

Attitude of Gratitude
Presented by Lisa Bishop
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Day One

Would you consider yourself to be a thankful person? Let's examine a topic that can transform your life—the undeniable power of a deep-seated posture of thankfulness.

A few weeks ago, I was headed to a wedding where I knew parking would be a bit of a challenge. I pulled up an app on my phone that helps you find and pay for parking spots in advance. I found my assigned spot #26, parked my car, and headed to see my friend get married. A few hours later I walked outside to go home and, you guessed it, my car was nowhere to be found. I was stunned and a bit bewildered. At first, I thought my car had been stolen. Then it dawned on me. I was parked in the wrong lot, and as a result, my car was towed.

As a side note, I have lived in Chicago for 27 years and have avoided this dreaded occurrence, but apparently, my lot was up. It was my turn to experience something I would not wish on anyone.

You might be wondering what this has to do with thankfulness. I would be lying if I told you I was thankful my car got towed. That is far from the truth. But I will say, instead of having a total meltdown in my dress and high heels, I was able to take the higher ground of gratitude, finding things I could be thankful for in the moment. While I did feel like bursting into tears, I talked myself off the ledge, focused on what I could control, and did my best to release the rest.

I kept calm and focused on what I could be grateful for even in the midst of an unpleasant situation: the Uber driver who took me to the tow lot and made sure I was safe, the fact that my car was not stolen and that I could afford the \$240 fee to retrieve my vehicle.

Did you know when you make it a practice to lead a lifestyle of thankfulness, it makes you more resilient? For the past two years during my quiet time, I have been recording what I am grateful for, and I believe it prepared me for this dreadful day.

When daily stresses come your way, gratitude will help you be resilient in challenging times. Gratitude reverses that negative spiral we can all be prone to when life throws us curveballs. But you must be proactive in growing in gratitude to reap the benefits of resilience.

My daily gratitude practice prepared me not to lose my cool and kept me grounded in God.

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Gratitude takes practice like any other skill, and when you are thankful, you are living in God's will.

Day Two

How am I supposed to be grateful when life hands me lemons? How can I be thankful when life is hard? Have you ever asked yourself that?

How can you be thankful when you are experiencing conflict at work or are overlooked for a promotion? When finances are tight, your dreams feel delayed, or when you have prayed that same prayer a million times, and your circumstances don't seem to change? It may not be easy, but it is possible. God's word instructs us to do more than just find the proverbial silver lining. God teaches us to be thankful in challenging circumstances because he has proven himself faithful even when life is hard.

Philippians 4:6-7 are familiar verses we often quote, but do we let them instruct us when life is sour?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

We often get the part about not being anxious, presenting our requests, and praying in every situation, but we tend to gloss over a key call to action—with thanksgiving.

Why be thankful when hardships happen? Because when you are thankful in hard times, you are promised peace! Now let me just say we are not called to be thankful for all of life's challenges that come our way per se, but to give thanks because we know God is working in our circumstances.

And this is also not a call to pick yourself up by your bootstraps and muster up a pretense that everything is A-OK. You are allowed to lament when things go awry. Gratitude and being disgruntled can coexist. The key is not to let the grumbling overpower the gratitude. Get real with God but also remember his character. He is for you even if you don't feel like it. Your feelings don't always tell you the truth, only God's Word is true and that is why you must renew your mind with the Word and pray with thanksgiving. As you pray and remember God's steadfast love and faithfulness, the peace of God will guard your heart and mind in Christ.

If you are facing a trial right now, I want to remind you to stand firm. God is with you and will not allow your needs to go unnoticed or unaddressed. It may be hard but keep your eyes open and your heart attuned to how he is working on your behalf, even in this very moment.

Hang onto the truth of God's Word to get you through hard times and be thankful.

Day Three

We are examining being thankful and I want to talk about gratitude in the battle.

2 Chronicles 20:1-30 tells the story of King Jehoshaphat, reminding us gratitude is not just a response to God's blessings. Gratitude is a proactive stance, a mind set on God that invites his presence and power into our lives.

When a vast army of his enemies were coming to wage war against him, instead of succumbing to fear, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, sought the Lord.

In verses 6-12, Jehoshaphat prayed a powerful prayer of dependence on God, acknowledged God's sovereignty, recounted God's faithfulness, and confessed reliance on God for deliverance. His prayer ended with the profound declaration:

We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you (2 Chronicles 20:12).

Have you ever felt like that? What stands out in this story is the response of Jehoshaphat and the people as they faced a battle. They didn't cower in fear, get angry at their circumstances, or wait passively; while they waited for the battle to unfold, they worshipped. In the middle of the hard, they praised (v. 19). As they went out to face their enemies, they sang,

Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever (2 Chronicles 20:21).

Their gratitude was not after the victory; it was before the battle even began. And as they began to sing and praise, their gratitude and worship moved the hand of God. The Lord set ambushes and defeated their enemies. Jehoshaphat and his people didn't have to fight; God fought for them.

Praise and thankfulness are powerful weapons in our spiritual arsenal. When you are facing a battle, follow in Jehosaphat's footsteps and remember these three things:

1. Gratitude helps us fix our eyes on God's power rather than our problems. When Jehoshaphat and his people turned to give God thanks, their focus shifted from the overwhelming threat to the overwhelming greatness of God.
2. Gratitude invites God's presence. As Judah worshiped, God's presence was tangibly manifested. Expressing gratitude invites God into our circumstances, bringing his peace, guidance, and intervention.
3. Gratitude precedes victory. Jehoshaphat's story teaches us to thank God in advance. Gratitude is an expression of faith, trusting he is already at work, even when we can't see it.

As we go about our week, rather than being overwhelmed by our challenges, let's resolve to fix our eyes on Jesus, thank him for his enduring love, and trust he is fighting our battles. Remember, gratitude is not just a response to victory; it's a catalyst for it.

Day Four

We're examining the importance of practicing thankfulness. Notice how I said practice! Being thankful is not necessarily something that comes easily to us. We tend to focus on what (or who) we want fixed. We need to proactively cultivate a mindset and habit of expressing gratitude.

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit (Proverbs 18:21).

When we hear these verses, we can typically focus on what not to do, use our words to tear someone down, defame or smear their name with lies or gossip. But how often do we focus as much on what to do with our words? I want to use my words to breathe life into people, don't you?

We often miss multiple opportunities to express our gratitude at home and in the workplace. We can get wrapped up in busyness, be overly self-focused, or assume someone already knows we are grateful for them and miss the chance to encourage them.

As you think about the people you work with, who is someone you can show genuine gratitude to?

Tell a coworker you are thankful for the way he or she leads projects or a boss that you are thankful for his or her leadership. And how about that person who might rub you the wrong way and get on your nerves just a bit? I bet there is something you can find that you appreciate in them too. Expressing gratitude doesn't cost you anything and in a dog-eat-dog world, where a lot of people are vying for position and credit, you will stand out in the crowd when you give sincere kudos to others. And how about encouraging fellow believers? One of my favorite verses is:

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

As followers of Jesus, we are to encourage fellow believers in the faith, to comfort and edify each other in times of trials. To cheer each other on. Who is someone at church, in your Bible study, a leader, or a mentor you can intentionally encourage and build up with words of thankfulness?

A few years ago, I was feeling a bit discouraged in my ministry. I wondered if what I was doing was making an impact. In God's timing, I received a card in the mail the very next day. The front of the card said, "Thank you," along with beautiful words to encourage me just at the right time. God knew what I needed, and he prompted this sweet woman to be his mouthpiece.

God wants to use you to encourage people in your life. Who is he calling you to say a kind and life-giving word to? Ask him to show you, and then follow through.

Day Five

Is there someone in your workplace who gets under your skin? Let's wrap up with being grateful for that coworker who gets on your nerves.

I know you are probably thinking I am crazy but stick with me. Who is someone at work you find yourself murmuring under your breath about? That person who raises your blood pressure, ignites your impatience, or causes you to complain in frustration.

Did you ever consider God may have placed them there for your sanctification? The coworker who bugs you with their behavior can actually be a blessing.

When we're triggered by the behavior of others, Galatians 5 tells us that our flesh wants to react with hostility, quarreling, jealousy, selfish ambition, envy, and outbursts of anger.

But the Holy Spirit who is living in you and me produces a different kind of fruit in our lives when we earnestly love and follow Jesus.

He turns our fleshly response upside down and instead, as Galatians 5:22-23 says,

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

So how is an annoying coworker a benefit? When a coworker puts you on edge consider you are being positioned for an upgrade in the fruit of the Spirit. What do I mean by that? When you are frustrated, ponder the possibility that God may want to use that situation for your sanctification.

For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of (Matthew 12:34).

We know Jesus wants us to become more and more like him and reflect his heart and he will place us in circumstances that show us where we need to grow in spiritual maturity.

This is a very kind and loving thing for him to do because he wants to transform our hearts and minds so our words and actions are in alignment with who he created us to be—carriers and conduits of his love, grace, and mercy.

Our lives are meant to be a witness to a different way of life, and when the fruit of the Holy Spirit is your go-to, others will see something different reflected in you.

The next time you find your flesh ready to respond, ask the Holy Spirit to help you with a renewed response.

When a coworker does that thing that used to bug you, stop and ask the Holy Spirit: How is this person the gateway to producing patience, kindness, or love in me?