



# THANKFULNESS

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# LESSON ONE

## HOW WE CAN SHOW THANKFULNESS

- Have you ever read the book 'The Five Love Languages?' If so, what are your love languages?
- Does thankfulness come easy to you?
- Think of a time you showed thankfulness and how it was received.



I can remember as a child when the book *'The Five Love Languages'* came out. It was THE book to have. Everyone talked about it, referred to it, preached on it, and took the quiz. While it's main objective was to equip people on understanding how to love their significant others and how they best receive love, I also believe that these five love languages were honestly ways to show thankfulness, just with an emphasis on love.

Just as we as individuals seek and thrive off of feeling loved and praised, so does our Heavenly Father. If you've been in or around church for any length of time, I'm sure you have heard that we should 'Enter his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise.' But some of you may be asking how exactly am i supposed to show God thankfulness? I have often thought, 'what can I possibly do to show a God, who has it all and gave it all, that I'm truly thankful?' While I believe that God is not confined to a set list of ways I would like to look into five things that move the heart of God: God's Five Love Languages.

### A Servant's Heart

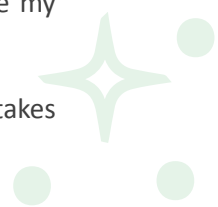
God delights in a servant. He frequently irritated the religious dignitaries of his day because he was more comfortable serving and eating and mingling with the poor and the outcast than with them. He explained that to follow him, the disciples would have to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him. He was the ultimate servant, shedding his blood and giving his life on Calvary so that we wouldn't have to spend an eternity in hell away from him. Every time we go out of our way to serve someone else, we are, in essence, showing God our gratitude. When we take the attention and focus off of our own life and focus on someone else, we glorify God and prove that his example is meaningful to us. When we see a new young person timidly come to the altar and visibly moved by God's presence, and make our way and put our hand on their shoulder and sincerely pray for God to meet their need, that is an act of thankfulness to our God. When you call up that girl you haven't seen in youth service in a while, just to say you miss her, that's thankfulness.

"And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'" Matthew 25:40 NLT.

God is watching and knows our hearts, and when He sees someone with a servant's heart He takes delight in it.

### Obedience

Have you ever told your parents "I'm sorry," and they respond by saying "I would rather you just obey than to hear you say sorry all the time?" Well, God pretty much says the same thing in His word. "Obedience is better than sacrifice" are his exact words. If we want to know how to show God how thankful we are, obey His word! Not just the parts we like, or agree with, or that come easy to us. Obey his word, ALL of it, and that will be the greatest act of thankfulness you could ever give God. His word says,



“And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” Jer. 29:13.

When we make sure we are keeping up with our personal time of prayer and devotion to the Lord, it not only benefits us spiritually, but it shows Him our gratitude for all he has done for us. We prove that we can't live without Him and that we need him everyday.

### **Faithfulness**

We often focus on God's faithfulness to us. He is the God that said He would never leave us nor forsake us. The God that is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The one that even when we don't believe, remains faithful. These are all givens, absolutes in the word of God that are easy to receive. But what about our faithfulness? It seems like it should be something we would strive to reciprocate. God expressed in His word when he talks about men like Noah and David, that because of their faithfulness he would not carry out his wrath as he intended to. Their faithfulness so pleased God that it deterred the judgment of God. That is incredible to me when I really stop to ponder it. Our faithfulness to the things of God and His house could quite literally move the hand of Gods judgment on someone's life or a certain situation. While we can't sit here and think 'I'm going to stronghold God into doing what I want because I'm faithful,' we can take comfort in knowing that God is taking note of our faithfulness.

### **Sacrifice**

When you look up the definition of sacrifice, it's pretty gory. They talk about the sacrificing of animals, of the killing of a victim on an altar, of the shedding of blood. But one definition that sticks out is:

'destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else.' We all know God paid the ultimate sacrifice on Calvary. His body was destroyed quite literally for the sake of our eternity. But once again, let us reflect on this from the perspective of us to God. What better way to prove our gratitude to God than to surrender our will for the sake of seeing his will fulfilled in our life. We sing songs like, 'I surrender all,' but do we really surrender all.

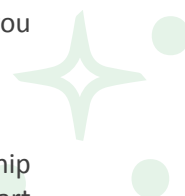
Can we say that we have truly surrendered every part of our lives to the one who died for us? Are you sacrificial with your money? Are you sacrificial with your time? This one is tough and I believe a very telling one. If we can truly live a life that displays sacrifice, then that will be a life exemplifying thankfulness.

Hebrews 13: 16 - “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

This is an act of thankfulness that requires a lot of introspective analysis. We have to proactively search our hearts and lives to make sure we have truly surrendered everything to God - no part of our lives is off limits to God. We can't serve God with all of our hearts and exclude any aspect of it. He wants it all! I urge you seek your heart and mind today and ask God to reveal the parts of you that you have not surrendered to him.

### **Worship**

Lastly, and certainly not least, is the fact that “God inhabits the praises of His people.” To worship requires not just emotional and verbal acknowledgment but also physical. This is where your heart and mind meet your body, and every part of your being is engaged in actively giving thanks to God.



To worship you I live... you cannot sing that and truly mean it without throwing your hands up in surrender and losing yourself in worship. This is why we believe in exuberant praise. It comes from a heart that is so overwhelmingly thankful for what God has done in our lives that we cannot contain it inside. It's the ultimate expression of your inward emotion. This coincidentally is also the one that embodies all the previous ones.

Each of the previous acts of thankfulness we talked about are an act of worship. When we serve, we are worshiping. When we obey Gods word, we are worshiping him. When we are faithful to his word and the house of God, we are worshiping him. When we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God —this is your true and proper worship. All of these acts of thankfulness are the truest forms of worship and they all proof of a life that is thankful to their Savior.



#### Discussion questions:

- Are you actively showing thankfulness to God?
- In what way could you be better at thanking God?
- Is there one of these 5 you struggle with? Why?



#### ***about the writer: Rocio Beebe***

Rocio Beebe is the mommy of three adorable and rambunctious children, Sofia, Jake, and Lily. She and her husband, Cole Beebe, attend The Pentecostals of Cooper City where they have served as Youth Pastors for the last six years. They currently serve the UPCI Florida Youth Ministry as Youth President.

## LESSON TWO

# HOW TO REMAIN THANKFUL IN YOUR SEASON

- Which of the four seasons is your favorite and why?
- Find an old photo of yourself. In what ways have you changed and matured since then?
- What is a goal you are working on for your next season?



**It's graduation day! You're dressed in your cap and gown, a college degree in hand, and you start your dream job on Monday. You did it! You accomplished the goal you have worked toward for the last decade of your life. Now, what...? The thrill of seeking is gone and the mundane reality of life sets in. Just like a new car, the excitement wears off quickly.**

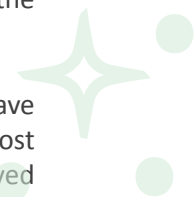
A new season is dawning, and you must learn how to find purpose and joy in it. It's a season of consistency and repetition. There isn't anything wrong with this type of season...It's just, different. Different than the goal-driven, ever-changing, exciting season to which you're accustomed. It's time to #adult. Yikes!

Or maybe you're a student and just starting on this journey of vision casting and dreaming. You have a bright future ahead of you filled with preparation, prayer, fasting, and planning for your future. No matter what season you're in, we're all subject to feelings of discontentment, complacency, and flat-out ungratefulness. We're human, after all! So, through all the ebbs and flows of life, how can you remain thankful in your current season? By focusing on the harvest!

### The God of Harvest

God speaks about the great harvest many times throughout the Bible. The multitudes will gather unto Him, and you have the incredible opportunity to be a part of it. When you place your attention on eternity and seek to reach the lost, you will find fulfillment and everlasting joy. Through each season, the fruit of your harvest will begin to evolve. Whether you're a student, youth leader, parent, or elder there is a crop ready to be harvested. You may produce grain in one season, and fruit in the next, and although they are different, they are equally valuable in the kingdom of God. You may think "I'm only a student, none of these other stages apply to me," but please understand that the struggles of life will hit you in every season of life, but if you cultivate a life of thankfulness to God now, this will become a natural reaction for you in years to come. Take it from me, spare yourself the trouble of comparing and evaluating your fruit based on what your sister or brother has produced. That will yield ungratefulness faster than you can blink! Instead, operate in the giftings God has given you and reach souls.

As a mother, my field looks different than it did two years ago (it's a little challenging to have meaningful conversations with a two-year-old constantly asking for snacks, Ha!), but what's most important is that I am still producing fruit, because that is where my purpose and joy is derived from. If you are in a transition phase or going through a difficult season, your crop may be affected for a period of time, but we serve a gracious and understanding God. He will carry you through, and I believe your harvest will be even greater in the days to come. God has chosen YOU to do a great work in EVERY season of your life!





## The Threshing Floor

“He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.” Matthew 3:12 NLT

The threshing floor is a place of separation and revelation. It is where the harvest was prepared by separating the grain from the chaff for the purpose of exposing and collecting the most valuable part of the crop. God puts His children through the separation process so He can refine and prepare us to be fruitful in every season. He removes the chaff, which is also defined as the inedible, wasteful part of the crop, out of our lives, so the remains are able to produce a harvest for His glory. Through every high and low, mountaintop and valley, we can find perfect peace and thankfulness when we lay ourselves on the altar and surrender our will for His will. God has great plans for this generation of young Apostolic ladies. You are powerful and you are chosen!

### Discussion questions:

- How do you remain thankful during difficult seasons?
- In what ways are you working toward producing a harvest and reaching the lost?
- Share your experience of going through the threshing floor separation process (when God removed the waste out of your life and refined you).



### *about the writer: Noel Hixon*

Noel and her husband, Shaun, have served as Student Pastors at the Cathedral of Pentecost in South Florida for more than ten years. She is the mom of two beautiful blessings, Everly and Levi. Drinking coffee while watching the sunset over a beautiful view is her version of heaven on earth.

## LESSON THREE

# WHY WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL

- Think about a time when someone did something nice for you. What did they do?
- How did it make you feel?
- Did you tell anyone? If so, why?

q&a



**Luke 17:11-19 tells the story of ten men who were lepers.**


These ten men were, no doubt, ostracized from their community as they were stricken with a sickness that was looked down upon in their society. In fact, it was written in the law that they be kept away from everyone in their community to keep their leprosy from spreading to others. They had to be separated from friends, family, basically everyone! Their sickness dictated that they had to be outsiders as long as they were sick and only the priest could determine if they were cleansed and could return to their homes.

It was in this hopeless situation that Jesus encountered these men. They shouted out to Jesus and begged him to have mercy on them. Jesus, who was known for doing many notable miracles, told them to go and show themselves to the priest. These men knew that the only way that they could approach the priest was if they were healed from their leprosy. So, with faith in their hearts, they set off to see the priest; not knowing what would happen, but trusting that if Jesus said to go, they needed to go. While they were on their way, something miraculous happened – they received their healing!

Can you imagine how excited they must have been? Leprosy was the kind of disease that would have caused them to be horribly disfigured. These men would have, not only scars and scabs all over their skin, but likely could have missing toes, fingers, ears, nose, etc. They were the kind of men that you wouldn't want to look at. Their features would probably be the source of nightmares for many. However, one encounter with Jesus changed their entire lives. As they made their way to see the priest, they saw the scars begin to clear and the scabs and sores begin to heal. They must have been elated; they must have been rejoicing at the thought that they could now go home to be with their families. Yes, they may still be disfigured, but they were satisfied with the thought that they could now be in the company of their loved ones and the rest of the people in the village.

One leper, however, when he recognized that he had been healed, took a moment to turn back and thank Jesus for the miracle he had done in his life. Jesus asked him, "Where are the other ones that were healed?" Surely there had to be others that would give God thanks for what had happened for them.

As a result of this man's gratitude, Jesus did something that the other nine were not a part of. Jesus told him "Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." Not only did this man receive healing from his physical scars, but because of his gratefulness, because he said, "Thank You," because he gave glory to God, he was made completely whole. Perhaps his features that were disfigured grew back, or maybe his emotional or mental health that had suffered during his time of sickness was restored. Whatever the situation, his act of giving thanks caused him to reap a greater blessing than those who had said nothing at all; those that were satisfied with an outward cleansing, but no real transformation.



Showing gratitude is one of the ways in which we display our love for Jesus. It is a way in which we give Him glory for all the things that he has done for us. When we enter into his presence, we should take the time to tell Him thanks for his goodness and blessings in our lives (Psalm 100:6-7).

Saying thank you also serves a dual purpose. Studies show that expressing gratitude helps our mental health by reducing feelings of anxiety and fear. When we are thankful, we focus less on our situations and problems and focus more on the Problem-solver. So, the next time someone does something nice for you or when God blesses you (which, by the way, he does every day), take time out to sincerely say “Thank you.” It may just change your life!

#### Discussion questions:

- Write down at least 3 things that God has done for you in the past week.
- Did you remember to thank Him?
- If not, take some time to do that now. If you already did, do it again. We can never say thank you enough!



#### ***about the writer: Sophia Gordon***


Sophia Gordon is a licensed minister with the UPCI and pastors along with her husband, Dexter Gordon, at one of the greatest churches in the world, El Bethel Church. She is the mom to four wonderful kiddos, Mikayla, Jayden, Seth-Aaron, and Noah. When not at church, she can usually be found (or not) hiding from her kids, searching for the elusive “peace and quiet” she has heard so much about.



## LESSON FOUR

# THANKFULNESS IN SPITE OF ADVERSITY

- What are you thankful for today?
- Are you able to identify things you are thankful for every day?
- Can you remember the last time you thanked God?



**Thanksgiving is almost here! We all anticipate the food, the fellowship, and the happiness that surrounds this holiday. However, we often forget that Thanksgiving is also a season to give thanks. Human beings forget.**

David said in Psalm 103:2, “Bless the Lord oh my soul and forget not His benefits.”

David recognized that he would probably forget the blessings of God, so he made sure to remind himself not to forget!

Thankfulness was important to him and it should be to us as well.

Psalm 100:4 states, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving.”

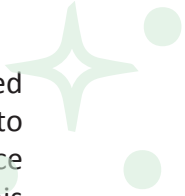
Thanksgiving was so important to King David that he said, that it should be the first thing we do as we enter God’s house or God’s presence. Now, it’s very easy to give thanks when abundance, blessings, and joy surround us. However, adversity is very real in our lives and knocks on everyone’s door sooner or later.

When the “mountain top” seasons of life become valleys and adversity invades our lives, it can become very difficult to be thankful. Pain and sorrow can blind us and keep our focus on the difficult circumstances.

The book of Job shows us a man who was blessed and favored by God and from one day to another, he lost everything he had. After tragedy struck his life, Job expressed,

“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” Job 1:21.

Job did two things when adversity knocked at his door, he thanked God and he worshiped Him. Then, Job goes on to talk to God about his situation and continues to draw close to him despite the loss he had suffered. Job is a great example for us to follow when we face adversity and perhaps he knew something that James wrote in the first chapter of his book, in verses 2 to 4,



“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its

work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

I have faced many losses in my life. I clearly remember thinking of Job while walking through what seemed to be a never-ending valley. I was reminded of my pain every single day and although I was still blessed, I didn’t find the words to thank God for what I had. Sorrow and sometimes anger would creep in and weaken my faith in God. Yet, time and time again, God reminded me through His word, that He is sovereign and that His purpose was taking place in my life even through adversity.

Many times I fought with the desire to not thank Him through worship or in prayer, but like David, I had told myself so many times that I would not forget His benefits. Therefore, a wave of memories would flood my mind and I would remember the goodness of God, His mercy towards me, and His blessings even in the middle of the trials. During those times, like James described it, I learned that my faith was being tested and it was making me whole!

God’s purpose for our lives is first, to make us whole so that we can then be used of Him. The ten lepers in Luke 17 desired to be healed and they cried out to Jesus for mercy. As they followed Jesus’ instructions, they were healed, but only one turned back and thanked him for his miracle. When Jesus saw him at his feet, he told him, “Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.” Luke 17:19. Jesus was not only interested in healing them, He wanted to save them. Jesus wanted them to be whole, but only the one who thanked Him in spite of having faced such difficult adversity, was made whole.

Today, I can look back and understand the reason why I went through adversity. I can also see God’s promises fulfilled in my life. Through it all, I have learned to be thankful and trust a sovereign God. I encourage you to thank God in spite of the circumstances you may be going through. Find strength and courage knowing that God is aware of your adversity and has trusted you to go through it so, you can be made mature and complete for His glory!

#### Discussion questions:

- What can you do to trust God when you go through adversity?
- Can you identify a time where you grew after going through a valley?
- What do you think God is doing in your life through the adversity you may be?



#### ***about the writer: Adriana Marin***

Adriana is wife to Jonny Marin and mom to Naomi and Keilah. She lives in Tampa, Florida where God called them to pastor a Spanish church, Iglesia Vida Nueva. Adriana is a Social Worker and is passionate about serving God and people.