

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. *Enjoy discovering more about Him!*

## "CHOOSING THANKFULNESS" | LUKE 17: 11-19 | PASTOR BRIAN

### WARM-UP QUESTION:

What is the best part of the Thanksgiving Holiday?

### *"Thanks-Thinking" (Psalm 103:2)*

Thankfulness is processed at the intellectual level, where the mind is appreciating good things or experiences a person has, which has all kind of benefits. Why is it hard to remember good things God has given?

### *"Thanks-Feeling" (Psalm 50:23)*

Thankfulness is glorifying to God when it goes from the head to heart, causing a person to praise God out of gratitude. What helps someone to have an overflowing heart of thanksgiving?

### *"Thanks-Giving" (Luke 17: 11-19)*

Jesus heals 10 lepers but only one returns to thank Him, giving praise. Jesus blesses this man, declaring his faith has made him whole? What does Jesus' reaction to thanksgiving show about God?

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

Pastor Brian closes his message with the reminder that to be thankful is a choice God asks us to make "even though" we're surrounded by enemies, even though we're in the valley of the shadow of death. It's a choice made out of a focus on God instead of on circumstances. Colossians 2:7 shows that a person rooted in Christ will be overflowing with thankfulness. Where has your focus been lately? Have you been choosing to thank God for His love for you? Take time to pray and meditate on all the blessings God has given.

## Choosing Thankfulness

### I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-6 Kelly: C@R. Thanksgiving Eve. CFLC. Pantry. Women's Christmas.
- B. Slide7a This week, *Choosing Thankfulness*. Next Week, *Jesus Celebrates Hanukkah*
- C. Prayer: Ps.50:23 *The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me.*

### II. Slide7b Intro: Choosing Thankfulness

- A. Thankfulness is an important quality for **all people**, especially for *Christians*.
  1. **Thankfulness** is recognizing good things that have happened to you, **and** acknowledging the people who made those good things happen.
- B. In the **Bible**, thankfulness is recognizing **who God is and what He has done**.
- C. **Islam** believes in 3 levels of Thankfulness: Heart, tongue (say it), doing rt deeds.
- D. **Hinduism** believes, as Ven. Master *Hsing Yun* explained, "*As Buddhist, we should feel fundamentally grateful for **everything** that happened to us.*"
  1. In Nepal, I woke up and looked out of my hotel window down on all the house tops before the sun came up each had a small garden on their house (**Illus**: woman watering *sprinkling her plants, sprinkling her deity*).
- E. So showing **gratitude** towards *something* has always been taught to everyone since the early ages. It is considered an important part of **moral ethics and etiquette**.
- F. Slide8a Practicing gratitude provides benefits to our **spiritual** lives as well as our **physical health**. [Gabriella Silva, M.A. in Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary]
  1. **In Relationships** research shows that gratitude improves interpersonal relationships. Couples who regularly express thankfulness to each other also demonstrate higher levels of *trust, loyalty, and overall contentment* with their relationships.
  2. **Regarding Stress** studies show that **habitually practicing gratitude** improves *stress levels, sleep, energy, and enthusiasm*. This happens

because when we express gratitude, our brain releases 2 important neurotransmitters, *dopamine and serotonin*, which are both responsible for feelings of *happiness and wellbeing*.

3. **Depression and Anxiety.** By *regularly practicing gratitude*, feelings of depression and anxiety can diminish as the levels of these brain chemicals rise (*dopamine and serotonin*), ultimately creating an association between gratitude and wellbeing.

a) In other words, *if our brain is a forest*, the more frequently we *tread the path of gratitude*, the deeper the **pathway** will be made on the trail to get us to **happiness and wellbeing**, *while* the path toward *hopelessness, despair, and fear* will be less trekked and weakened over time. *To believers, this is also known as renewing the mind.*

G. *Slide8b Thanksgiving* (תּוֹדָה, todah; εὐχαριστία, eucharistia). *The act of offering thanks or being thankful, usually to God. Often connected to provision, deliverance, or God's character. Commonly associated in Scripture with meals and worship.*<sup>1</sup>

1. *In the OT*, it is closely tied with the verb **to bless**.

- a) The most common Hebrew noun used for “*thanks*” (תּוֹדָה, todah) **derives from the verb “to praise”** (יָדָה, yadah).
- b) Thanksgiving bears a prominent place in the *Psalms*, both on an **individual and communal** level.

2. *In the NT*, thanksgiving is tied to the concept of **grace** (χάρις, charis).

- a) People in the NT offer thanksgiving to God *in worship, individual prayer, and at meals*.

H. *Slide8c Outline: Thanks-Thinking. Thanks-Feeling. Thanks-Giving. Thanks-Choosing.*

### III. *Slide9 THANKS-THINKING* [thankful in our mind]

<sup>1</sup> The Lexham Bible Dictionary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

A. Thanksgiving then is not about *accumulation*, but **appreciation** (for what you already have).

1. It's *ironic* that it's followed by a day of *massively acquiring*. (Black Fri)

B. **Melody Beattie** (Psychiatric Medical Care, PMC web page) “*Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into **enough**, and **more**. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a **feast**, a house into a **home**, a stranger into a **friend**. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow”.*

C. **Thankfulness** is processed on an **intellectual** level, **but gratitude** should move from our head into our **heart**.

#### IV. Slide10a **THANKS-FEELING** [thankful in our **soul**]

A. **Not all thanksgiving is thanksfeeling**. You may say thank you **but** not feel it. (eg. telling small children to parrot your phrase, “*say thank you!*”). It’s where you have to start with a small child, **but** hopefully we spiritually aren’t 5 yrs old.

B. “*The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me*”. Psalm 50:23

1. This offering of thanksgiving which glorifies God is **not merely external**. It is gratitude truly **felt in the heart**. That is the only kind of sacrifice that **pleases Him**.

C. **Slide10b** It’s a work of **grace** in our lives when it drips from our **minds**, into our **souls**.

D. So it's not only that we say thank you, **but** when our **soul feels** thankful.

#### V. Slide11 **THANKS-GIVING** [thankful for our provisions] **for the \_\_\_\_\_**

A. **Acknowledging** your thankful heart.

B. **Thanksgiving** is the *expression* of our gladness that *God is good to us*.

C. Deut.8:7-10 *For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, 8 a land of wheat and barley, of (red) vines and fig (newtons) trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, 9 a land in which you will eat bread without*

scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. 10 *And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.*

1. Moses was teaching them the basics, **to Thank God for all provisions**. [It's a beautiful starting place] (*For the* turkey, stuffing, candied yams. *For the* blessings, weather, health, wealth.)

#### D. Slide12a THE 1 LEPER THAT RETURNED

E. Lk.17:11-19 *On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance 13 and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." 14 When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, **praising God** with a loud voice; 16 and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, **giving him thanks**. Now he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18 Was no one found to return and **give praise to God** except this foreigner?" 19 And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well." [already **phys** well, **so** must be **sp** well/whole]*

F. **Leprosy** a disease where you die *inch by inch*. [a re-emerging threat in Nepal]

1. Ken Gire, *There he lives, w/o love, w/o hope, w/o the simple joys and dignities of life: being smiled at, being greeted on the street, buying fresh fruit in the market, talking politics by the public fountain, laughing, getting to go to work, operating a business, haggling over prices w/a shopkeeper, getting a wedding invitation, singing hymns in the synagogue, celebrating Passover w/family. All these barred to him. Forever!*

G. **All 10** called out to Jesus for help/**mercy** (13).

H. Then their leprosy disappears *en route*. "*Faith believes in advance what will only make sense in reverse.*"

I. (15,16) The story turns on a dime. **Who is he?**

J. We have 9 **ungrateful** men, **&** 1 unusual man ... **&** he's a Samaritan.

- K. Slide12b **1st**, that he might **Praise God the Father** (15). **2nd**, that he might **give thanks** to **God the Son** (16a).
- L. The following are 9 suggested reasons why the 9 did not return: (listen to any excuses your mind might have used *for not* giving God **thanks**).
1. #1 waited to see if the cure was real. #2 waited to see if it would last. #3 said *he would see Jesus later*. #4 decided that he had never had leprosy. #5 said he would have gotten well anyway. #6 gave the glory to the priests. #7 said, "*Jesus didn't really do anything*". #8 said, "Any rabbi could have done it". #9 said, *that he was already improving*.<sup>2</sup>
    - a) Slide12c *We often write our **blessings** in the sand, and we engrave our **complaints** in the marble.* Spurgeon
- M. The Samaritan's 9 friends were declared **clean** by the priest, **but** he was declared **saved** by the Son of God.
1. While it is wonderful to experience the miracle of physical healing, it is even more wonderful to experience the miracle of eternal salvation.
- N. **Infants** **do not** always appreciate what parents do for them. They have short memories. Their concern is not what you did for me **yesterday**, **but** what are you doing for me **today**. The **past** is meaningless **and** so is the **future**. They live for the **present**. [when it comes to *thankfulness* would you consider yourself: an infant, a preschooler, got your GED, working on your Doctorate?]
- O. **Lesson**: Christ values Gratitude. **And misses it when it's not** expressed. He already dealt with *ingratitude* in Lk.7, when he said, *you gave me no **water** for my feet, you gave me no **kiss**, you didn't **anoint** my head with oil* (*yet this women w/a past* hasn't stopped doing all 3).
- P. **But not** only thankful *for* when He serves us. This may just be *entry-level* manners or *politeness*.

## VI. Slide13a **THANKS-CHOOSING** [even when it's hard] *even though* \_\_\_\_\_.

A. It's about choosing to show thankfulness, **or** practicing gratitude.

<sup>2</sup> Charles L. Brown, Main Street Monitor.

1. There's nothing *natural* about **gratitude**, if you disagree, *you've never never fed a 2 year old.*
- B. Graduate from *an attitude* of *gratitude*, to *the practice* of *gratitude*.
1. It's not about only having a grateful **heart**, *but* grateful **habits**.
  2. Some say, *Well you know my heart. No* I don't, express it! (say it, show it)
- C. Ps.23:4 ***Even though** I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.*
- D. Thank Him *even though* \_\_\_\_\_. David takes us another layer deeper. (to a mature level, a deeper level)
1. David says later in Ps.119:23 ***Even though** princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes.*
  2. Jesus prayed in Jn.17:25, *O righteous Father, **even though** the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.*
  3. *Even though* I walk through the valley in deep darkness.
  4. *Even though* all hell is breaking loose in one area of my life.
  5. *Even though* this relationship seems trashed.
  6. *Even though sorrows like sea billows roll. **Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.***
    - a) It is well, *even though* he broke up with me. It is well, *even though* my heart is completely shattered. It is well, *even though* I lost my best friend. It is well, *even though* I'm going through it right now. It is well *even though* I'm still single. It is well *even though* I can't pay my next bill. It is well *even though* I'm now a widow. ***Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.***
  7. I may not be **thankful** to have *gone through* heartbreak, *but* I can be **grateful** for the **lessons** I've learned because of it.
- E. Slide13b Ps.23:5, *you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemy.*
1. The psalmist switches from portraying God as a Shepherd *to* portraying Him as a host.

2. **Hospitality** in the ancient Near East required more than providing a meal. The host was also responsible for **protecting** his guest (i.e. Gen19:8 This honor code meant that **Lot** could not turn *the strangers* over to the men of Sodom). Since the psalmist, as a guest, enjoys Yahweh's protection, he can **eat safely in the presence of his enemies**.
3. How about **thanking Him** when you're *in the presence of your enemies*, in the presence of your **insecurities**, in the presence of your **deficiencies**, in the presence of your **addictions**, in the presence of your **confusion**.
4. **Picture when God sets the table**, you are at 1 end of the table and He sits at the other. **So keep your eyes fixed on Him. Not on whatever enemies sit around the table.**

F. *Thankful for the \_\_\_\_\_*. This is where we learn to thank God in what we **can see**.

G. *Thankful even though \_\_\_\_\_*. This is where you learn to trust God w/what you **can't see**.

1. **Thankfulness** is *A Passing Moment*, **Gratitude** is *A State Of Being*.

H. **Prayer**: Col.2:7 that we would be *abounding in thanksgiving*.

I. Keywords: Thankfulness. Gratitude, Grateful.