

## Prayer & Worship Night

### Trevor Atwood Slide

Before Social scientist and Harvard Professor Arthur Brooks began writing popular level books- he was writing a lot academic papers- read by very few people with very little public critique.

So after he released his first book intended for the general public...he wasn't expecting the letter he received

"Dear Professor Brooks: You are a fraud." The author of the letter then proceeded in 5000 words- to criticize in vitriolic detail every chapter in the book- informing him of his failures as a researcher and.. just a person in general. It took Dr, Brooks 20 minutes just to read the letter.

He said after reading a letter like that- most of us only see 3 options.

- 1- Ignore him- Why waste my time?
- 2- Insult him- "Get a life man! Don't you have something better to do?"
- 3- Destroy him- Pick out his most glaring errors and throw them back in his face.

The problem with all three of those choices- is they give into one of the most dangerous human emotions: contempt.

Contempt is a combination of anger and frustration that leads to disgust. Contempt is the last stop before you get to sheer hatred.

Dr. John Gottman- who's famous for studying what keeps married couples together for the long haul- said the number one predictor of divorce is the presence of contempt.

You know what Dr. Gottman looked for to determine whether a relationship had sunk to contemptuous levels?

The Eye Roll. He said when he consistently saw "eye rolls" as couples continuing response to each other- he could almost guarantee there was contempt.

When you have contempt for someone- you feel like you are superior to them in some way. Morally, intellectually, relationally- and you tend to demean them for whatever you think they lack.

There are 2 places- one digital and one sociological where contempt runs wild today.

Politics & Social Media. ...

Social Media is a contempt machine....and the political space today largely encourages contempt for your political enemies. This is national politics right down to local school board elections.

We swim in a digital age of ongoing, ever-present contempt. We consume it by the bucketloads in short form video- which may be the worst possible way for the brain to take in information...and the best possible way to get contempt to stick in your mind and reinforce itself over and over.

And its tearing apart our relationships.

When you have contempt- you have no vision for the other person's change...you think...You are inferior to me and you always will be. Contempt believes nothing. Hopes nothing. It just accepts what it sees.

Its filled with sarcasm, demeaning humor, and yes...eye rolls. All little acts that say "You are worthless. Beneath me. And you will always be that way."

So now back to Arthur Brooks and his Contemptuous Fan Letter.

As Dr. Brooks thought about which of the three ways to handle his unfortunate fan... suddenly he realized something.

"He read my book! Somebody read my book!"- and strangely he was filled with gratitude for the man. So he wrote back "I know you really hated my book- but it did take a lot of work to write it and i deeply appreciate your time and attention to every detail."

15 minutes later...the guy emailed him back.

Arthur braced himself as he opened it. But instead of contempt and hatred...the man said he was shocked that Dr. Brooks actually read his note and the next time he was in Dallas- he said "we should grab dinner!"

So did the man suddenly change his mind about the book? Of course not. But he learned that Arthur Brooks was the kind of man that showed gratitude. That honored the efforts of others. He learned that there was actually something about Arthur Brooks he could like

### **Finding the Good Life Series Slide**

Spiritual Connection  
Deep Relationships  
Transcendent Purpose

These 3 things aren't completely separate categories... and we're going to get into that today.

## **6 Phrases of a Deep Relationship**

Today- Thank You

### **Title Slide- "Thank You: How Honor & Gratitude End Contempt"- Luke 17:1-19**

Tonights passage is in Luke's gospel. I know we just finished Luke..but this is a chapter I actually skipped with the intention of coming back to it now.

Because what is in this passage says something pretty profound...even jarring...about the way we should approach being thankful.

#### **Luke 17:1-2**

**He said to his disciples, "Offenses will certainly come, but woe to the one through whom they come!"**

**2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to stumble.**

Justice assumed here.

Basically- the comfort is- when offenses come that lead you to contempt- realize you are not the one in charge of settling the score. Leave that to God.

#### **Romans 12:19-21**

**Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God's wrath, because it is written, Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord. 20 But**

**If your enemy is hungry, feed him.**

**If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.**

**For in so doing**

**you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.**

**21 Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.**

#### **Luke 17:3-4**

**3 Be on your guard. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. 4 And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and comes back to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."**

This is a tall order... "I forgive you" is one of our DR6 phrases. how can he say must

## **Luke 11:4**

**And forgive us our sins,  
for we ourselves also forgive everyone  
in debt to us.  
And do not bring us into temptation.**

To forgive like this you have to have an ongoing conscious understanding that God has forgiven you.

Again- notice this whole idea of “must forgive” is based on an understanding of your relationship to God- “Spiritual Connection”. Your spiritual connection to God- or lack of it is going to filter into the depth and quality of your relationships. period.

Let's see how the apostles respond.

## **Luke 17:5-6**

**5 The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.”**

**6 “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed,” the Lord said, “you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.**

The apostles are like “man...if we're gonna forgive like that...we need more faith”.

They are asking more quantity of faith. Like- we have a little faith...but not that much.

Jesus is saying, “What you are lacking is not an AMOUNT of faith...its the QUALITY of your faith that's the problem.”

See- if you had the tiniest amount of the ‘real deal’ faith...the faith that understands how much God has forgiven you... mulberry trees would be flying around. Ya'll would be like Neo in the Matrix out here dodging bullets. You'd be the epitome of a non anxious presence.

Instead- as soon as somebody seems to poses a threat to you...you just turn into the baptized version of your enemy. full of contempt and moral superiority.

and that leads us straight into this dramatic shift- where Jesus lights into a story that seems to not really connect...in which he hits us with one of those weird statements that nobody...i mean nobody expects Jesus to say.

## **Luke 17:7-10**

**7 “Which one of you having a servant tending sheep or plowing will say to him when he comes in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? 8 Instead,**

**will he not tell him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, get ready, and serve me while I eat and drink; later you can eat and drink'? 9 Does he thank that servant because he did what was commanded? 10 In the same way, when you have done all that you were commanded, you should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we've only done our duty.' "**

How he gets them thinking about being the master. The boss. The one in charge.

Then he switches it up...and says "Actually, you're the servant."

Here's what he's doing.

He recognizes in his disciples the attitude of entitlement.

And he's seen this before in his disciples.

### **Luke 9:46 & 49 & 52-56**

46- arguing about who's the greatest

49- they find someone else driving demons out in Jesus name...but not our tribe...so we tried to stop them.

52-56- The Samaritans didn't respect us. James and John "You think its about time to call down fire on their village?"

### **17:9-10**

**Does he thank that servant because he did what was commanded? 10 In the same way, when you have done all that you were commanded, you should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we've only done our duty.' "**

That entitlement has crept up in you- where now it doesn't really seem like you're in this because you know who I am and what I'm doing- rather- you are in this to get in on the honor that is due only to God.

Instead of looking for me to honor you- you need to understand that I don't NEED you. That word "unworthy" is sometimes translated "worthless".

Which kind of sounds like contempt doesn't it? But Jesus is not de-humanizing them... in fact- he is RE-humanizing them.

Think about it. The original temptation to the first man and woman in the garden of eden was EYE-rolling contempt toward God- and humanity seeking God's to take God's glory and honor from him. They tried to ascend their humanity and take on divinity.

## **Gen 3:1 & 5**

Did God really say (Eye Roll)

He lied to you (character defamation)- you won't die. you have unlimited potential to be just like him if you break his command and take what should have been yours all along.

## **Luke 17:9-10**

Jesus is not dehumanizing them...he's putting them in their place. They are not his equals. Not his peers. They do not share his honor as the Son of God. Instead- they are servants of God.

Don't look for God to fall all over himself to thank you for being awesome. In fact- that word 'unworthy' literally means useless...you bring nothing to the table with God.

## **BUBBLE MOWER**

But the truth is- God doesn't just put up with you. He loves you. He even likes you. But he doesn't need you nor is he ever indebted to you. The only reason humans are worth honoring at all is because we are made in God's image. We are his handiwork. His craftsmanship.

Now- watch the way this finishes.

## **Luke 17:11-13**

**11 While traveling to Jerusalem, he passed between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten men with leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"**

Notice-

The scene is set. These are the people that are outcasts. Looked down on. They are getting close to Samaria...where the people didn't travel to Jerusalem to worship, and instead had a little different take on where they should worship. Those folks were looked down on with contempt by the Jews who worshipped in Jerusalem.

And- we're with a leper colony. Lepers- because their disease is so contagious and threatening- and would make them unclean for any kind of temple worship- had to warn people by shouting out when they came near.

So Luke has set us up here with EXACTLY the makeup of people that would have had the most contemptuous response.

But notice. Instead of shouting out warning- according to the law- they shout out in desperate faith- honoring Jesus as their master. They cry out for mercy!

Now- we're not told- but according to the way the disciples treated children who tried to come see Jesus- we can pretty safely assume- they would have been ready to put these lepers in their place.

But Jesus sees them- and responds

#### **Luke 17:14-16**

**14 When he saw them, he told them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And while they were going, they were cleansed.**

You see that word Cleansed. That is a ritual worship word. In order to be admitted back into society- they had to have a priest confirm that their disease was healed. And listen- this meant wholeness. They couldn't have fingers missing or a part of their nose fallen off like would typically happen with leprosy.

Imagine. running to the priest and seeing- ON THE WAY- before a Priest can check you out...MY NOSE IS BACK! MY FINGERS...

If you were one of these lepers- removed from your family- an outcast- wouldn't you want the OK from priest- wouldn't you want to immediately return to your neighborhood- to your family- to your spouse, parents, and kids?

**15 But one of them, seeing that he was healed, returned and, with a loud voice, gave glory to God. 16 He fell facedown at his feet, thanking him. And he was a Samaritan.**

One of the ten- stops- returns to Jesus and thanks him.

Now- note the connection of Giving Glory to God- and Thanking Jesus.

Note the posture of thanksgiving here. He is facedown at his feet.

In an honor-shame culture- this is the position of giving honor.

This man is prostrating himself in front of Jesus...honoring Jesus by giving thanks- and at the same time- he is giving glory to God. Meaning- he is pointing away from himself- and TOWARD GOD as the one who is responsible for this miracle.

And look at cheeky little Luke. And he was a Samaritan. This is yet another case- Just like in Luke 10 when Jesus answered the question who is my neighbor- he used a Samaritan as the hero. Here Luke notes that the one guy who took the time to return and give glory to God and thanks and honor to Jesus- was the very one that James and John and the other disciples had recently held in contempt so much they wanted to call fire down on his village.

Finally- watch what Jesus points out.

**Luke 17:17-19**

**17 Then Jesus said, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18 Didn’t any return to give glory to God except this foreigner? ” 19 And he told him, “Get up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.”**

Jesus says- “Your faith has saved you”

He doesn’t mean ‘healed you’. The other 9 were healed just like this guy was. When he says your “faith has saved you” he is taking about spiritual connection.

The same way the man who hung next to Jesus on the cross cried out for mercy and put his faith in JESUS as the MASTER- the son of God- so this Samaritan leper has moved a mulberry tree.

His faith in Jesus not only healed him physically it healed him spiritually.

Wasn’t really a place for saying “thank you” in an honor shame culture. When someone did you a favor- you were now on the hook for paying them back. Each time you were trying to OUTSHINE or outdo someone in showing them honor.

But when this man returns to say Thank you- he is essentially ending the payback cycle. He is saying- You Win Jesus- I cannot possibly return this favor. In essence, its saying “I’m an unworthy servant. I have nothing of matched value to what you have done for me. I’m at a loss. Thank you.”

This leper has now gone from shouting “STAY AWAY- I’m a leper. I’m UNCLEAN- to shouting “JESUS COME NEAR! HAVE MERCY ON ME!” to now shouting “THANKS BE TO GOD FOR THIS INDESCRIBABLE GIFT. MASTER- I have nothing to offer except my whole life!” and he bows at Jesus’ feet.

**GOSPEL INVITATION**

When you realize what Christ has done to forgive you. That when you were hell-bound- holding God in contempt, wrestling away control from him...you and I were worse off than this leper.

We alienated ourselves from God. In our pride- we stole God’s honor. I’m the master of my own destiny. I’ll decide what is good for me.

But that does not lead to the good life. Instead it leaves us isolated, miserable, and disconnected spiritually from God.

In all of that mess- Jesus knowing all that about you-went to a cross and died. for you. When he did that- he was trading places with you. He was taking all the shame and

punishment you deserve for rebelling against the true King- and he removed it from you.

Because Jesus died in your place- you are now forgiven. For everything you have done and ever will do. You have been made clean.

And now- you can return. Just like that leper. You can come back to the community. Back to the people you have been alienated from. And you can give glory to God with your life.

You now are a welcome resident of the Kingdom of God.

But it doesn't happen automatically. You have to receive it. You have to return. You have to say yes, Jesus- I believe you have made me clean. Forgiven me of my sin. And my life now belongs to you.

Will you do that today?

2 Points of practice:

**1) Serve gladly because you know you're loved, not to get a 'Thank You'.**

Now- the application here on Mothers day weekend is not to go to your Mom and say- "This is a made up holiday- you serve because you know your loved- not to get a thank you"

BUT... holidays like Mothers day- fathers day- or birthdays do set us up for entitlement.

You deserve this in advertising.

You are placed at the center- while others revolve around you.

The way to combat entitlement—- always expecting a thank you- is to grab hold of the transcendent purpose in all you do.

Service of others is actually a service to God. Because you are serving people he loves.

And if you know that the most important person in the universe already loves and values you. don't need to go after those thank yous- Jesus has already loved and valued you in his sacrifice.

It frees you to serve others without expecting something in return.

**Colossians 3:22-25**

**Slaves, obey your human masters in everything. Don't work only while being watched, as people-pleasers, but work wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, 24 knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong he has done, and there is no favoritism**

See- you are free from contempt. Love your enemies. Pray for them. Serve them. Let God take care of the justice.

## **2) 'Thank you' is great. 'I Thank God for you' is even better.**

Expressing Gratitude is one of the healthiest things anyone can do.

It helps you develop a positive mindset, reduces stress, anxiety, and depression.

It improves emotional resilience- opening up cognitive pathways in your brain that help you better cope with negative emotions that often accompany difficult circumstances.

Expressing gratitude improves focus, immunity, and sleep. It helps with social bonding and can even reduce the number of cases you experience of headaches, infections, digestion problems, congestion, muscle soreness, and nausea.

Gratitude is literally like a reverse prescription drug commercial. Its side effects are all awesome!

They are all a part of a life of flourishing. Gratitude is absolutely a key part of a good life. And doesn't that make sense. As a human being created by a Good God- we are primarily created to know and worship God- and know and love each other.

So God has made your brain and body respond with incredibly great ways when you act in accordance with the way he made you.

Even atheist and agnostic social scientists and doctors will tell you that expressing gratitude is really good for you. The problem is- gratitude needs to be expressed TO someone. A person. The UNIVERSE CANNOT receive your thanks.

But God can. Its what you were made for. God literally made us to give us good things- and us return glory, honor and gratitude to him.

You know, you can't really find "thank you" in the NT at all...like person to person.

But what you do find is something the Apostle Paul does in most of his letters to churches.

## **Philippians 1:1 & 3**

He identifies himself as a servant of Jesus.  
Then he thanks God for the people he is addressing.

This does 2 things

First- it fights against entitlement. I'm a servant doing my duty- not a hero for you to laud and give glory to.it brings Transcendent purpose into the conversation.

Second-

When he says "I thank God for you" - he immediately brings spiritual connection into the conversation.

That's the better "Thank you"

Now- we're not here to be the "thank you" police. But try it out.

It really is honoring- maybe more honoring to hear someone say "I thank God for you" instead of thank you.

It kind of takes it to another level.

"Pass the salt please"

Sure

"I thank God for you"

That will deepen a relationship FAST.

I want to finish today by showing you just a few examples of where this pops up in other places in the NT- in Paul's letters to various churches. Because its the same instruction. And hopefully it will give you a better imagination for how to do it.

## **POSSIBLE CUT TO ROMANS 12:9-10**

### **2 Corinthians 4:1**

**Therefore, since we have this ministry because we were shown mercy, we do not give up.**

### **2 Corinthians 4:7**

**7 Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us.**

## 2 Corinthians 4:14-15

For we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you. 15 Indeed, everything is for your benefit so that, as grace extends through more and more people, it may cause thanksgiving to increase to the glory of God.

## Romans 12:9-10

10 Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another.

Remember Arthur Brooks- To someone seemingly undeserving of his gratitude- he took the lead in showing honor.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:18-19

See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray constantly, 18 give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Don't stifle the Spirit

-- I'll summarize it like this:

**Don't expect thanks, but generously give it.**

Prayer counselors-

**Do you need to pray to receive Jesus' gift of forgiveness tonight?** I want you to seek out one of our prayer counselors- and let them pray with you. Then we want to talk about the next step of obedience with you.

Do you have a **seemingly impossible situation to be grateful in?** Come and pray with one of our prayer counselors.

**Do you need healing-** crying out to Jesus for mercy tonight? Prayer counselors

**Do you know that you have been living an entitled life-** demanding recognition and honor from others- instead of giving it generously? Come and pray and be prayed for.

The Altar is open.

## Lords Supper

Eucharist- means thanksgiving.

Literally- Good Grace