

SLIDE ONE:

THANKFULNESS

I'm thankful for coffee during the Aus Open!

And for the men's final tonight being followed by a public holiday on Monday.

Thankfulness is not merely a "nice" Christian character trait.

Gratitude or thankfulness (I'll use them interchangeably) is a vital indicator of our soul's health and a powerful protector of our soul's wellbeing.

So, we should intentionally cultivate the healthy, happy habit of thankfulness every day in our lives.

I want you to allow yourself a few moments to honestly answer the next few questions in your mind.

Right now at this moment in your life, what challenges and struggles are you facing?

You or someone you care about is facing serious health issues.

Family breakdown

Financial stress

Battling with Mental health

Feeling disconnected from God

There are so many challenges in life, and every day our mind gravitates toward them in various ways. To give up thinking about the troubles in life is likely impossible. These are real problems, and they demand our attention.

If you're like me, sometimes you can get stuck there.

That's the end of the thought process. X Y and Z are wrong at the moment. I wish this thing went differently and I can't wait until this happens.

But that is not the complete picture is it? We are missing out if we allow our minds to stop there!

Right now this moment, what are the gifts and blessings that are part of your life?

Think about so far this morning:

The gift of coffee as you woke up

Cool, refreshing breeze

The gift of beautiful trees, birds and incredible beaches just down the road.

The gift of waking up in a house. Driving in a car. Worshipping in a church.

Friendships and smiles when arriving.

Freedom to worship.

Relationship with God through Jesus – the gift of new life.

Allow yourself to consider and appreciate all these gifts, to settle into a space of gratitude.

I've just used the word "gift" repeatedly. This was a deliberate choice to highlight the deep connection between gratitude and gifts.

"Gratitude is a sense of thankfulness and joy in response to receiving a gift"

Most of us have had the experience of giving a gift to an ungrateful receiver

Example of Laura receiving gift and immediately exclaiming, 'oh, my cousin will absolutely love this!'

Or receiving a gift from her then boyfriend (now husband) and then re-gifting it to one of her best friends. When boyfriend asked about the gift, she had to awkwardly call her friend and fess up and ask for it back

Or maybe you have had the experience of working your backside off on something. Going over and above, and no one says thanks. That can really sting!

And likely we've all had the opposite experience, a joyous one, where the one receiving our gift wells up in tears of thankfulness.

This is the difference between entitlement and gratitude; between complaining and being content; between bitterness and joy. **It turns out to be a distinction of great importance to our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.**

May you and I learn to be people who thankfully receive the gifts offered to us every day. May we be people who regularly and sincerely express our gratitude towards God and one another.

PRAY

SLIDE TWO:

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Would you describe yourself as a thankful person?

Gratitude is associated with increases in positive mood, pleasantness, self-esteem, sense of well-being, and life satisfaction.

Grateful people have a lower risk of depression than others, as well as a decreased likelihood for anxiety disorders, phobias, eating disorders, nicotine dependence, and alcohol/ drug abuse.

Grateful people are less materialistic than others and experience enhanced daily motivation. Gratitude promotes social relationships.

Compared with others, grateful people are more motivated to work on their relationships, more inclined to repay kind gestures, and more willing to forgive.

They are inclined to praise and trust others, to accept altruistic acts from others, to help others, and to feel socially supported.

Those who are grateful tend to have positive views of others, to be expressive of their feelings, and to find meaningful ways of resolving conflict.

Expressing gratitude in a romantic relationship promotes improvements in the relationship. And gratitude from one partner promotes gratitude in the other partner.

The link between gratefulness and health benefits is clear in the scientific findings: grateful people experience various psychosocial health benefits, relational benefits, and likely physical health benefits as well.

Is gratitude good for our health? Yes.

But that's not really the main point of the Christian story, is it?

Amidst the various struggles and challenges of life—and every life has them—we have been given the most incredible gift. It is the gift of abundant life in Jesus, and the most reasonable response is to give thanks.

Gratitude is simply the way we are called to live as Christians. It may be tougher for some people than others, and it may or may not make us healthier, **but moving toward more and more gratitude in life is still part of our calling. It's who we are to be, regardless of how good it may be for our health.**

Think on these two quotes:

“So much has been given to me that I have no time to ponder that which I don't have.” —Helen Keller

“Giving thanks is not a matter of feeling thankful, it is a matter of obedience.” —Joni Erickson Tada (she is quadriplegic)

Right, so it's definitely time to get our bibles out and see what God has to say about us being thankful.

SLIDE THREE:

Two Things:

- 1) Thankfulness protects us and helps us live godly lives

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. ² Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ....

³ Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. ⁴ Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you.

Instead, let there be thankfulness to God.

V18 Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, **but** be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ***giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ***

- 2) Thankfulness helps us pray and be reliant on God

There are a lot of bible verses about thanking God through hard times.

Perhaps you have read them and thought, 'That's easy for you to say but you're not going through what I am. You wouldn't be thankful if you were in my situation!'

There's a clear pattern in scripture about prayer and thankfulness in all situations:

PRAY

GIVE THANKS

GIVE THANKS

PRAY

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 4

² Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.

In the late 1800's George Mueller operated an orphanage that at one time had 1,000 orphans. One morning there was no food to eat, but he called all the children and staff together and prayed thanking God for the provision of food, even though no food was on the table. A few moments later a baker knocked on the door. He told Mr. Muller that God had led him to bake bread the night before and give it to the orphanage. Before the bread was given to the children, a milkman knocked on the door. He said that his milk truck had broken down and he wanted to give the milk to the orphanage.

George Muller gave thanks, even when it took faith to do so.

Let's look at another story in Luke 17 which illustrates this:

SLIDE FOUR:

Luke 17:11-19

¹¹ As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria.

¹² As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, ¹³ crying out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

¹⁴ He looked at them and said, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy.

SLIDE FIVE:

Luke 17:11-19

¹⁵ One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, “Praise God!” ¹⁶ He fell to the ground at Jesus’ feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ Jesus asked, “Didn’t I heal ten men? Where are the other nine?”

¹⁸ Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ And Jesus said to the man, “Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you.”

SLIDE SIX:

Luke 17:11-19 – With Emphasis!

¹² ... ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, ¹³ crying out, “**Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!**” **THEY ASKED JESUS TO MEET THEIR NEEDS**

We are good at talking about our problems and needs, worrying about them, even complaining about them. But we can learn something from this group. They went to Jesus with their needs.

¹⁵ One of them, **when he saw that he was healed (recognise the gift)**

came back to Jesus (recognise the giver), shouting, “Praise God!” ¹⁶ **He fell to the ground at Jesus’ feet, thanking him for what he had done. (give thanks)**

SLIDE SEVEN:

¹⁵ One of them, **when he saw that he was healed**

We have so much to be thankful for! So much.

Things we can be thankful for:

Early mornings – Children to love or a job to go to

A house that needs to be cleaned – a safe place to live

Dirty laundry – clothes to wear

Shopping list to do – money to spend

We can so easily forget to be thankful and grateful because we focus on what we don't have or what we have yet to receive.

God will not give us everything we pray for. We don't always pray or ask for the right things.

He will give us what we need – He gives good gifts to his children – he gives what is best for us.

We might pray for guidance or direction for a major decision. Maybe we won't get a clear answer.

God, what is your will for my life?

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances!

God won't always answer our prayers when we want him too.

Yet even in the waiting. Even in the disappointment, his will for us is crystal clear

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Give thanks even when you don't get what you asked for!

Our thankfulness does not rest simply on a positive outlook, or on receiving what we want or ask for – it rests on the strongest foundation possible – the goodness of God – this is something that does not change despite the circumstances.

SLIDE EIGHT:

V15 He came back to Jesus, shouting, “Praise God!”

Who knows that we love to take credit and pass blame?

I can see those sideways glances at your spouse or sibling!!

But we really do love to receive praise for the things we have done.

We like to think that we deserve credit for all the good things in our lives.

And I am a huge believer in encouraging and thanking people.

However, ultimately the praise and thanks belongs with God.

I have worked very hard to be successful in my career and provide for my family.

Congratulations. God created you with the ability to work. He gave you gifts, talents and passions in life.

He made you with the ability to have a family. He put the longing for companionship within you and made you relatively handsome so that you could find a wife.

God has been working throughout every single day of your life as your provider. Even while you sleep.

Don't take too much credit for yourself.

Do you love to admire the beautiful veggie patch or garden at your place that you have lovingly tended and grown. Well done! Remember that God created vegetables, dirt and plants – you may have worked on them, but he is still the giver!

James 1:17 (NLT) “**Whatever** is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father

Recognise the giver!

SLIDE NINE:

¹⁶ He fell to the ground at Jesus’ feet, thanking him for what he had done.

He didn’t just think his thanks, he thanked his thanks!

Can everyone say the word thank you – wow! One more time?

We are quick to make our requests and slow to thank God for His answers. Because God so often answers our prayers, we come to expect it. We forget that it is only by His grace that we receive anything from Him.

God knows our thoughts. He knows when we are feeling thankful. He still tells us repeatedly to give thanks. Not to think thanks.

Psalms 100:4 states it very clearly:

‘Enter His gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

Thanksgiving softens our hearts – makes us receptive emotionally and physically so we have a desire to approach God, so we have humble attitude when we approach God – grateful for the amazing opportunity and so we are openhearted, trusting and thirsty enough to be teachable while in His presence.

Invite worship team

SLIDE TEN:

Barriers to Thankfulness:

- Too busy
- Entitled
- Unforgiveness
- Self-pity
- Impatience
- Self-reliance
- Comparison
- Complaining

NUMBERS 11

SLIDE ELEVEN:

Congregation to have time to write things they are thankful for.

Finish with the following prayer:

A Prayer for a Thankful Heart:

Lord, teach me to offer you a heart of thanksgiving and praise in all my daily experiences of

life. Teach me to be joyful always, to pray continually and to give thanks in all my circumstances. I accept that Your will for my life is to give thanks in all circumstances. I long to bring pleasure to Your heart daily. Change my outlook and attitude into one of joyful contentment with my present circumstances. I thank You for

Jesus, I want to be like You who obeyed the Father without complaint. Convict me whenever I complain or compare myself with others. Give me Your attitude of humility and thankful acceptance. I want to be like the Apostle Paul who learned contentment in every circumstance. I choose to continually offer You a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that give praise to Your name. I long to bring a smile to Your face. Teach me the power of a thankful heart. I know that Your truth dwells in a thankful heart.

“I will give thanks to the LORD because of His righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! In Jesus’ name, amen.