

Study Guide – Dissatisfied or Thankful? *from 11-26-2017*

Warming Up

If you have a Thanksgiving dinner with family or friends, do you have any traditions that require the participants to express thanksgiving? If you don't, what traditions would you like to initiate? Share.

Gratitude or Attitude

Pastor Bobby said, "We can't be full of thanks and full of complaints." One normally dominates the other. I suppose that most of us would justify this inconsistency by saying that sometimes we are thankful and sometimes we complain about things. Have you ever wondered what the results would be if you had a meter that recorded each expression of thanks compared to each expression of complaint? What would your results be on most days?

Vision and Decision

In Matthew 6:22-23, Jesus said, "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" Indeed. How great is the darkness of negativity in someone's life? How does that darkness effect people close to them?

A spoiled rich person may complain about something that a poor person would love to have. Do you think most Americans behave more like spoiled people or like grateful ones? Why?

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 reads, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Explain to someone the important difference between giving thanks "**in** everything" and giving thanks "**for** everything." Is it a strange thought to you that God's will for you is simplified to rejoicing, prayer, and giving thanks? How much focused time and attention do Christians spend on these three things?

Pastor Bobby said, "An entitled person focuses on themselves and what they do or don't deserve. Thankful people focus on Who they serve." When a person expresses an attitude of entitlement, he or she may want you to believe that they are being treated unfairly, making them a victim; but, Pastor Bobby pointed out that expressions of entitlement are really generated by pride. When Jesus "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant" (Philippians 2:7), He never complained about what He was actually entitled to have. When you hear someone with an attitude of entitlement, do you fall into sympathizing with them or do you automatically think of them as being prideful? How do you think they consider themselves? How difficult would it be to explain to them that entitlement is really pride?

When Pastor Bobby shared the sad story of his family dog, he boldly expressed that “There’s always something to be thankful for.” Try practicing these three exercises:

1. Name three things for which you are grateful today. Repeat with new things every day for the next 21 days.
2. Write something positive in an email every day.
3. Make sure your social media expresses gratitude and thankfulness more than negativity.

Brain Change - Can Eeyore Stop Being Eeyore?

“It’s a choice to rejoice!” PB

Pastor Bobby shared the results of some research from “gratitude labs.” Those studies show that physical grooves are cut into our brains by the frequency of the kinds of thoughts that we have. (The thoughts release chemicals that cut the ruts.) Therefore, when a person chooses to have positive thoughts, changes to the brain result in more overall positivity. Likewise, continual negative thoughts cut waves of negativity, leading to more negative thoughts.

Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as he (a person) thinks in his heart, so is he.” (Sounds like the findings of the gratitude lab.) The question that every gloomy, disgruntled person needs to ask is, “Do I need to remain controlled by my mood and circumstances, or can I choose intentional gratitude?”

What if positive thinking could really change your whole outlook from an attitude of complaint to one of gratitude? Would you be willing to try Proverbs 23:7?

Conclusion

Romans 12:2 sternly instructs us, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Satan tempted Eve to consider a complaint against God, and she conformed to the god of this world. As Christians, we must be transformed by renewing our minds away from complaint against what God has allowed for us and towards proving the goodness of God and our appreciation of it.

Are you willing to ask God to help you focus on several positive things every day? If you do, it will lead to the renewing of your mind - away from complaining and towards an appreciative attitude. Then, you will “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”, as a child of God should.