

MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

Tuesday, January 8, 2019

Attitude of Radical Gratitude

Overview: Gratitude is the natural response when something that has some value is freely given to us. We haven't earned it or bought it. God desires us to live with an attitude of radical gratefulness by becoming aware that every moment is a gift that is freely given. This present moment is a gift from God and within that gift is an opportunity—the gift of opportunity. "...Let us rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 118:24

Hearing Our Stories: Rick Thatcher

Segment Questions:

- Have you ever been uncomfortable when asked to say what you are thankful for when sitting down for Thanksgiving Dinner? Why? Do you think the Psalmist did in Psalm 79:13?
- How would you explain the interplay of glorifying God, His redeeming grace, and our gratitude in Psalm 50:23? How does this verse inform Paul's description of the Godless in Romans 1:21?
- Would you say that Paul's enjoinder to "Rejoice always" and "give thanks in all circumstances" (1Thess 5: 16-18) is a command to be obeyed, the desire of God, or maybe both? What's the significance of Paul using the word "**in**" rather than "**for**" in "give thanks **in** all circumstances...?"
- How is Paul's exhortation in Philippians 4:8 foundational to a Radical Attitude of Gratitude?
- God warns of one Gratitude Buster in Deuteronomy 8. What is it? Think of other Gratitude Busters.

Action Questions:

- As you develop an attitude of gratitude, what changes do you think you will see in yourself and your relationships?
- To whom do you need to show your gratitude this week? What are some simple ways you can express your gratitude to your spouse, friend, or others?
- Would you be up to the challenge of Journaling 3 things you are grateful for and the reason why 5 days a week for the next two weeks? We can process the experience as we gather at the next meeting.

Personal Prayer: Lord I want to be joyful and content in You with a song of praise on my lips. I want to know you Lord. I want to see you Lord. Open my five senses to really experience You by slowing my thoughts and actions enough to allow You to show Yourself to me in every moment, in every place, in every circumstance in every thought so I may Rejoice and be glad in it.

Introduction

One of our family traditions was that I would read the Chronicles of Narnia as bedtime stories. In the second book of C.S. Lewis' series, The Silver Chair, there was a character named Puddleglum who could see a black cloud behind every silver lining. My wife Julie and our kids used to tease me by calling me Puddleglum because I was very polished at being a cynic who could always identify why something wouldn't work or what could go wrong. One of the reasons I was attracted to Julie was because of her rosy optimism, something I definitely needed.

A friend of mine, Joel Wong, is an IU professor who teaches counselors in training and also has been doing research in the area of Gratitude. I recently participated in a group that focused on becoming more grateful which inspired me to seek to make this more of my life worship of God.

Gratitude is a choice, a spiritual—not a social, behavioral, or even emotional—process. Expressed as a behavior, gratitude is not the behavior itself. We may automatically respond, “Thank you” or “Appreciate it” as polite, conditioned responses, but they are not gratitude. Instead, gratitude is a spiritual way of life, a belief system that cultivates a spirit of thankfulness even through the negatives of life. It is remembering there will always be more reasons for gratitude than for despair. It is also seeing God's creative work in everything. “Through Him all things were made.” John 1:3

Just like Puddleglum, picking out the negatives in life and focusing on them is the easy part, and it is a sure fire way to become depressed, unhappy and develop a bad attitude that permeates throughout my life. In a society consumed by fears of not having “enough”—money, possessions, safety, security, and so on—Astry suggests that if we cultivate gratitude as a way of being, we may not change the world and its ills, but we can change our response to the world. If we fill our lives with moments of gratitude, we will indeed love the life we have.

The apostle Paul tells us to, “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** God wants us be intentional about having a Radical Attitude of Gratitude every day. Joel and other researchers have discovered that gratitude unshackles us from toxic emotions like resentment, envy, and anger, improves mental health by reducing depression and anxiety, activates the part of the brain associated with learning and decision making, and that the positive benefits increase over time for those expressing gratitude. Having an attitude of thanksgiving and gratitude is really the key to being happy and finding joy in your life. God wants us to be happy and to find joy and that's why he commands an Attitude of Radical Gratitude. So why did I find myself such a Puddleglum?

Psalms 79:13 “But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.”

Psalms 50:23 “The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!”

Romans 1:21 “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

Psalms 95:2 “Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!”

Colossians 3:15 “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”

Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

Deuteronomy 8:12-14 “But suppose you don't obey his commands. And suppose you have plenty to eat. You build fine houses and settle down in them. Your herds and flocks increase their numbers. You also get more and more silver and gold. And everything you have multiplies. Then your hearts will become proud. And you will forget the Lord your God.”