

THE JOY OF THANKFULNESS 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ESV

1. **F.W. Woolworth, the founder of the Woolworth's chain of stores,** *Bill Turner*
had amassed one of the Largest fortunes in the world by the early 1900's.
 - a. A Portion of this fortune (\$50 Million) was given to his granddaughter, Barbara Hutton.
 - b. She was one of the riches women in America, but was never able to find true happiness.
 - c. She married 7x—a Prince, a Count, a Baron, a Diplomat, Movie Star Cary Grant, others.
 - d. The Tabloid Press labeled Barbara Hutton “the poor little rich girl” and the label stuck
 - e. All the divorces left her almost bankrupt, she battled Drug & Alcohol addiction & anorexia
 - f. She died at age 66 and weighed less than 100 lbs w/ only \$3,000 left of a \$50 mil fortune.
 2. **You Would Think that someone who had so much would be thankful and happy**
It is not happy people who are thankful—it is thankful people who are happy
-

I. THE COMMAND OF THANKFULNESS

A. DID YOU KNOW THANKFULNESS IS A COMMAND?

1. Thankfulness is a Command (1 Thes. 5:16-18 ESV)

(NLT) Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

- a) But How can we Be Thankful for all Circumstances?
- b) For 2 yrs of Division and Divisiveness?
- c) How Can We Be Thankful for COVID? —or Grief or Loss or Sorrow?

2. NOTICE WHAT A DIFFERENCE ONE WORD MAKES!

- a) God's Word Does NOT Say Be Thankful FOR All circumstances...
It says: Be Thankful IN All Circumstances!
- b) What a Difference 1 Word Makes!

3. We Are Commanded to Be Thankful **IN** all circumstances (not **FOR**...)

- a) Solomon lists that things that happen to everyone in life (**Ecclesiastes 3:1–13**)
- b) These events happen to all people of all nations and languages in all world
- c) But God's People Are Called to Give Thanks IN Every Season of Life
— In Good Times and in Bad > (not *for every season of life*)

B. THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD FOR YOU...

1. Sometimes we ask, what is God's will for me?

Here is One Thing God Desires for You—Thankfulness

2. TEN LEPERERS APPROACHED JESUS... (**Luke 17:11-14**)

- a) It's hard for us to imagine how horrible leprosy was, peeling skin, ulcers, sores
- b) It was an incurable, slow motion death sentence

3. ONLY ONE RETURNED TO GIVE THANKS (**v.15-16**)

4. ONLY HE WAS MADE WHOLE Physically and Spiritually (**v.17-19**)

C. THIS IS THE FAITH FORCE MULTIPLIER THAT PLEASURES GOD

It is not happy people who are thankful—it is thankful people who are happy

II. THE BARRIERS TO THANKFULNESS

A. THANKFULNESS REQUIRES HUMILITY

1. Have You Ever Noticed it's Humble People Who Are Thankful People?
2. It's not a coincidence... Thankfulness and Humility go together just as unthankfulness and self-centered arrogance go together

B. THANKFULNESS REQUIRES HONESTY

1. It Takes an Honest Heart to have true thankfulness
2. Dishonest People take credit for all the good and blame God for all the bad
3. An honest person gives credit to God for all the good, and accepts responsibility for the bad in their own life

C. THANKFULNESS REQUIRES EFFORT

1. It took effort for the one Leper to return to thank Jesus personally
2. It takes effort to gather for worship to give thanks to God
3. Thankfulness requires effort—which is why fewer people are thankful

D. THANKFULNESS REQUIRES SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

1. Every Good and Perfect Gift is From God (Ecclesiastes 5:18–20)
2. Only Those With Spiritual Maturity Can Perceive This (Ecclesiastes 7:14)

It is not happy people who are thankful—it is thankful people who are happy

III. THE BENEFITS OF THANKFULNESS

A. RESEARCHERS FROM UC DAVIS MEDICAL CENTER & UNIV. MIAMI

1. “Thankfulness is the ‘forgotten factor’ in happiness research”
–says researchers from UC Davis Medical Center and Univ. of Miami.
 - a) It's Always interesting when Science catches up to what Bible said 2,000 yrs ago
 - b) They admit that Thankfulness has almost entirely been experienced in the realm of Religious Faith — but they are now researching it
2. They Divided into 3 Control Groups, with Brain Scans before and after...
 - a) 1st Group: Told to keep a daily journal listing all the negative things in their life, the disappointments, wrongs, hurts, frustrations.
 - b) 2nd Group: Told to just list regular events of the day neither positive or negative
 - c) 3rd Group: Told to keep Gratitude Journal of 6 things day they were thankful for
3. At the End of 2 Months they did brain scans again and interviewed them
 - a) 1st Group: The Fight or Flight area of the brain was enlarged and enflamed
The area of anxiety, stress, anger and fear
 - b) 2nd Group: No Change in Mood or Brain Activity from Before
 - c) 3rd Group: The Fight or Flight Area of the Brain had reduced and the Feel Good part of the Brain had grown!

4. In Interviewing the Groups:

- a) **1st Group**: Was More Fearful, More Depressed and Hopeless
- b) **2nd Group**: No Change
- c) **3rd Group**: was Happier, More Positive, more energetic, more thankful!

5. THEY WERE ABLE TO CHANGE THEIR BRAINS IN ONLY TWO MONTHS

- a) They Felt Better, Slept Better, Had more Energy, with Positive Enthusiasm

[Study: Emmons, UC Davis; McCullough, University of Miami]

“Gratitude blocks toxic emotions, such as envy, resentment, regret and depression, which can destroy our happiness,” Emmons said. “It’s impossible to feel envious and grateful at the same time.” (Emmons)

“Gratitude doesn’t change the scenery. It merely washes clean the glass you look through so you can clearly see the colors.” (Richelle Goodrich)

B. THE BENEFITS OF THANKFULNESS FAR EXCEED THE CONSEQUENCES

1. Being Unthankful Results in DISCOURAGEMENT:

—Being Thankful Results in ENCOURAGEMENT

2. Being Unthankful Results in RESENTMENT:

—Being Thankful Results in HAPPINESS

3. Being Unthankful Results in ENVY:

—Being Thankful Results in PEACE

It is not happy people who are thankful—it is thankful people who are happy

IV. THE EXPRESSION OF THANKFULNESS

*“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”
(William Author Ward)*

A. THANKFULNESS IS AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE

1. As Jesus Taught in Parable of Two Debtors (Lk 7:40-50)
2. The Greater the Thankfulness the Greater the Love!

B. EXPRESSED IN WORSHIP TO GOD

1. Thankfulness results in Worship (Ps. 95:2; 100:4-5)
2. But did you know Unthankfulness results in Judgement? (Rom 1:18–21)

C. IN SINGING PRAISES TO GOD

1. (Ephesians 5:19-20)
2. v.20 giving thanks always for all things!

D. IN SERVING GOD

1. (Hebrews 12:28) Thankfulness to God is seen in Serving God

E. IN PRAYER TO GOD (Mt 15:36; Lk 10:21)

1. Even in the Shadow of the cross, the night He was betrayed
2. when Jesus was to lay down His life, He thanked God (Luke 22:19–20)

F. IN OUR HEART

1. (Colossians 3:15) Thankfulness and peace are connected
2. But so is bitterness and envy

G. IN ALL WE DO

1. We give thanks to God in all we do! (Colossians 3:17)
2. Are you going fishing? On Vacation? Work? Helping Others?
3. Give Thanks to God!

“I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.” (G.K. Chesterton)

It is not happy people who are thankful—it is thankful people who are happy

V. THE REASON FOR OUR THANKFULNESS IS GOD!

A. THERE ARE SO MANY REASONS TO BE THANKFUL TO GOD!

1. GOD’S LOVE FOR YOU (Revelation 1:5)
2. THE GRACE GOD HAS GIVEN YOU! (Ephesians 2:8–10)
3. HIS PROMISE TO NEVER LEAVE YOU OR FORSAKE YOU! (Heb 13:5)
4. THE HOME HE HAS PREPARED FOR YOU! (Jn 14:1-2)

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

5. AND THE CHANGES HE IS MAKING IN YOU...

TO PREPARE YOU TO BE MORE LIKE CHRIST!

CONCLUSION:

1. **Ultimately, a thankful heart is the only offering God receives.**
 - a) He’s not impressed by our possessions or positions of importance
 - b) He Owns the Whole Universe!
 - c) It is a thankful, obedient heart that God desires
2. **This is the Thankful heart that brings us Joy to God and to us!**
 - a) The Joy of Salvation
 - b) The Joy of God’s Love and Forgiveness
 - c) The Joy Only Found in Christ! (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ESV)

It is not happy people who are thankful—it is thankful people who are happy