

MAKING GRATITUDE A HABIT

Psalm 71

November 25, 2007 Sunday a.m.

INTRODUCTION

- A. Elizabeth Elliot, whose story was recently told in the movie *The End of the Spear*, had this to say about gratitude: *"It is always possible to be thankful for what is given rather than to complain about what is not given. One or the other becomes a habit of life."*
- B. Today I want to talk about making gratitude a habit.
 1. Its been said that gratitude doesn't come naturally, but grumbling does.
 2. In other words, it takes effort to be grateful, but complaining is easy.
 3. How can we make gratitude a habit?
 4. King David shares several ways in Psalm 71. What are they?

I. FIRST, GRATITUDE BECOMES A HABIT WHEN WE REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US.

- A. **Thomas Merton** said, "To be grateful is to recognize the love of God in everything he has given us -- and he has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of his love."
- B. **King David** says the same thing—v.15 & 19.
- C. When **Barbara Ann Kipfer** was a teenager she got the idea to make a list of her favorite things. No matter how much she wrote, she couldn't run out of ideas. The list continued to grow; she added to it all day long -- on the bus, at the dinner table, and even in the middle of the night. Twenty years and dozens of spiral notebooks later, her list was compiled into a single volume and published under the title *14,000 Things To Be Happy About*. Isn't that a great idea?
- D. **Frances Ridley Havergal** was a Christian poet and hymn writer who lived in the 19th century. Her best known hymn is *Take My Life and Let It Be*. During the last years of her life she got in the habit of writing on her calendar one thing -- usually a small thing -- for which she was thankful. It was her way of recognizing, acknowledging, and remembering God's work in her life.
- E. At the end of each day, take some time to think about what good thing God brought your way during the past 24 hours. Gratitude is a habit; we have to practice it daily in order to get good at it.

II. SECOND, GRATITUDE BECOMES A HABIT WHEN WE LEARN TO LIVE IN THE MOMENT.

- A. We need to learn to live in the moment. This moment, right now, where you are -- this is all you have. As the Bill Gaither song goes, *"Yesterday's gone and tomorrow may never come, but we have this moment today."*
- B. Many can't be grateful for today because they are not living in the moment. Where do some people live if not in the present moment?
 1. Many live in the past rather than the present moment-haunted by things that happened years ago—
 - a. Things like....
 - The bitterness of divorce.
 - A business deal lost.
 - Being treated unfairly.
 - Unwilling to forgive ourselves for a past mistake.
 - b. We have to accept the fact that the past is gone and it doesn't do any good to dwell on it.

2. Others live in the future rather than the present moment—worried about what might happen.

a. They can't express gratitude today because they are worried about tomorrow.

C. King David, however didn't live in the past or the future, but in the present moment—v.8.

III. THIRD, GRATITUDE BECOMES A HABIT WHEN WE PRAISE GOD PUBLICLY.

A. On November 11, Georgia's Governor Sonny Perdue, praised God publicly when he held a prayer meeting on the steps of the State Capital asking and leading people in praying for rain (article attached). He wasn't afraid to praise God publicly and neither should we be.

B. King David praised God publicly too—vv.15-17.

CONCLUSION

A. What habit rules your life, gratitude or grumbling?

B. We can make gratitude a habit by...

1. Remembering what God has done for us.

2. Living in the present moment rather than the past or the future.

3. Praising God publicly for his goodness.