

Thanksgiving 2015
grATTITUDE
Psalm 100

Throughout this year, we have continually returned to the theme of our ATTITUDE. Attitude is everything. Your attitude drives everything that is important in your life. So many great things are linked to a good attitude, but there is something about a good attitude that you must understand: **NO ONE ELSE can determine your attitude. You CHOOSE it and you USE it. Neither people nor circumstances determine your attitude; YOU ALONE drive that bus.** Now, wouldn't it be nice and easy if there were just some pill that we could take or some powder we could put on that would automatically GIVE us a good attitude? Well, the people of Colorado may think that they have found a magic attitude weed, but there really is no such thing. There is actually something much better than a mind-killing weed.

This morning (on the weekend after Thanksgiving) I would like to address what I believe is the KEY ACTION that will always lead to a great attitude: GRATITUDE. **Gratitude leads attitude. Something happens inside of you when you start to allow gratitude to form inside of you and spill out of you on others. Gratitude keeps your mind in the right gear and your heart on the right focus. Gratitude even affects your BODY!** Being thankful reduces your risk of feeling stressful. Medical studies have actually found that showing gratitude reduces stress, encourages exercise, strengthens immune systems, limits insomnia, increases energy levels, and lengthens life spans! Who doesn't want in on some of that? Gratitude not only enriches you; it blesses others. Gratitude makes YOU more enjoyable to be around. The positive mindset of one who is grateful actually rubs off on the people around them. **Gratitude makes you more LIKEABLE!** Who doesn't like being around thankful people? Gratitude is even linked to job performance and promotion. Grateful people have a better attitude at work and they tend to work harder and better. **Employers AND employees both like having grateful people on the jobsite.** One would think that facts like this would lead all people to stop complaining and start expressing thanks. It seems like we would pass a law that would put a "Thanksgiving Celebration" in every month! (Although I am certain that my waistline could not take it!)

Well, even if our government refuses to take this step, I want to encourage each of you to take steps to plant gratitude squarely in the center of your DAILY life. **It is time to make gratitude a CORE VALUE and KEY PRACTICE of our lives.** God's Word has pressed for this from the very beginning. In fact, **gratitude begins with God.** God's goodness is the original catalyst for all gratitude. **Psalm 100 NASB**

1 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. 3 Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. 4 Enter His gates with

thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. 5 For the LORD is good; His loving-kindness is everlasting and His faithfulness is to all generations.

That is such a great passage of scripture! It would do you well to read this scripture out loud to God at the beginning of every week. You need to HEAR IT with your ears as you read it with your mouth, so don't be afraid to do this out loud in your home. This practice is related to one of several key factors about the kind of gratitude that we must have if we want it to change our attitude. The first factor is this:

Gratitude must be obvious.

How obvious is YOUR gratitude? The Psalmist stated that we must shout joyfully to the Lord. On a basic level, this means that **thanksgiving must be EXPRESSED in order for it to be ENJOYED**. This means that we must choose to VERBALIZE our thanks rather than just feeling it. The FEELING of gratitude is for YOU; the EXPRESSIONS of gratitude is for the GIVER. Oh, that you and I would choose to verbalize our thanks for the good things in our lives. I am grateful for the fact that my children choose to say thanks for the simple things that they enjoy at home that many kids take for granted. I love it when our kids thank their mother for fixing them a meal or washing their clothes. This is a big deal. Say thanks, **a lot!**

When you say thanks to God, you should do it with obvious, joyful abandon. **HOW you do what you do is just as important as what you do!** David encourages us to SING to God and to SHOUT our praises to him. This is not dependent upon your personality style or your singing skills. God has been good to you, so GO PUBLIC with it. Are you guilty of simply listening to the music on Sunday's during the praise time rather than singing? Stop it! Start singing. **Don't even wait for the weekend; start making it a practice to praise him every day of your life!** God's word tells us to sing out to God and to shout our praises to him. This is not just at church! What is stopping you from obeying him? Sometimes I think that it is our PRIDE that keeps us from praising God out loud. We are afraid that someone might not like our singing or our shouting. Don't worry about them; THEY are NOT your AUDIENCE. God is the One that you are thanking, so do it loudly and proudly (like the way you worship – I mean cheer on – your favorite football team). This really does bless God. **Imagine; you can BLESS the One who is the Source of all blessings. There is nothing that you can give to God that he lacks; but your thanks-filled praises give something to him that he will not force.**

Perhaps you could even write your praises out to God? **This is why we have the PSALMS in the first place!** I love to revisit journals that I wrote years ago in which I wrote praises to God for all that he was doing in my life at those times. They are a powerful reminder of the goodness of God throughout my lifetime. Write your praises down and speak them out to God! **Writing is also a great way to thank the people in your life who have blessed you. Years ago, a wise person told me that the BEST way to praise someone was to write it down for them.** This is a more permanent form of verbalization! When you praise and thank someone in writing,

then you are giving him a gift that he can revisit time after time. It is a tangible gift that remains long after the experience is past. I would encourage you to write your “thank you” down and mail (or email, or text) those words to those that bless you. You see, gratitude should NEVER be kept inside! If you hold it in too long, it will either bust you up or (worse yet) dry up and blow away. **The time to show gratitude is NOW.** When you wait too long after an experience to show gratitude, then you begin to lose the incentive to express it after a while. So, don’t wait! Today, while I was writing this message, a friend of mine texted me to tell me how God used the message from the day before in his life. It was a simple act, but it was powerful because it came out of a PRESENT EXPERIENCE of blessing. That is a great way to make gratitude OBVIOUS.

How obvious is your gratitude toward God to others? This is so important, because it is a powerful way of pointing others to God. **Public praise to God invites everyone to the FEAST!** I want my thanks to create a hunger in others for God! David said, “You have put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God. Many shall hear it and fear, and trust in the Lord!” This is enough reason to express gratitude! But there is something else that we should learn about the kind of gratitude that will change our attitude: **Gratitude must be consistent.**

Aren’t you glad that God is good ALL THE TIME (and all the time, God is good!)? God’s consistent goodness is the key to our consistent well-being. In fact, it is the key to our BEING in the first place! Psalm 100 encourages us to gratefully acknowledge that he is God, and that HE MADE US. (Vs. 3) Some modern scientists have come to the conclusion that the universe created itself. That may have come from brilliant minds, but that is a perfectly ridiculous idea! “Professing themselves to be wise, they became FOOLS!” God made all that is, and that includes you and me. We are amazing creatures who have been conceived and crafted by a magnificent Creator! (Just look at your hand!) Thank him for that! Beyond that, I am simply grateful for the God that IS. I could not imagine a greater, more loving, more amazing God than the One that actually is! As you take the time to really read and study his Word, you cannot help but fall in love with the God who is the Great I AM! I also LOVE the fact that this glorious God that made me is feeding me every day in PASTURES that HE has prepared for me. When was the last time that you thanked God for the current “pasture” that he has you in? You need to take the time to focus on aspects of your current pasture (your home, your job, your family, your church, etc.) and genuinely thank God for the good things within it. This is why King David wrote: **Psalm 100:5 NLT**

5 For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

We rely on God’s consistent goodness, so why would we not consistently express that reliance to him in a joyful, thankful manner? This is one reason why gratitude is so important to a good attitude in life. It is a realistic understanding of the goodness

and generosity of God. **Your gratitude ought to be as consistent as the blessings you receive.**

Consistent gratitude is important for another reason. Let me ask you a question: **How often would you like to experience the tangible PRESENCE OF GOD in your life?** Wouldn't it be amazing if you could go into the very presence of God anytime that you wanted? Well, you can. David made it clear that there is only ONE WAY to do this in your life – with gratitude! **Psalm 100:4 NLT**

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.

If you want to go into the presence of God, you will NEVER do it without a thankful heart. Even when you are going through a most difficult time, you still must learn to approach God with gratitude. Pay attention to the Psalms. Every psalm that David wrote included expressions of thanks and praise to God for who he is and for what he is able to do. **Learn this principle: Praise and thanks are the entry point to the presence of God.** This is why God's word commands us to be thankful AT ALL TIMES, IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. Paul wrote that this is actually the way to stay in the will of God: **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NLT**

16 Always be joyful. 17 Never stop praying. 18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

If you want to stay in the center of God's will, then stay thankful no matter what you are going through! Your gratitude will be a humble acknowledgment of God's wisdom even if you don't understand WHY he is leading you into some rugged pasture at this current time! This kind of gratitude will make you constantly aware of the fact that God is WITH YOU. [This is actually another way to "Clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus" that we talked about last week!]

In truth, every living soul has reason to be grateful every day to God in their lives. (Vs. 1) Every day that you live is a GIFT from God. You should thank him for that. Did you know that the earth itself shows consistent gratitude to God? The Prophet Isaiah wrote that as God sends his sunshine and rain on the earth, **"the mountains and the hills break forth with singing, and the trees of the field clap their hands"** in praise to him! As God sends his rain and his sunshine on the earth, it rejoices with thanksgiving to him for his goodness. I love to think of this when I see the breezes move the trees before and after a rainstorm. Those trees are just worshipping the God who provides for them! **Are you giving God praise like this EVERY TIME he provides something good for you; or do you just take it in and take it for granted?** It is time to express consistent gratitude to God. How often do you say "thank you" to God? Do you thank him for EVERY meal? Do you thank him daily for your friendships, your children, your health, and your church? Why not? This is not something that gets old and worn out with time. It actually increases your joyful experience of a thing when you express it out loud consistently. It is like the old gum

commercial: “Double your pleasure!” When you consistently give thanks to God, you double the joy that that thing brought to you. Try that some time.

There is another truth about the gratitude that changes attitude that you must know: **Gratitude must be guarded.**

I want to warn you about the importance of GUARDING gratitude in your life from THANKSGIVING THIEVES. Thanksgiving thieves are hidden mindsets that become actions that will always rob you of the ability to thank God or others for the blessings in your life. These thieves are everywhere, so you must stay on your guard against them. The first thief that you must guard against is ENVY. You lose sight of your blessings when you begin to COMPARE (a twin thief!) them to the blessings of others and begin to wish that you had what they have. Watch out for this thief! A Psalmist named Asaph wrote of this thief in **Psalm 73:1-7 NLT**

1 Truly God is good to Israel, to those whose hearts are pure. 2 But as for me, I almost lost my footing. My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone. 3 For I envied the proud when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness. 4 They seem to live such painless lives; their bodies are so healthy and strong. 5 They don't have troubles like other people; they're not plagued with problems like everyone else. 6 They wear pride like a jeweled necklace and clothe themselves with cruelty. 7 These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever wish for!

Do you see what happened to this man? He started focusing on the perceived blessings of the godless people around him. He began to think about their fancy cars, their fat wallets, and their God-free and guilt-free lifestyles, and he lost sight of God's goodness to him. He even began to RESENT (another thief!) the restrictions that God had placed on his lifestyle. **Psalm 73:12-14 NLT**

12 Look at these wicked people--enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply. 13 Did I keep my heart pure for nothing? Did I keep myself innocent for no reason? 14 I get nothing but trouble all day long; every morning brings me pain.

Be careful! Envy comes from improper comparisons, and those comparisons always lead to another thief: COMPLAINING! Have you ever noticed how you only notice the good things about what others have? We seldom think about the burdens and problems that are always hidden just beneath the surface of other's lives! We may envy the brand new Ford F-250 4X4 King Ranch Crew Cab truck that our neighbor is driving; we do not envy the \$60,000 price tag that comes with a \$1,200 truck note for the next 60 months that he is carrying! We envy the mansion that he lives in, but we would not want the wreck of a home and marriage that he is living because he works 90 hours a week and is never home. Do not allow these thieves into your heart. Stop comparing your life to others and complaining about your lot in life, and

start expressing gratitude. **I could go on for a long time about these thanksgiving thieves, but you should probably spend some time identifying the others that might be sneaking up on you.** Never stop guarding your thankful heart!

Gratitude must be obvious. Gratitude must be consistent. Gratitude must be guarded. **If you truly want to IMPROVE YOUR ATTITUDE, then INCREASE YOUR GRATITUDE!** This is a WIN for everyone in your life, including you.

I want to give you a SIMPLE CHALLENGE for the remainder of this year: Make it a point to express gratitude to God and to someone else EVERY SINGLE DAY for the rest of 2015. Get creative. Write a letter. Send a text. Mail a blessing-check to some one. Give God more than just a tithe. Make your gratitude COSTLY. It will always pay you back.

Let's pray.