

## Transforming Power of Gratitude

*As Presented by Lisa Bishop*

Air Dates: August 29- September 2, 2022

### Day One

When you are in the midst of a hard season in life, what is your reaction? When things are not going the way you had planned or when suffering comes your way, how do you respond? Does your heart grow cold to God, distanced, or weary? Or is gratitude the posture of your heart in the midst of suffering?

I have been reading the book of Job, and to be reminded of the loss, suffering, and pain he experienced while all the while staying faithful to God is astounding. It is counterintuitive to praise God in the middle of our pain, but that is exactly what Job did and it floors me every time I read his story. Job chapter 1 tells us that Job was a man of perfect integrity who feared God and turned away from evil. His life was marked by his faithfulness to God.

One day Satan challenges the authenticity of Job's faith and declares that the reason he is faithful is because God has provided for him abundantly and protected him and everything he owns. Satan challenges Job's loyalty to the Lord and tells God, "But stretch out your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will surely curse you to your face" (Job 1:11). God essentially gives Satan permission to test Job's faith and as we read, everything that Job has is taken from him, starting with the death of his children and servants and the loss of his livestock which was his livelihood. Everything, gone. His family and everything he worked so hard for vanished.

This is Job's response:

*"Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshiped, saying, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will leave this life. The Lord gives, and The Lord takes away. Praise the name of Yaweh" (Job 1:20-21).*

And as we read further, we learn that "Throughout all this Job did not sin or blame God for anything" (Job 1:22).

Job's gratitude for God transformed his response to God when his life seemed unbearable and like it was caving in. We can learn a lot about others by how they respond to God when life gets hard. We learn a lot about ourselves. Will we cling to him, show gratitude for who God is and his faithfulness during difficult times? Or will we become distant and bitter towards God? Job lost almost everything dear to him, yet he expressed trust in God even when his heart was breaking.

Would you respond the same way? What difficult situation are you currently facing? How can you respond like Job, falling to the ground in worship? Praise God in the midst of your pain, and remember the character of God and refuse to forget that he is faithful. He is for you. He is with you.

### Day Two

I don't know about you but I think we have a love problem.

In my personal experience and as I minister to hundreds of women, there is a common theme, a common underlying question that I think we are all trying to get the answer to. Does God really love *me*? Now I am not talking about being able to rehearse Bible verses about God's love (although that is very important). What I am referring to is experiencing and receiving God's love and affection to the degree that it seeps into the depths of your heart, soul, and mind. I am talking about being convinced to the core of your being that *you are deeply loved by God*. Are you absolutely convinced that God's affections for you are great? I struggle to believe and fully receive Jesus' steadfast love. I am guessing you do too.

I was celebrating a friend's birthday this weekend and all of the guests went around the table and shared one thing that drew us to her. That was an easy answer for me.... My friend is absolutely convinced that Jesus loves her. She has such confidence in his affection for her, it is very endearing and inspiring. And by the way she lives her life, you can tell she receives God's love, to her very core. Why do we often fail to receive and believe in God's love? I mean, evidence of his love is all throughout the Bible.

First John 3:1 says, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"

As a child of God, he lavishes his love on you. And you did nothing to earn his love. God's greatest act of love towards you was sacrificing his son. Jesus' death on the cross was the grandest display of love the world has ever seen. And yet, we have a hard time receiving.

One of my favorite prayers in the Bible is Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3. Receive these words as a prayer over you and open yourself up to allow them to penetrate your heart.

*"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:14-19).*

Take time to just sit and be grateful to God. Tell Jesus, "Thank you that your love for me is so extravagant, help me to fully receive your love and help me be your love to those around me."

### Day Three

Let's look at an extravagant response of gratitude by an unnamed woman whose story is told in the gospel of Mark.

*Now Jesus was in Bethany, in the home of Simon, a man Jesus had healed of leprosy. And as he was reclining at the table, a woman came into the house, with an alabaster flask filled with the highest quality of fragrant and expensive oil. She came to Jesus, and with a gesture of extreme devotion, she broke the flask and poured out the precious oil over his head (Mark 14:3-9).*

In other words, she came to Jesus in a response and act of extreme gratitude!

After this selfless display we see the disciples highly indignant, and in an uproar they question how this woman could waste such an expensive bottle of oil which would have been the equivalent to a whole year's worth of wages.

Listen to how Jesus responds:

“Leave her alone! Why are you so critical of this woman? She has honored me with this beautiful act of kindness....She has done all that she could to honor me. I promise you that as this wonderful gospel spreads all over the world, the story of her lavish devotion to me will be mentioned in memory of her” (Mark 14:7, 8-9).

We do not know much about this woman, what her life was like or the story of her past. But surely we can surmise that she experienced the saving power and extravagant love of Jesus. And experiencing the extravagant love of her Savior caused her to have an extravagant response towards that love. Her display of extreme devotion and thankfulness to God was so significant that nothing, not even facing the shame, scorn and ridicule of men, was going to stop her from this heartfelt act.

Her act of gratitude towards Jesus was so noteworthy that it is recorded in the Bible for billions of people to read and for us to read as an example 2000 years later.

And Jesus says that as the Gospel spreads, her story of lavish devotion will be told.

When you know how incredibly loved you are by God, more than a head knowledge, but a deep knowing that penetrates your mind, heart, and soul—when you know this love, you can’t help but respond the same way she did. This unnamed woman’s wordless display of gratefulness, her act of worship, is an example for me and for you.

How are you showing your extravagant gratitude for who Jesus is and for what he has done in your life?

The unnamed woman’s act of worship was anointing Jesus’ head with oil. What will be your act of worship and gratitude?

## **Day Four**

Being grateful really is an attitude of the heart and a will of the mind. It requires a deliberate effort, a commitment to focus our attention and thoughts on who God is and all of the evidence of his faithfulness throughout our lives. When we are going through a challenging or uncertain season, it is easy to forget God’s character. When we are riding high, and life feels like it is smooth sailing, we are prone to do this same. We can tend to take all of the credit and forget that it is God who has provided and not merely our own self effort. So whether your current season feels like you are in a valley or on a mountaintop, remembering God and his faithfulness is essential.

In the book of Joshua we see a powerful example of remembering, and the call to gratitude.

After wandering in the wilderness for 40 years Joshua is positioned to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. The Israelites endured an immense number of trials, tribulation, and trauma along the journey. Yet through it all and in the midst of their 40-year trek to freedom, God was with them every step of the way. We see that their long season of wandering comes to an end as they come to the Jordan River. God makes a way for them to pass through as he leads them to the land he promised, the land flowing with milk and honey.

After the people of Israel supernaturally crossed the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land, God commanded Joshua to “choose twelve men, one from each tribe. Tell them, ‘Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan. Carry them out and pile them up at the place where you will camp tonight’” (Joshua 4:2-3).

Then Joshua (4:6-7) says, “Let this be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off

before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

The stones were set up in Gilgal as a reminder to that generation and the generations to come of what the Lord had done, to trigger a memory of God’s faithfulness in the past, to reflect on him in the present, and trust him in the future, to invoke a heart of gratitude.

How are you remembering Jesus and expressing gratitude for his faithfulness today? To remember, you have to intentionally look. We can get so mired and fixed on the pain, uncertainty, and current hardship or struggle that we forget to take the time to reflect and recall all of the ways that God has been faithful. It can be easy to forget. How can you create your own stone of memorial, your own reminder that God is faithful, that his promises never fail?

## Day Five

Have you ever experienced an overwhelming sense of anxiety?

Anxiety has been something that has reared its unsettling head in my life for the past several years. I had never really experienced anxiety and now, it can come in long waves. Staring a major life changing decision in the face caused unrelenting anxiety and restless and sleepless nights. I would wake up feeling sweaty and heavy and my eyes had not even been open more than a second.

When anxiety tries to get the best of you, go to the Word, pray, text or phone a friend to talk things through and ask for prayer. At the onset of worry and anxiety, I called my friend Lisa and shared with her that I was really struggling. She graciously created a safe space for me to share all of the thoughts that were invading my mind. Sometimes it can help to find a trustworthy friend who will just listen. When we verbalize what is causing worry and concern, sometimes it can lose a little bit of its power. She graciously listened and said “Girl, I don’t have the answer to your dilemma but have you worshiped?” With that question, she responded with humility, love, and truth. A tender reminder that in those moments of life when you feel overwhelmed—turn to worship and gratitude.

In Philippians the Apostle Paul instructs us, “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. 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” (Philippians 4:6-7 NLT).

The first thing I want to point out is the fact that Paul even talks about anxiety! If he is addressing it, surely people were experiencing it. Sometimes I think we can feel as if we are alone and the only ones who experience anxiousness. Or perhaps we feel like something is wrong with us when we feel waves of anxiety coming on. But Paul reminds us that there will be times when we feel anxious, and he points us to truth and who to turn to in those moments.

When you are anxious, pray. Tell God what you need. His Word says that he inclines his ear toward you. Thank him, express your gratitude for who he is and all he has done in your life. It can sound trite but it is truth. When you do, God promises you will experience peace.