

Summary

This sermon explores four levels of thanksgiving based on Ephesians 5:20, which calls believers to give thanks always for all things. Pastor Chris examines the grippers who constantly complain, the grounded who are blind to blessings, the grateful who only thank God for good things, and the godly who give thanks in all circumstances. Using the historical example of the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving born from hardship rather than abundance, the message emphasizes that true thanksgiving isn't dependent on circumstances but on our relationship with God. Pastor Chris shares personal testimonies and challenges, including the story of Tony Wilcox's transformation from a life of crime to faith, demonstrating how God uses our trials to prepare us for greater purposes and how thanksgiving can be supernatural rather than natural.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You with grateful hearts, acknowledging that every good and perfect gift comes from You. As we gather together in this small group, we ask that You open our hearts and minds to receive what You want to teach us today. Help us to be vulnerable with one another and receptive to Your Spirit's leading. Lord, we pray that You would speak to each person here in the way they need to hear from You. Give us wisdom, understanding, and the courage to apply Your truth to our lives. We surrender this time to You and ask for Your blessing upon our discussion. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What's one simple thing you're thankful for today that you might normally take for granted (like clean water, the ability to see, or having a roof over your head)?

Key Verses

- Ephesians 5:20
- Romans 8:28
- 2 Timothy 3:2
- Hebrews 12:11
- Psalm 119:67
- 2 Corinthians 12:9

Questions

- Which of the four levels of thanksgiving (grippers, grounded, grateful, or godly) do you most identify with currently, and why?

- Pastor Chris mentioned that the first Thanksgiving was born out of hardship, not abundance. How does this change your perspective on when and why we should give thanks?
- What are some specific 'little things' in your life that you could thank God for more intentionally?
- The sermon states that 'unthankfulness leads to unholiness.' How have you seen this principle play out in your own life or in others?
- Share about a difficult time in your life when it was hard to be thankful. Looking back, can you see how God was working even in that situation?
- Paul wrote about giving thanks from a prison cell. What current 'prison' or difficult circumstance in your life could become an opportunity for supernatural thanksgiving?
- Pastor Chris shared Tony's story of how his past struggles prepared him to fight cancer. How might God be using your current struggles to prepare you for something greater?
- What practical steps can you take this week to move toward the 'complete level' of thanksgiving - giving thanks in every trial and tribulation?

Life Application

This week, commit to thanking God for at least three things each day - including one thing that might be difficult to be thankful for. Keep a gratitude journal or share your thanksgiving with someone else. When you face a challenging situation this week, practice saying 'Thank you, Lord' before you react, and look for how God might be working even in the difficulty.

Key Takeaways

- True thanksgiving isn't dependent on circumstances but on our relationship with God and His faithfulness
- There are four levels of thanksgiving: gripers (complainers), grounded (blind to blessings), grateful (thankful only for good things), and godly (thankful in all circumstances)
- Unthankfulness leads to unholiness - when we stop thanking God, spiritual corruption can creep into our lives
- God's strength is made perfect in our weakness, and our trials often prepare us for greater purposes
- Supernatural thanksgiving in difficult times can shift the spiritual realm and bring breakthrough

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for this time of fellowship and for the truths You've revealed to us today. We confess that we don't always live at the level of thanksgiving You desire from us. Help us to be people who give thanks always, for all things, even when we don't understand. Strengthen us to praise You not just when life is pleasant, but when we're pressured, persecuted, and pushed to our knees. Transform our hearts from complaint to gratitude, from entitlement to appreciation.

Use our trials to draw us closer to You and prepare us for the purposes You have for our lives. We commit to being more intentional about thanksgiving this week. May our praise and gratitude bring glory to Your name and breakthrough in our circumstances. In the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.