he loved what he saw in Jesus. Gratitude will draw you close to Jesus.

Scripture Reading: Luke 17:11–15

Action Step: Verbalize your gratitude.

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Look for an opportunity today to thank the Lord for what He has done in your life—aloud and in the presence of others.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, I want to be like the one healed leper who returned to give thanks for what You've done. You have worked in my life, healing my sin-stricken soul just as you healed the leper of his physical disease. I come back to You again, with loud praise for redeeming me and healing me. I draw close to You, fall at Your feet, and proclaim Your power and goodness over my life. Thank You!

Day Eight: Posture Check

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."—James 4:10

Gratitude is the overflow of a humble heart, just as surely as an ungrateful, complaining spirit flows out of a proud heart. Proud people are wrapped up in themselves. If people or circumstances don't please or suit them, they are prone to whine or become resentful.

A humble person thinks much of God and others and spends little time fixating on himself. He recognizes that anything he has is better than he deserves. He doesn't feel anyone owes him anything. He doesn't feel entitled to have more, or for life to be easy, or for everyone to love him and treat him well. He's grateful for the least little kindness that's extended to him, knowing it's more than he deserves.

Scripture Reading: James 4:6–10

Action Step: Confess prideful postures.

Make a list of anything you can recall whining about recently. How does your complaining manifest a spirit of pride, entitlement, and expectations?

Then take time to sit quietly before the Lord. Confess any pride that has shown itself in complaining, irritability, anger, or resentment. Humbly tell Him that you don't deserve any of His favor, and give Him thanks for any specific recent blessings He brings to mind.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Heavenly Father, so often my default posture is one of pride. Forgive me for my self-focus and fix my heart upon You and others. Help me to think little about and of myself so that there is room for You and for loving people around me. Reset my posture to one of gratitude and teach me to be quick to give thanks for everything. Thank You!

Day Nine: Grateful People Are Generous People

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"You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God."—2 Corinthians 9:11

What do generosity and gratitude have in common? Where gratitude grows, you'll generally find generosity flourishing as well. This goes against conventional wisdom, however, that implores us to take of ourselves before giving to others, especially in this risky, volatile, and dangerous economic era.

God's wisdom says something else though. In our Scripture reading for today, Paul expressed a surprising lack of concern for economic indicators when he advised the Corinthian church to let generosity be among the most notable expressions of their gratitude. His trust in God's supply was so strong, he treated as a "given" the fact that the church would "be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God" (v. 11). "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (v. 8).

In all things. At all times. Even these times. God's people are to be grateful people who are generous people.

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 9:6–15

Action Step: Be generous.

What act(s) of generosity might gratitude be motivating you toward today? Ask God for wisdom and faith, and then follow through on the promptings of His Spirit in relation to your giving.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, show me today how to express my gratitude for You and You goodness through my acts of generosity today. Let me hold loosely to my time, my resources, and my possessions so that I might freely give them to bless others in need. I choose to trust you to supply my every need so that I might meet the needs of others, for Your name and Your glory. Thank You!

Day Ten: Grateful for Things Unseen

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him."—1 Corinthians 2:9

There are blessings in your life and mine that "no eye has seen, nor ear heard" (v. 9)—blessings that are so because life rolls smoothly in their absence. For example, think of the many miles you've driven without getting a flat tire. Think of the big tree out front that's never dropped a damaging limb on your house. Think of a destructive sin or habit the Lord has kept you from being tempted by. Perhaps you're hobbled by a medical

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problem or two, but think of a dozen you've never experienced. All these good things go unnoticed, unseen, unheard—but are definite blessings from the Lord.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:6–11

Action Step: Intercede for others.

Look at all the benefits on your growing list of gratitude inducers, and back them into reverse to discover all the unseen and unheard blessings. You'll find your blessings multiplying at an amazing rate. Gratitude can (and should) lead us to intercession. A good prayer starter is to ask God to remind you of those who do suffer from some of the things He's spared you from. Lift these people up to Him today.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, I thank You for the many unseen and unheard ways You have spared me heartache and trouble and inconvenience. Remind me of Your care as I go throughout my day, and prompt me to intercede for my loved ones who are in need today. Thank You!

Day Eleven: Wondering Anew at God's Mercy

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."—Romans 5:8

If you're a Christian, the best thing that's ever happened to you is being saved from sure destruction for your sins and then being ushered into the family of God, beginning now and continuing for all eternity. Sadly, time tends to dull our appreciation of the magnificent, sacrificial work of Christ on our behalf. Life gets so busy and complicated; we can go for weeks—or longer—without being swept away by the magnitude of our salvation.

One of my friends paraphrases Romans 5:8 this way: "God demonstrated His love toward us in this: while we were in open, hostile rebellion toward Him, having no interest in Him—not only that, but also actively despising Him and all that He stands for—Christ died for us." How can we not be inexpressibly thankful? But, praise God, gratitude can reopen the wonder to us, throwing back the dingy curtains of complacency until the full light of His grace and glory come streaming through.

The salvation we have in Christ is a "many-splendored thing," a diamond with countless brilliant facets. Stand in grateful awe of His work for you today.

Scripture Reading: Romans 5:1–11

Action Step: Consider God's mercy.

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Take time to wonder anew at the mercy God has had upon you. Let your gratitude swell and overwhelm you once again. What spiritual blessings in today's Scripture reading need to be added to your list of "Gifts from God"?

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Father God, thank You once again for loving me when I was Your enemy. Awaken my heart to the heights and depths of Your mercy toward me, a sinner. Teach me to cultivate a grateful heart for all that You've done and all that You are. Thank You!

Day Twelve: The Health Benefits of a Grateful Heart

"Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul."—3 John 2

Numerous secular studies and research projects attest to the health benefits of the attitude of gratitude. From better sleep to fewer medical symptoms, gratitude just seems to satisfy.

The apostle John says to his beloved sons and brothers in Christ, "I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul" (3 John 2). He's right—there's something physically strengthening and sustaining about being joyful in the Lord and grateful for His blessings.

While living a godly life does not guarantee physical health, a healthy (spiritual) heart can do much to enhance our physical and emotional well-being.

Scripture Reading: 3 John 1–4

Action Step: Consider your physical health.

We've been on this gratitude journey for more than ten days now. What differences have you noticed in your overall wellness and outlook? Make note of how you are feeling physically and ask God to show you how an attitude of gratitude is helping.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Heavenly God, I ask you to develop an attitude of gratitude within me so that it may be well with my soul. Show me where I'm defaulting to negativity and pride, and help me to choose gratitude for the sake of my health. Thank You!

Day Thirteen: Joyful in the Darkest Night

"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God."—Psalm 43:5

The Psalms are a good place to camp out if your heart's desire is to be grateful—though not because they're filled only with happy, upbeat sentiments. They vibrate with every

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emotion known to man. They speak of backbreaking pressures, deep valleys of depression, and times when life barely seems worth living. And yet the Psalms reveal that the only ultimate answer to trouble, grief, pain, and loss is a constant returning to God in worship and gratitude.

Even in the darkest night, you can still experience His peace and rest, knowing that the joy of morning is ahead. Resolve not to let your joy level be determined by the presence or absence of storms, but by the presence of God. Choose to be joyful in Him today.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 43:1–5

Action Step: Camp out in the Psalms.

Choose a few psalms to read throughout the day (aloud if possible). See if they don't cause praise and thanks to well up in your heart.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Heavenly Father, I thank you for Your ever-present help and fellowship, especially in the dark times. When darkness falls, would You help me, Lord Jesus, to be joyful in You and Your love? Capture my gaze and fill my heart with the joy of Your presence. Thank You!

Day Fourteen: When Joy Hides Behind Our Circumstances

"In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?"—Psalm 56:4

Psalm 56 is a hymn of praise and trust, of confidence and strength, of worship and gratitude. This particular one was written in far less than ideal circumstances, however. David was on the run from King Saul, and when he was spotted and seized by the Philistines in the city of Gath, he faked insanity to avoid being detained.

Yet in the midst of intense, frightening hardship, he submitted himself to the Lord's protection and found within this relationship the ability to say, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you…. What can flesh do to me?" (vv. 3–4). He didn't deny the reality of what was happening to him, but he found reason to be grateful even for his sorrows.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 56

Action Step: Go hunting for hidden joy.

Perhaps it's hard for you to find much to be thankful for today. Look above your circumstances, beyond your fears, and ask God to show you what He's doing in the midst of them. Then look back through your list of blessings and benefits, adding any new ones that come to mind. Focus on the ones that give you the most comfort in crisis.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

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Lord Jesus, will You open my eyes to see the joy that may be hidden under and behind the tough circumstances in life? You are always doing more than I can ever see or think or know—help me to trust You are working so I can see beyond my circumstances and find joy. Thank You!

Day Fifteen: When Gratitude Is Last on Your List

"Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."—Psalm 50:15

Plenty of occasions exist in life where being thankful is the last thing you feel like doing, where nothing seems good or gratitude-worthy. The psalmist instructs us to call upon God in the day of trouble, to offer God a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Even when nothing in your life looks praiseworthy, we are to continue to fulfill our vows to the Lord and praise Him for what He will do. That may seem strange—or impossible! We're not expected to thank God for things that are sinful. But we can give thanks in everything, knowing that God is still God and He uses all things in this fallen world to accomplish His purposes.

Begin to track the ways that God is using these circumstances in your life. Perhaps they're causing you to become more dependent on Him, or to call upon Him in prayer, or to exercise faith in His promises. When we call upon our Lord "in the day of trouble," with minds set on glorifying Him, He does marvelous things in the midst of our pain and sorrow.

Are you facing a day of trouble? Go to the Lord, offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and wait for His sure deliverance.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 50:14–15, 23

Action Step: Make your troubles a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Make a list of all the difficult things in your life today. Spell them out, as detailed as you want. Then offer it all back to the Lord as a sacrifice of thanksgiving, trusting the Lord to work through your life and bring you to a place where you can glorify Him. Thank Him by faith that He can use each of these situations as a means to display His glory.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, You are worthy of praise even in my day of trouble. I give back to you all that weighs upon me today, and I commit to trusting You with it all. Because You have promised to deliver me, I praise You and glorify Your name. Thank You!

Day Sixteen: Power in Praise

"Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name."—Psalm 30:4

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The word sing occurs over one hundred times in the Bible—more than sixty appear in the book of Psalms. Verses 4 and 12 in today's passage both tie singing and giving thanks together. There are a number of illustrations in Scripture of the powerful effect of praise through music.

When I talk with women who are struggling with chronic discouragement or depression, I often ask two questions:

1. Are you memorizing Scripture?

2. Are you singing to the Lord?

These aren't magic pills that will make every emotional struggle go away, but I've found them to be extremely effective at recalibrating my heart and restoring inner peace. At times, when I am deeply distraught or discouraged, I'll open my hymnal and just begin to sing. As I sing to the Lord, my heart and mind are re-tethered to His goodness and love, and invariably, the cloud begins to lift.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 30

Action Step: Sing praises.

Whether it's a cloudy or sunny day in your heart, sing! Right now, if possible. Put on a CD or music from your iPod and sing along or just sing to Him on your own.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, today I choose to praise you in song, both in my heart and with my voice. You have promised to inhabit the praises of Your people, and I ask You to come near as I sing out to You. Draw near to me and grow gratitude in my heart today. Thank You!

Day Seventeen: Seek Something Better Than Happy

"Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding."—Proverbs 3:13

When the writer of Proverbs outlines the benefits of wisdom, he is also advertising the benefits of every other habit and discipline inspired by the Scriptures. And since the practice of being thankful is a basic characteristic of God's people, I believe these passages that call us to wise, godly living can appropriately be applied to the issue of gratitude as well. That's why I really like what's implied in today's reading. It begins and ends with a word—blessed—that portrays the type of person God desires and enables us to be.

Some Bible translations use a slightly different word … happy. For most people, happiness is tied to circumstances—to what is happening in their lives. For Christians,

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however, happiness or blessedness is not dependent on the weather, the stock market, or how our last haircut turned out.

Real happiness—that unshakable sense of peace, contentment, and well-being—comes as we remind ourselves of the blessings we have in Christ and then respond with thankfulness.

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 3:13–18

Action Step: Develop a happy countenance.

We've talked about being loud with our thanksgiving, being vocal about what God is doing. Check your countenance to be sure it is also expressing a joyful, thankful heart.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Father God, I ask that You might grant me a greater vision for my life than mere happiness. I want more than that—I want to be blessed, to have a joy and gratitude that doesn't change with my life happenings. Let me look to Your blessings for my joy. Thank You!

Day Eighteen: Banish the Grumble Monster

"We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer."—1 Corinthians 9:10

In today's reading, Paul reflects upon the children of Israel as they walked in the wilderness and identifies four specific sins they committed, all of which had dire consequences. It's sobering to realize that He includes the sin of "grumbling" with these other sins!

Grumbling is the opposite of thankfulness. Like gratitude, it starts in the heart and expresses itself in our words. It grows out of the sin of discontentment—not being satisfied with what God has provided. Philippians 2:14–15 says we are to "do all things without grumbling" and that when we are obedient in this matter, our lives shine the light of Christ into our dark world.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1–13

Action Step: Confess your grumbling bent.

Are you guilty of the sin of grumbling? If so, confess that to the Lord; ask Him to forgive you and to grant you true repentance. Purpose in your heart to "put off" all complaining and to "put on" a heart of thankfulness.

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Ask God to make you sensitive and alert to situations over the next twenty-four hours where your natural response would be to murmur or whine. Ask Him for grace to give thanks every time you're tempted to grumble.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Heavenly Father, forgive me today for grumbling over my life circumstances. Make me sensitive to my heart's attitude and fill me with gratitude for all You are doing and promise to do in the future. Thank You!

Day Nineteen: Gratitude Isn't Silent

"We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Thessalonians 1:2–3

When you read Paul's New Testament letters, you can't help but notice he was thankful for others. Paul didn't just leave it at generalized expressions of gratitude—he often took time to identify specific individuals for whom he was grateful and then let them know how much he appreciated their contribution to his life and ministry.

People matter to God. And they should matter to us. It's important to take time to recognize and express appreciation for the contributions that even little-known people make to His kingdom and to our lives.

Scripture Reading: Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 1:15–16; Philippians 1:3–4; Colossians 1:3–4; 1 Thessalonians 1:2–3; 2 Thessalonians 1:3

Action Step: Thank others for being a blessing to you.

Today, make a list of individuals who have blessed or touched your life in some way. Ask yourself, "Have I ever thanked this person for the way God has used him/her in my life?" Put a checkmark next to each individual to whom you have expressed gratitude.

Then begin the process of catching up on your "gratitude accounts." Don't try to tackle the whole list at once. Pick one for starters. In the next twenty-four hours, find a way to express your gratitude for that person's influence and impact in your life. Then move to the next one … and the next.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, I want to love people the way You showed us. Help me to express my gratitude to others for specific ways they have invested in me and enriched my life. Thank You for giving me people who love me and care for me. Open my eyes to every person who needs encouragement from me for how they have loved me. You Thank You!

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Day Twenty: The Family that Gratitude Builds

"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well."—2 Timothy 1:5

Godly character—or the lack thereof—shows up within the four walls of our homes. We can't say we love God if we don't manifest His love to our family members or if we allow bitterness to fester in our hearts toward them. For the most part, we don't get to choose our family members, as we do our friends. Yet we are called to love and care for those in our families, in spite of their personalities, their idiosyncrasies, or their character flaws. And that's not always easy!

When was the last time you voiced your gratitude for your family? Each person brings something unique to the mix—ask God to cultivate a heart of gratitude for each person in your family and to help you express that to each one.

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 5:8; 2 Timothy 1:3–5, 3:14–15

Action Step: Give gratitude for your family.

Today, focus on expressing gratitude for and to your family members. Make a list of each member of your immediate family. Next to each name, write one quality about their life for which you are particularly grateful.

Take time to thank God for each member of the family He has given you. Then pick one or two individuals from your list to whom you can express gratitude today, in person, by phone, or with a note or an e-mail. (Note: You may want to express gratitude to a family member who has been especially difficult to love.)

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Heavenly Father, I choose to thank You for each member of my family and for how they enrich my life. Help me to express thanks to them and grow in patience toward them. Cultivate in me a heart of praise and grace for those who know me best and see me most. Thank You!

Day Twenty-One: Does Your Family Avoid You?

"It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife." —Proverbs 21:9

At first, you may wonder about the seriousness of this proverb. It is seriously highlighting the dangers posed by tongues that are contentious, combative, and discontented. Whether or not you are a wife, the warning is clear: no one wants to be around someone who is lacking in gratitude.

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If one of the blessings of gratitude is that it makes us generally happier people, it follows then that gratitude makes those who live with us happier people too.

The restorative power of a grateful heart and tongue is more potent than we can imagine, as is the destructive potential of being bitter and difficult to live with. “Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body” (Prov. 16:24). Let’s make sure our words have that kind of effect so that people choose to live under the same roof with us.

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 21:2–9

Action Step: Be easy to live with.

Ask God to guard your heart—and your tongue—today. Anytime you hear yourself saying words that are contentious, complaining, or critical, rather than gracious, gentle, and godly … stop. Ask Him to forgive you. And seek forgiveness from those to whom—or in whose presence—you spoke.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Heavenly Father, I want to be the kind of person others seek out—not the sort of person that others avoid. Cultivate in me a heart of gratitude that overflows with gracious, gentle, and godly speech so that my family is blessed by my presence. Thank You!

Day Twenty-Two: Grateful in Plenty and in Want

"Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches."—Proverbs 30:7–8

Some preachers and teachers leave the impression that God intends for every Christian to be materially rich. Others go too far the other way, proudly wearing poverty like a cloak of self-righteous sainthood. Today’s proverb puts a proper perspective on the whole thing. The Word is teaching us to focus more on being grateful for where we are—not only because to do otherwise would be sinful and proud, but also because we don’t know what the Lord may be saving us from by not giving us everything we might want.

Even if we possess much less than others have, if our hearts are full of gratitude, neither money nor the lack of it can shake our contented dependence on God.

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 30:7–9

Action Step: Acknowledge God as your Provider.

Ask the Lord to show you if there is any root of discontentment or “love of money” in your heart. Ask Him to provide just what He knows you need—enough to keep you from being tempted to sin to get your needs met, but not so much that you no longer need to

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rely on Him as your Provider. Take some time to thank Him for His practical, material provision in your life.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Heavenly Father, today I acknowledge You as Provider for all I need in this life. I choose to trust You for what You've given as well as for what You've withheld. Make my heart learn contentment in plenty and in want so that I might praise You in all circumstances. Thank You!

Day Twenty-Three: Gratitude Is Your Ticket to Freedom

"But godliness with contentment is great gain."—1 Timothy 6:6

All of us, in some way, possess some sense of entitlement toward God. So often our expectation or demand for "more" towers over the plenty we already possess. That's because we forget that God doesn't owe us anything. We are debtors. We are the ones who owe. We think we deserve more (or different or better) than we have, and therefore we forget or minimize the blessings God has already given and continues to give.

Not content with food, clothing, and a roof over our heads, we whine if we don't have a certain kind of house, a certain kind of car, a certain kind of job, a certain kind of marriage, and certain kinds of friends living in a certain kind of neighborhood and income bracket. It's time we let gratitude be our ticket to freedom.

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 6:6–10

Action Step: Sorting out your wants from your needs.

What kinds of "wants" are you defining as "needs"? Ask God to show you any ways you may have become blinded to His grace. Highlight them. Confess them. And trade them in on the bounty God promises to the grateful.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, remind me of Your high call to seek Your Kingdom above earthly things. Show me where I have confused my wants with my needs, and teach me to be grateful for all I already have. Thank You!

Day Twenty-Four: Living Like the World Owes You

"I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants."—Ruth 2:13

Ruth was a woman with a humble heart—a trait that's a companion virtue of gratitude. She didn't claim her rights. She didn't insist that Boaz provide her a living by letting her glean in his fields. And because she relinquished her demands for certain expectations,

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she was able to be genuinely thankful when she actually did receive the blessing of his generosity.

Too many of us live with a chip on our shoulder, as if the world owes us something. “You ought to do this for me. You ought to serve me. You ought to meet my needs.” But the humble heart—the grateful heart—says, “I don’t deserve this, and it’s an amazing act of grace that you should minister to my needs. Ruth just went out to serve with a humble, thankful heart. And as a result, God made sure her needs were met. He’ll do the same for you.

Scripture Reading: Ruth 2:1–13

Action Step: Relinquish your demands.

Who do you know who consistently exhibits a grateful spirit? What is it about them that makes them so remarkable? What can you learn from their example? Take note of these responses and then relinquish the demands you hold for what others owe you or what you think you deserve.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, I desperately want to live like You did—as a Servant who came to give Your life as a ransom for others. Show me how to serve others and lay down my demands so that others would be blessed. Cultivate in me a heart of humility and gratitude that looks to give instead of get. Thank You!

Day Twenty-Five: Grateful in Every Season

"And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness."—Deuteronomy 8:2

Historians have differing perspectives regarding the first Thanksgiving celebrations in America, but we are certain about some details. For example, we know the Pilgrims’ journey from Holland to England to the New World was frightfully difficult, with sickness and storms on the arduous, weeks-long voyage. We know once they arrived, the task of carving dwellings out of the forest quick enough to hold back the advancing effects of winter was a losing race against time—nearly half of those who made the trip didn’t survive the winter.

Yet with sheer survival as the order of each day, and with constant fears for their families, their writings and recorded history are filled with demonstrations and attitudes of thanksgiving.

Each Sunday—in lean times as well as relatively plentiful—they gathered for prayer, meditation, the singing of hymns, and a sermon. It was their regular practice to stop and give thanks to God at the outset of each week. They did this despite hardships and

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heartache, and their faithfulness is a bright example for how we are to honor the Lord with our thanks in every season.

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 8:1–10

Action Step: Remember God's faithfulness.

Think back over the history of God's faithfulness in your life, in your family, and in your church. Make a list of desperate situations or seasons when you have witnessed His providential protection and provision.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Father God, You have been so very faithful to me over the course of my life, showing Your care and provision time and again. I'm so grateful for the way You have walked with me, sustained me, encouraged me, strengthened me, comforted me, and loved me in every season. Thank You!

Day Twenty-Six: A Declaration of Thanksgiving and Praise

"And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.'"—Ezra 3:11

On October 3, 1863, at the height of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued a

Proclamation of Thanksgiving, calling the nation to observe a "day of Thanksgiving and Praise."

This proclamation eventually led to the establishing of our national day of Thanksgiving. The document began by listing multiple blessings the nation had experienced through the course of the year, even in the midst of a severe conflict. It called the American people to recognize the Source of those blessings and to respond collectively to the Giver in gratitude, repentance, and intercession.

As God's people, we need to dedicate each day for Thanksgiving and Praise for all God has done for us—even in the midst of conflict and trials. Let's continue to respond to the Giver in gratitude, repentance, and intercession.

Scripture Reading: Ezra 3:8–13

Action Step: Craft a declaration of thanksgiving.

Today, craft your own declaration of thanksgiving. Use some of the insights the Lord has shown you these past few weeks, and incorporate some of the Scriptures that have particularly touched you. Then dedicate your life to what these words are saying.

Share what you've written with your family or a close friend. Be an igniter of gratitude by encouraging those you love and care about to cultivate a thankful heart too.

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Pray for a Grateful Heart

Heavenly Father, You are the Giver and Source of all I have and all I am. I want my life, my heart, and my attitude to exude gratitude for Your provision each and every day. Thank You!

Day Twenty-Seven: Keep on Growing in Gratitude

"Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress."—1 Timothy 4:15

As we near the end of this gratitude challenge, take a little quiz today to see where you're growing and where you still need work. Try answering these questions candidly—not just yes or no, but with supporting details that come to mind:

1. Do I often complain about my circumstances, feeling like I deserve better?
2. Do others hear me voice more complaints and negative comments than words of gratitude about the typical events of daily life?
3. Would others describe me as a thankful person?
4. What evidence is there that I have a grateful or an ungrateful spirit?
5. How often do I begin statements with these words: "I am so thankful that . . ."?
6. Do I more frequently display a pessimistic, negative outlook or a positive, grateful perspective?
7. Am I reserved or eager when it comes to expressing appreciation to others?
8. My most recent expression of gratitude was . . .

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 4:11–16

Action Step: Find a Gratitude Partner.

If you haven't done so already, consider taking this gratitude challenge into an accountability setting, letting others help you stay true to your commitment, while being there to offer your support to them as well.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, how I long to keep growing in gratitude and in Your likeness. Show me where I need to walk in greater obedience and how I can take steps of faithful obedience. Please continue on with me, cultivating a heart of gratitude that reflects Your goodness in my life. Thank You!

Day Twenty-Eight: Have You Paid Your Gratitude Debt?

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy."—Philippians 1:3–4

If expressing gratitude is to become a way of life for us, we can't treat it as an optional exercise. If it never gets beyond our wish list, if it only nestles down with all the other

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nice things we hope to get around to someday, the “someday” of gratitude will never roll around on our calendars.

A grateful heart is a heart that beats with praise and gratitude. It seeks to give thanks and praise each and every time praise is due. Think of it as being a debt you owe, the same way you’re called upon to pay your monthly bills. Don’t skip your payments; instead, be faithful to give what is due each time.

Scripture Reading: Philippians 1:3–11

Action Step: Keep your Gratitude Account clear.

Start a list designated as “Gratitude Accounts,” specific listings of individuals to whom you owe a debt of thanks. Seek God’s direction for how to clear your account each day, with a phone call, a message, a note, or whatever token the Lord leads you to give.

We all have gratitude accounts. There just aren’t many of us who keep them paid up. Make sure you’re becoming the type of person who stays current on your bill.

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Lord Jesus, teach me how to express thanks to You and others regularly so that my Gratitude Account doesn’t become overdue. I want to give what’s due to others, to encourage them and to remember that I am blessed by Your hand. Thank You!

Day Twenty-Nine: Is Your Attitude of Gratitude Worth Catching?

"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." —Deuteronomy 6:7

If you’ve been blessed with children, you know that gratitude doesn’t come naturally for them. We all must be taught to express gratitude. But few things are more remarkable (and unusual) in children today than when they’re known for their thankful, contented spirit.

While teaching and instruction have their place in growing gratitude in our kids, the best teacher of all is our example. Do your children hear you thank your husband when he tackles a home repair job? Do they hear you express gratitude to the Lord and to others for both little and big things throughout the day?

Conversely, do they hear you grumble when your husband delays dinner by needing to see one extra client or when you get a flat tire or the sun doesn’t come out for a week?

Gratitude is more effectively caught than taught. How contagious are you, especially at home?

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 6:1–12

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Action Step: Make your gratitude attitude worth catching.

Sit down and talk with your children about the high value God places on gratitude. Tell them how they're going to start seeing some "gratitudinal" changes in you. If you don't have children of your own, think about those God has placed in your sphere of influence. What are you teaching them about gratitude by your lifestyle?

No matter who is in your family or your circle, make sure your gratitude attitude is worth catching. Remember that it's contagious either way!

Pray for a Grateful Heart

Father God, I want my heart attitude to honor You and draw others closer to Jesus. When I begin to grumble or give in to pride, remind me that my attitude is contagious. Please work in me to make it worth catching. Thank You!

Day Thirty: Develop Your Gratitude Goals

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."—Galatians 5:22–23

As you launch out in your new lifestyle of gratitude, start by setting some goals for what you want God to accomplish in your heart. Be specific about the ways you intend to practice ongoing thankfulness. For example, if you want to become more deliberate about writing thank-you notes, how many would you like send in a typical week or month? What Scriptures do you plan to memorize and meditate on in relation to thankfulness? Whom will you ask to hold you accountable for specific areas where you need to grow in the grace of gratitude?

Whatever mechanics this requires to get it up and running will be worth the freedom you'll find to pursue it with passion. Are you ready to experience the life-changing power of Christian gratitude? Then let the Lord help you decide what your next steps should be.

Scripture Reading: Galatians 5:16–24

Action Step: Set your gratitude goals and write your own heartfelt prayer.

Based on the questions provided, determine what gratitude goals you will set. Be sure to outline all the details and what you need to be successful. Next, write a simple prayer, expressing to the Lord your desire to develop a radically grateful lifestyle. Thank Him for His supernatural grace that will enable you to "abound in thanksgiving."

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