

The Significance of Gratitude



By Dave Butts

There is far greater spiritual significance to gratitude than many Christians realize. The Bible is filled with both command and example regarding giving thanks to God, and teaches that being grateful is a key to walking in right relationship with God and growing spiritually. While there are hundreds of Scriptural texts that relate to the issue of giving thanks, here are a few that give a good overview of the Biblical teaching on this subject:

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe” (Heb. 12:28).

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful” (Col. 3:15).

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Col. 4:2).

“Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name; make known among

the nations what He has done” (1 Chron. 16:8).

“When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, ‘He is good; His love endures forever’” (2 Chron. 7:3).

“I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks” (Neh. 12:31).

“In that day you will say: ‘Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done, and proclaim that His name is exalted’” (Isa. 12:4).

What Happens When We Don't Give Thanks to God?

There is one very powerful verse in Scripture that approaches giving thanks from the negative aspect. What happens when we don't give thanks to God? “For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Rom. 1:21). The Apostle Paul literally links ingratitude to the whole progression in Romans, chapter 1, that shows man's rebellion against God and the devastating results of that sin. Failing to give thanks is more than just bad manners. It is the beginning point for separation from God.

Key to Humility

Gratitude is so important to practical Christian living because it is a key to humility. Giving thanks for something puts us in the place of a recipient. I have received something from someone and therefore say, “Thank you.” A lifestyle of gratitude will instill humility deep inside us. We will begin to recognize that all that we have and all that we are comes from God. Gratitude helps teach us humility.

True humility is the antidote to the devastation that pride brings to our walk with God. We can never grow deeper in our Christian life as long as pride dwells within us. Pride seeks to dethrone God. Pride puts self first and becomes the root cause of greed, hatred, envy, covetousness, and much more.

Too often we try to deal with pride by putting ourselves down and feeling bad about ourselves. As we try this, we again and again find ourselves fighting back with thoughts of self-justification. It's an endless struggle and is not only unsuccessful, but dishonors the person that God has intended us to be.

There's a more godly way to learn humility. It comes by recognizing our complete dependence upon God. In practical, daily ways, we are trained in humility through expressing gratitude. Saying "thank you" shows that, to some degree, I have learned that everything comes from God. It shows me that He alone is God and I am not. As the grateful creation, I give thanks to my Creator for my daily bread and everything else needed for this life and for eternity.

Prayer

My Father, I come before You with my heart absolutely filled with gratitude. For this day and each day that You give me, I bring You thanks. For family, ministry, friends, and provision I give You thanks. My Lord, there have been times of great loss and sorrow...yet in the midst of those times You stayed by my side. Thank You. Your Word tells me that You have given me every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies through Christ Jesus. Thank You! Such knowledge helps me understand that whether in times of plenty or want, peace or war, health or illness...what You ultimately have given me is the gift of Yourself through Jesus. For that I am and will be eternally grateful. Amen!

–Dave Butts was the president of Harvest Prayer Ministries from 1993 until his death in 2022. He was the author of many books, articles and blogs.