



An Attitude Toward Gratitude: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

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Group Leader Notes

Today, we're concluding a series of sermons on generous living – asking how do we find true joy, live with generosity, and practice gratitude. When we do these; it leads to a deeper life and faith. I titled the sermon, *An Attitude Toward Gratitude* because gratitude leads to joy and fulfillment.

Questions: How do we find lasting joy and deep-seated gratitude?

Bottom Line: What leads to deeper meaning in life is practicing gratitude and being thankful.

Memory Verse: Acts 20:35

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Take Home Message:

Pursuing pleasure, happiness, or our own fulfillment doesn't lead to lasting joy or meaning but leaves us wanting more. Ultimately, we find ourselves disappointed. Jesus points us to a purpose greater than ourselves – to invest in others, love others, give, and serve others. When we do these things, our attitude changes. We become grateful and more generous people. Our relationship with others begins to reflect our relationship with God.

Main Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray continually, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Other Scripture References

Ecclesiastes 2:1, 4, 7-8, 10-11

Matthew 16:24

Mark 12:31

Psalms 118:1, 5, 6a, 7a, 28-29

Luke 21:3-4

Teaching Points:

- Hedonism: Pleasure is the highest good, the ultimate pursuit. If we had more, we'd be happy – more money, more things, more experiences.
- People who practice gratitude can benefit from stronger immunity, lower blood pressure, better sleep, more joy and pleasure, more compassion, and less loneliness.
- Give thanks to the Lord, not because He needs our thanks but because prayer shapes our hearts.

Group Discussion

Begin in prayer before reading and discussing the text.

1. We are all guilty of taking for granted, what we have or the blessings in our lives. When we navigate difficult circumstances, we struggle to see any good. Does this resonate with you? Take a moment to think about your health, family, job, and church community.
2. The Greek root word for pleasure is *Hedonai*, the root for hedonism; it's also at the root of the word for Eden in Hebrew. In the Garden of Eden, it was God's original intention for us, his creation, to find pleasure, joy, and life in him. Pleasure, delight, and joy is at the root of our relationship with God.

Read John 15:9, 11-12. Can you explain the connection between the joy in our relationship with God and Jesus' command for us to love one another?

3. Eli Weisel, the Holocaust survivor who wrote the book *Man's Search for Meaning*, said this: "When a person doesn't have gratitude, something is missing in his or her humanity." What do you think this means?
4. Pastor Joshua said, "In my own life I find that when I'm more generous in my giving I am more grateful, I'm happier, I live with more joy. When you are more generous in giving, how does that make you feel?"
5. This Thanksgiving week, as you sit at the table with family and friends to celebrate the abundance of God's blessings upon your life this past year, consider the ways that you can use your time, talents, and treasure to become a blessing to those around you.

Let's Pray 1 Corinthians 16:34

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.