

20171118 Job 13:15 Thanksgiving - Can we Be Thankful for the Good and the Bad?

Thanksgiving - Can we Be Thankful for the Good and the Bad?
Lessons for Living - By Faber McMullen © 2017



This morning we will take a look at how important it is to have a grateful heart. I think one of the most wonderful things my parents taught me and my sisters was how to say "Thank you". Whenever anyone shared a kindness with us or gave us a gift, we were required to sit down and write a small "Thank you" note expressing our gratitude. One time for Christmas I gave each of my children a package of 500 note cards with their names engraved on beautiful cards. This would make it easier for them to say "Thank you" for any kindness showed to them. I was trying to help them to become grateful people. So what's so great about being grateful?



NEWSWEEK NOVEMBER OF 2015¹ - 5 Scientifically Proven Benefits of Gratitude

1. Grateful people are more hopeful and healthier

2. Grateful people sleep better

[2009 study](#) in the *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* found that those who expressed gratitude more often slept better and longer than those who didn't.

3. Grateful people have an Increased self-esteem - They

feel better about themselves

A [2014 paper](#) in the *Journal of Applied Sports Psychology* found that athletes who expressed more gratitude toward their coaches, in general had higher self-esteem.

4. Grateful people are more helpful and empathetic to others (grateful people are helpful people)

One [2006 study](#) in the journal *Psychological Science* found that those who expressed more gratitude were also more likely to help out others.

5. Grateful people have Increased resilience - They bounce back from hardships

In a [2006 study](#) in the journal of *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, found that veterans with high levels of gratitude were less impacted by post-traumatic stress disorder.



In the McMullen house during Thanksgiving we go around the circle and each person is asked to express to the group something for which they are thankful. Usually the thanks given are for family, friends, a roof over our

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heads or something else, but I don't ever remember anyone giving thanks for something negative that has happened. No one says, "I'm grateful for losing my job and I'm thankful that my sweet little dog died."

The Bible tells us to ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)



But..... how can we do this when we are faced with tragedy? Just looking around this room this morning I see people who have owned land in our community for generations. They grew up on it. They were children on it. They became adults on it. Their parents died on it, and then through economic hardship they lost the land. How do they rejoice and give thanks

in this?

I see others in this room who have been abandoned and rejected by spouses that they had for decades. They have cared for these spouses and they've been the best husband or wife they've known how to be..... and then it all falls apart. They are left alone with no one to love and no one to love them. How does an abandoned person rejoice and give thanks in this?

I see others in here who lost their husband or wife to horrific illness while they were both in their prime. The survivor was left alone. It has been decades, but there are nights you can't sleep. There are days you can't face. There are no answers. The pain became so great you just wished God would go ahead and take you too while He was taking. You find yourself asking God over and over, "Why did this have to happen to me?" Or, "Why did you take him?" "Why did you take her?" How do you rejoice in this? How do you give thanks in this.

I see women in this group that were violated by selfish men. These men satisfied themselves at your expense and in some cases you were left with a child to support and raise. You did it alone. And an even greater pain was experienced by some of you that had to give a child up for adoption. There is a hole in your heart. It won't go away. The pain doesn't end. The heartbreak is never over. How do you give thanks in this? How do you get over this?

Lastly, I see others who have built businesses and careers. You were successful. you had dreams. You sacrificed and risked your energy and youth to build a practice, a business, or a trade. And then, you experienced betrayal as partners, employees, co-workers, or an owner was filled with greed and bettered themselves at your expense. They took not only your economic wealth, but your dignity. You are now cast aside, too old to redeem the time. How can a person rejoice in the midst of that? How can a person give thanks in that?

PAUSE

I am not sure that any human being has the capacity within themselves to rejoice or be thankful in the midst of any of this. But the Bible says that through the power of the Holy Spirit such a mental attitude can be developed.

When Job got so beat up and lost everything he was stubborn enough just to refuse to give up on God. His wife, neighbors and friends, basically said, "Job, what the hell; just give up and curse God and die." But what was Job's response? He said,

¹⁵ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. (Job 13:15)



I explained to the congregation on Wednesday night that I think our lives and our experiences here on earth are sort of like a parade. As we sit on the sidelines and watch a parade we are only able to see the float that is directly in front of us. We cannot see the beginning of the parade and we cannot see the end of the parade. If we are in the parade, we can only see the float that we're on. We don't have the entire perspective of what is going on. This or that awful experience or traumatic event in your life is the float that is in front of you. Our perspective can only comprehend the here and now, yet God's perspective sees what was and what is to come.

In some cases we do have a hand in bringing these heartaches on ourselves in one way or another, but sometimes we have nothing to do with it. It just happens to us because evil is in the world, and scripture tells us:

“The heart [of man] is hopelessly dark and deceitful, a puzzle that no one can figure out. But I, GOD, search the heart and examine the mind. I get to the heart of the human. I get to the root of things. I treat them as they really are, not as they pretend to be.”² (Jeremiah 17:9-10)

When these events happen we need to remember 3 things that the Bible says:

1 ²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son,³ (Romans 8:28)

² Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (Je 17:9–10). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 8:28–29). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

2 "Give Thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endureth forever" (Psalms 107, 118, 136 and I Chronicles 16:34)

3 ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.⁴ (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

The first verse has a big condition attached to it. It says that this promise is for "those who love God and who are called according to His purposes." So this is only a promise for the believer. It is saying that for the believer, God can use the insanity of life, the trauma, the heartache, and the misery somehow for our own good. These things happen to us and they are horrible, but He will use them for what we are told in verse 29 "to be conformed to the image of His Son." Guys, this is telling us that God will use the evil that others inflict on us and the damage we impose on ourselves to chip away the part of us that does not look, think, and behave like Jesus.



Think of it as though you are a big slab of stone. God is the great sculptor that will use those events to chip away all the stuff in you that is not like Jesus. After the chipping is done and all of the nicks and hammer marks are smoothed out, you will look and be like Him. He will use those negative things that happened for a positive purpose.

The second verse simply says, "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endures forever". This gives us a reason to hang onto hope. In the midst of the insanity give thanks and rely on the truth that "God is good." It is not He who is doing these things to you. Recently one of you told me with a broken heart, "God isn't hearing my prayers. I've given up on my prayers because my wife is divorcing me without cause. I told him, "God isn't divorcing you. Your wife is divorcing you." And I told him and I'm telling this congregation that God keeps and accounting and eventually He will set things right. So, give thanks to the Lord for He is good. God knows every tear that you have shed and he understands the heartbreak. In Psalm 56 a broken hearted shepherd king tells us,

⁴ [*The New King James Version*](#). (1982). (1 Th 5:16-18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; *Are they not in Your book?*⁹ When I cry out *to You*, Then my enemies will turn back; This I know, because God *is* for me. ¹⁰ In God (I will praise *His* word), In the LORD (I will praise *His* word), ¹¹ In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Yes my friend, "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His love endures forever." You're looking at one float on the parade and you can't see the beginning or end.

Lastly, let's look at that third verse:

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.⁵ (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

God is telling us to rejoice because He knows that life will bring us sorrow. These things are written to encourage us. He knew that we would find ourselves in holes that we couldn't crawl out of on our own, so He tells us through this passage to "pray without ceasing". That means "keep on praying. Praying helps us to understand that the parade is not over yet." The verse goes on to tell us "in everything give thanks" Why? Because it is God's will that we give thanks. Giving thanks to Him is part of what will heal us.

We must learn to give Him thanks when we are in the good and the bad, or when we have gone through the good and the bad. The choice is pretty clear. You can experience that terrible thing, and then adding on to that hurt you can spend a lifetime in discouragement, despondency, depression, and bitterness. Or, you can choose life and say, "I choose today to give thanks to the Lord for I believe Him to be good, and I will tell myself and others that His love endureth forever."

If you can let Him set you free to do this, you can have real peace, real shalom. In the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Philippi he says

⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Let us pray

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⁵ [*The New King James Version*](#). (1982). (1 Th 5:16-18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.