

The Biggest Enemy of a Thankful Heart

1. Why does it seem like there's such opposition to gratefulness in the world today? Why does the enemy even care if we have a thankful heart? Because there are SO MANY BENEFITS that help us mature as Christfollowers when we cultivate thankfulness in our lives!
 - a. **God's will is for us to "give thanks in all circumstances"** -1 Thess 5:18
 - b. **Thankfulness brings peace**- Phil 4:6-7 NIV *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts & your minds in Christ Jesus.*
 - c. **When we are thankful for something- We appreciate it more and it becomes more valuable in our eyes**
 - d. **A Grateful heart is a HUMBLE heart**
 - i. "...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5)
 - e. **A thankful mindset helps us maintain a child-like faith.**
 - i. "I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." - Mark 10:15 NLT
 - f. **When we are thankful, especially during difficult seasons, it DEEPENS our relationship with God.**
 - g. **Thankfulness is a key to favor.** (*Gives GRACE to the humble. Grace is another word for favor*)Thankfulness is a key to abundance. When we maintain a thankful heart, we keep the door open for God's blessings & provision.
 - h. **Thankfulness keeps our heart soft before God.**
 - i. **An atmosphere of thankfulness is an atmosphere where miracles occur, because our hearts are open to His presence. The Bible says that God is enthroned upon the praises of His people. What is praise except an expression of gratitude?**
 - j. **Keeps us Spiritually healthy**
 - k. **When we are thankful, we are looking with eyes of faith**
2. What's the biggest enemy of a Thankful Heart?
 - a. **So many things that work against gratefulness, but the biggest is a Victim Mentality**
 - b. **A mindset that perpetuates Victimization works contrary to Faith. It works against Faith. And unfortunately, it is prevalent in all of society.**
 - c. **Definition of a victim mentality:** *persistent and often harmful mindset where people view themselves as powerless and constantly wronged by others or their circumstances.*

3. **There is nothing new under the sun;** it's been around since the very beginning. **Its root is the distrust in the goodness of God and connection with a sense of lack. It's a big part of our fallen nature. ITS INGRAINED IN HUMAN NATURE.**

a. *The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.*
-Genesis 3:1, 5-6 NLT

b. The enemy was throwing Shade on God by trying to make Adam and Eve think that he was holding something back from them.

i. Cain & Abel

c. **The danger of a victim mentality is that it goes beyond what we think it becomes an identity that we cling to**

i. Slander, blame, threats of violence. **You can be victimized but not embrace the identity .**

ii. *(It's easy to embrace being a victim because it gets you attention & sympathy. But sympathy is temporary and definitely has no power to change the situation.)*

1. Many of you have been real victims of abuse. But **YOU** are **not** what happened **TO** you. It is a temptation to embrace the identity of a victim. And the enemy would like for you to stay plugged into that- because As long as we remain victims, **we have no power**. But there's nobody more detrimental to the kingdom of darkness than a person who has every right to be bitter and resentful, and feel victimized, but who has **OVERCOME** through the power of THE RESURRECTED SAVIOR!

iii. The victim identity focuses on what we don't have, not what we DO have (psalm 23:1) **the lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing** and is essentially the **OPPOSITE** of thankfulness.

4. **Key traits of a victim mentality: (to help identify in our own lives)**

a. **Blame-shifting:** Believing problems are always someone else's fault, rarely taking ownership.

i. *“Who told you that you were naked?” the Lord God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?”*

The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it." Then the Lord God asked the woman, "What have you done?" "The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it.""- Genesis 3:11-13 NLT

- ii. *There always has to be somebody to blame. The problem is, many times we ourselves are the ones to plan for an issues. But who wants to admit that? Nobody – that's why we search people or system, God, or circumstance. But when we keep that mindset, we will always be the victim*

b. **Perpetual Helplessness:** Feeling powerless to change situations, even when choices exist.

- i. *"If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt," they moaned. "There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death.""- Exodus 16:3 NLT*

c. **Negative focus:** Dwelling on what's wrong, unfair, or painful instead of looking for solutions.

- i. *"Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."... "Yet I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed him!""- 1 Kings 19:10, 18 NLT*

d. **Resentfulness**

- i. *See story of Michal when David was dancing and praising the Lord*
- ii. *"But as the Ark of the Lord entered the City of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked down from her window. When she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she was filled with contempt for him."- 2 Samuel 6:16 NLT*
- iii. *Resentfulness simmers. This is not something that happened overnight and ultimately it resulted in her barrenness*
- iv. *Michael had a lot of very complicated reasons to be resentful. Many things in her life happened that she had no choice over. **The reasons that we hold onto resentment or a victim mentality may be very complex, but ultimately the solution is not.***

e. **Attention-seeking through suffering:** Using hardship as an identity marker to get sympathy or validation.

- i. *"Is that why you have conspired against me? For not one of you told me when my own son made a solemn pact with the son of Jesse. You're not even sorry for me. Think of it! My own*

son—encouraging him to kill me, as he is trying to do this very day!” - 1 Samuel 22:8 NLT

- f. **Resistance to solutions:** Even when offered help or advice, dismissing it because it's easier to stay in the victim role. **Always seeing obstacles that require effort as insurmountable.**
 - i. “When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?” “I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.” - John 5:6-7 NLT
 - ii. If your first response to anything difficult is, “I can’t!”, then you might struggle with victimization. **THANKFULNESS helps us SEE the solutions.**
 - g. **Looking for ways to take offense:**
 - i. - 1 Samuel 22:12-15 NLT
 - ii. **Unchecked victimization leads to death (priests of Nob). Death of friendships, death of dreams, assassinations of characters-SO PREVALENT TODAY!**
 - iii. **When we put into practice the act of being thankful, it reminds us of the blessings that we have, it keeps us thinking about good things. and is a cure for self pity**
5. **8 Steps to overcoming VM**
- a. Bring it to God.
 - i. “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” - Psalms 139:23-24 NIV
 - ii. **We’re afraid to take things to God because we don’t want him to reject us. But correction doesn’t mean rejection.**
 - b. Take responsibility for your part in the situation
 - c. Think solution oriented thoughts [THOUGHT LIFE is KEY!] THERE IS ALWAYS AN ANSWER- *Philippians 4:8*
 - d. **Assume the Goodwill of people until they prove you wrong**
 - e. CHOOSE to apply God’s word instead of your own stinking thinking
 - f. Quit being infatuated with THE DRAMA. **[victims perpetuate drama. GOD HAS MADE YOU INTERESTING ENOUGH WITHOUT IT]**
 - g. **Come to grips with the fact that sometimes life is hard** and we must persevere and PUSH and CONTEND and exercise TENACITY until we get the breakthrough.
 - h. **TRUST THAT THE CROSS OF CHRIST, THE RESURRECTION, has made us VICTORIOUS!**

- i. “No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.” - Romans 8:37 NLT

- i. **Someone who didn't let the role of a victim steal her miracle (one of my heroes!)**

- 1. *“Right away a woman who had heard about him came and fell at his feet. Her little girl was possessed by an evil spirit, and she begged him to cast out the demon from her daughter. Since she was a Gentile, born in Syrian Phoenicia, Jesus told her, “First I should feed the children—my own family, the Jews. It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.” She replied, “That's true, Lord, but even the dogs under the table are allowed to eat the scraps from the children's plates.” “Good answer!” he said. “Now go home, for the demon has left your daughter.”” -Mark 7:25-29 NLT*

- 6. **How have you let a victim mentality steal from you? What miracle? What relationship?**