

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday November 14, 2021. "The Science of Gratitude."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're on a sprint towards Advent and Christmas and we hope you join us. A great group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. Our children's, youth areas and coffee spot have been fully open also and we're seeing a good response. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

II Sunday.

After a fairly tough series about unhealthy masculinity, we thought we'd take a more seasonal approach and talk about the fundamentals of cultivating a life of gratitude. Unfortunately talking about gratitude, thankfulness, is kind of like talking about worry. There's nothing really new we can learn that would convince us about these topics. We know being grateful is a better, healthier, more scriptural way to live. But that's always easier said than done. We all too easily get sucked into ungratefulness, missing the good things in our life. And honestly, if we do some real self-evaluation we have to admit we all battle some level of entitlement. We believe things should mostly go our way, not have to encounter too many struggles or difficulties. And we all at times have uttered the unanswerable "Why?" question at some things we've had to face.

So, growing, cultivating and heart and practice, (this word is important) of gratitude is difficult.

Why is, can be, gratitude, such a difficult gift to practice?

What pulls us into a sense of entitlement?, (and be honest in admitting this). It just means we believe and expect life to go a certain way for us.

The scripture was not a super familiar one, but it gave us a pretty indepth picture of what is at the root of cultivating a heart of gratitude. Read **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**.

What jumped out to you from this passage about the nature of gratitude?

Were there any specific truths or elements in this passage that you felt were linked to practicing gratitude?

Here are some elements we will have to address before we can experience true growing gratitude.

1. Where are you stingy? First we have to admit we all can be stingy. Tight-fisted, unwilling or able to practice generosity. **Is there some specific place, thing, personal preference, that's hard for you to let go of?**

We all have some things in our life we hold very...too tightly. Be honest and take a serious inventory about things in your life you may hold onto too tightly.

2. Reform your mind TOWARDS generosity. This is a rebuild. Tearing down stinginess and rebuilding a mindset of generosity. Tearing down the old, things we protect, hold onto, don't share. Paul said; *"Take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind"* This is the continual work of closely examining our inner world and seeing what your appetites and desires are we being driven by. Your growth towards gratitude and generosity is a process. Put practices in place that will allow the Holy Spirit work to be done within you. Also an interesting point, making up your mind *"protects you"* too. Start practicing small steps, rethinking what is making you stingy, and doing the opposite.

3. We are hard-wired for reward. Don't be ashamed of that. All through scripture it says; if we practice certain ways of Jesus there will be a reward. In the Sermon on the Mount, Fasting, praying, being generous, (not letting your left hand know what the right hand is doing) are mentioned as important practices. And when you do them your Father in heaven will reward you. We are hard-wired to want a felt benefit for our work, and are motivated by a return on our work/investment. Do the better, wiser, more loving, generous thing, because what you want to happen will actually happen. But it will come from God, rather than you trying to satisfy your own needs.

4. Gratitude will help us separate our 'needs' from our 'wants'. Putting these practices in place, will begin to remake, realign your inner self with the heart of God. What I continually refer to as; *"a well-formed maturity"*. God says test him, because he knows he's faithful, and you will also begin to do a better job at differentiating actual needs from wants.

-In the words of the great philosopher Mick Jagger.

"You can't always get what you want. But if you just might find. You get what you need...oh yeah."

Real, meaningful, satisfying, gratitude grows out of a regular habit of practicing these things, and then this change for the better will happen within you.

III Challenge.

So as expected, we talked about gratitude as we head towards Thanksgiving. We need to be reminded regularly that a life cultivating gratitude...is just a better life. And that requires some intentional decisions and life practices to help us be better at this. And we hope we were able to provide some specific things for you to know and do, to grow our gratitude.

So, as always a final question AND a challenge.

Where are some places in your spirit that need to be addressed to help you be more grateful?

And if you're interested, post on any social media you use, what you are specifically grateful for. Feel the full freedom of posting familiar easy things, and also the hard and unusual things.

Tag it with: **#NCCGrateful**

And let us all be an encouragement to each other and our world.