

PK's Perspectives ... Giving Thanks

Our ability to give thanks doesn't really depend on how many blessings we can list at any given time. We can always give thanks, because we always have the ultimate blessing: a relationship with a good Father. The practice of "always giving thanks" is about developing a lifestyle of unqualified gratitude. Here are five ways to help you develop a lifestyle of gratitude:

1. Look beyond your circumstances to God's presence. No matter what circumstances come into or out of your life, you can always count on God to be with you. Your circumstances change, sometimes precipitously, but God's presence is constant. Psalm 139:7 asks, "*Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?*" and then describes how God is with people anywhere they could ever go.

2. Develop daily rituals you enjoy that help you notice God's work in your life. Your awareness of God's activity around you (which is always going on – even in the toughest situations) will grow if you intentionally look for it on a regular basis. Think and pray about meaningful ways you could search for, and celebrate, evidence of God's work in your life. Then create some rituals to express those ways as you go through each day: a daily quiet time, an evening walk to reflect on God's activity around you, etc.

3. Keep souvenirs of past times when God has answered your prayers. In Joshua chapter 4, the Bible describes how the Israelites saved 12 stones from the Jordan River as memorials of how God miraculously helped them cross the river. They used those stones later as tools to express their gratitude in worship to God. Journaling (keeping a spiritual diary) is an awesome souvenir of answered prayers.

4. Learn how to be content in any kind of circumstances. The more you develop an attitude of contentment, the less changing circumstances will affect your emotional stability. Unconditional contentment breeds gratitude. Paul shared in Philippians 4:11: "*...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*" Humble yourself to absorb the reality that everything you have – and even the fact that you exist at all – is because of God's generosity. While God loves you completely, He owes you nothing. Shed the entitlement attitude and simply receive the blessings God chooses to send you as the pure gifts that they are.

5. Pay your blessings forward by giving to others in need. Moving your focus away from yourself and toward others expands your perspective in ways that help you be more thankful. When you pay attention to the struggles of others, it breaks you out of dwelling on negative thoughts about your own challenges and you become part of something positive as God's love flows through you into their lives. This all leads to more gratitude because it sensitizes you to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who renews your mind so you can see your circumstances from God's perspective and realize just how much you have to be thankful for.

Thank you for the privilege of sharing life with you. Your notes to me during Pastor Appreciation month were gold...your monetary gift ridiculously generous. I hope for you an amazing week of Thanksgiving. PK