

DEVOTIONAL #6

TITLE: THE ONE CONSTANT

We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers (1 Thessalonians 1:2, ESV).

Name one thing you “**always**” find yourself doing, something that’s “**constantly**” part of your day. How often would *giving thanks* be an honest answer to that?

Perhaps you’d say you’re constantly talking on the telephone. Or constantly busy, constantly working. Maybe you feel as though you’re always thinking about the future, making plans for what you hope to see happen next, a mixture of both worry and optimism. You may always be glued to the news, or picking up after your kids, or stuck in traffic trying to get home. What are your own particular *always* things?

According to Scripture, one of the most important things to be always, constantly doing is being thankful. Not in a sappy-greeting-card, rose-colored denial of reality. Not in a pretentious attempt to keep from admitting that life can be hard and upsetting. To be giving thanks *always* and *constantly* means simply maintaining an overall, ongoing attitude of thanksgiving . . . **because gratitude is the attitude that sets the altitude for living.** It is often the difference between being overwhelmed by what just happened and being excited for what’s just ahead.

You may counter, however, that this kind of heart and mind is practically impossible to keep up. Not everything is easy to be happy about. Not every week comes equipped with enough suitable “gratitude” material to work with. But one of the secrets found in Paul’s words to the Thessalonians and (more importantly) his example toward them is how he deliberately thanked God “**always for all of you.**” In order to stay constantly thankful, you should routinely be giving thanks for the people in your life. *All* the people in your life.

Not just your favorite people—the ones who are so much fun to be around—but also those whose names you don’t particularly enjoy seeing pop up on your phone. Not just your most encouraging leaders and co-workers, but also those who push you into doing more than seems reasonable, perhaps far beyond your comfort zone or capability. Not just people from your own generation and culture who are easier to relate to, but also those who are a little harder to get to know and understand. Not just your closest friends and family members, but also those who, for whatever reason, insist on being your enemies.

Relationships sour when we focus on faults; they flourish when we keep the thankfulness fire burning. Nothing comes much easier to us than first noticing, then rehashing, the parts of someone else’s comments or personality style that make them almost intolerable to deal with. But in order to be the kind of person that you yourself

truly want to be, you must constantly stay reminded that God is sovereign over the universe, totally in control of everything. Nothing comes into your life that He doesn't allow; nothing comes into your life that He won't transform into something for your good. That's why you can be thankful to Him for how He's using your boss, your brother-in-law, your mom, or a former spouse—difficult and demanding though they may be—to shape you into the person you'd never become otherwise, without them.

Few things dilute and drain our hope more quickly than ungratefulness. That's why you can never miss a day. *Do it always*. And never miss an opportunity. *Do it for everybody*.

What are you having a hard time being thankful for right now? Think of one way that God might be growing your heart through a difficult person or situation. Bring this fresh perspective into your praying today.

I encourage you... as we continue our 21-day fast together as a church, ask God to help stir up in you a spirit of THANKFULNESS! There's no better way to begin a new year than with a heart that is grateful for all that God has done in the past and all that He will do in the future! **Gratitude is the best attitude!** Let it fill your heart today, and it will serve you well in the future!

Blessings,
Pastor Clayton Baird

Pray

Dear Father, THANK YOU. Thank you for the blessings you've given me, the family and friends that I have, the local church that I get to be a part of, the opportunities you've given me; and most of all, thank you for Jesus! I pray that you would always remind me daily to keep a spirit of thankfulness in my life. Help me to see your hand at work in my life every day, as you grow me and take me to new levels in my relationship with you. Specifically show me ways this week that I can express my gratitude for the people you've placed in my life. It's a new year... and I choose to be THANKFUL in all things!