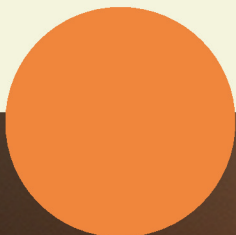


CORNERSTONE BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP



**14 DAYS OF
THANKFUL
THANKFUL
THANKFUL
THANKFUL**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03

Day 1

05

Day 2

07

Day 3

09

Day 4

11

Day 5

13

Day 6

15

Day 7

TABLE OF CONTENTS

17

Day 8

19

Day 9

21

Day 10

23

Day 11

25

Day 12

27

Day 13

29

Day 14

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good—Abstain from every form of evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22



This commonly quoted verse on thanksgiving is sandwiched in between a list of behaviors that Paul wants this young church to consider part of the conduct that makes up what Christians look like when they try to live like Jesus. Aligning with Jesus is evident in how we treat those around us, constantly looking to the good of others above ourselves. But Paul takes it a step further, saying that part of living a life like Jesus and looking to the good of others is found in being grateful and rejoicing. When we live a life of complaining and negativity, it affects the people in our homes, workplaces, and daily routines. That person who cuts you off in traffic or that fast food worker who gets your order wrong is going to receive whatever is brimming up inside of you and ready to overflow. If you have let your attitude fill you with annoyance and frustration, that's what will spill out. On the other hand, if you are walking in step with the Spirit and being filled with peace and joy, that will pour onto the people around you with the love and kindness that only the Spirit can give, that overcomes messed-up orders and annoying coworkers. Gratitude and joy that overflows into kindness and love shine a light in a world full of negativity, anger, and impatience. A joy that takes pleasure in waiting on a slow person in line or yielding the best seat or being patient when your child interrupts you can only be found in a grateful awareness of who we are in Christ and what we've been bought from and to.



As I think about the day to come, what are some ways I feel the Holy Spirit drawing me to look to the good of those around me?

Lord, I thank You for the ways that You have designed me to live on earth with other people. Remind me today that in the same way that I was made to care for others, You have made others to care for me; that Your design for me was not loneliness or struggle, but a tapestry of joy as You place others in my path to help meet my needs. I find joy in remembering that no matter what frustrations, inconveniences, or trials I face, I know You are using them to form me into Your image. I thank you for loving me enough to use even the things I see as bad parts of my day to bring me nearer to You.

Holy Spirit, as I go throughout the routine of my day, seeking my own good through the everyday work and activities of life, help me to have my eyes open to the people who cross my path. Show me ways I can seek not only my good, but the good of those you place in my path.

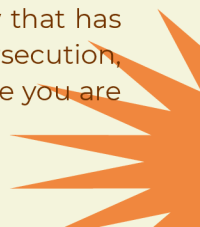


DAY 2

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying, "I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all Your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!" And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon dry land.
Jonah 2:1-10

The story of Jonah is an interesting place to find a proclamation of thanksgiving. And it isn't even at the end of the story. Jonah is thanking God from the very center of the belly of the whale- the very center of his trial. His salvation isn't complete, and still, he feels grateful for the things he already sees God doing to rescue him. He is reflecting gratefully on the struggle he's already been pulled out of, and that increases his faith that God is fully able to meet the rest of the trials ahead of him.

What trial do you find yourself in the middle of? How could being grateful for the ways you've seen God work in the past and the ways you believe He will work in the future help you to have a different perspective on your current circumstances? Gratitude in the Bible isn't based on just making a list of good things in your life and trying to keep those on your mind and close your eyes to the bad things that you aren't grateful for. It's being grateful while you're looking the bad things square in the eye, because you are believing in a good God to make good things out of them and make you good through them. That's the joy that took Jesus to the cross because of the future joy set before Him. It's the joy that has held up believers through centuries of hardship and persecution, and it's the joy that will hold you in whatever circumstance you are walking in today.



Holy Father, thank you for the ways I have seen You bring about my deliverance, most of all through my salvation. Increase my faith until I am overflowing with praise, no matter the circumstances.

Help me see each part of my life as a means You use to draw me nearer to You. Help me use each interruption, frustration, and disappointment as an opportunity to praise You, knowing You are using all things for Your glory and my good.

Lord, I ask You to bring to mind someone in my life who is currently in the middle of an overwhelming situation that feels like the darkness of the inside of a fish. I pray that You would awaken their mind to a new sense of gratitude today, helping them feel Your nearness and love for them in the midst of a deep ocean.



"When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, 'O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?' The king answered and said, 'The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.' Then they answered and said before the king, 'Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.' Daniel 6: 10-13

Daniel, presented with the extreme options of walking out his faith or losing his life, keeps living his faith exactly like he always has. He is so committed to his prayer life that he won't even alter it when his life is threatened. But an even more amazing thing is the content of those prayers. As soon as Daniel heard that there was a law that anyone who prays would be horrifically put to death, he knelt in thanksgiving to God. He didn't wring his hands in despair at the days he found himself in; he worshipped God and thanked him for the days given him. His gratitude became an act of defiance against both seen and unseen forces.

Take a moment to reflect on your own practices of faith. Do you have the unwavering faithfulness of Daniel? Or are you tempted to change your prayer time for more sleep and mind-numbing distractions?

Is your first response to horrible news to kneel in thanksgiving?

Openly tell these things to the patient God who loves you, and ask Him to give you a heart like Daniel's that remains true in the midst of Babylon because of an unrelenting commitment to abide in the one who helps us face lions.



Merciful Father, show me the areas in my life today where a response of gratitude can be an act of warfare. Where in my job, school, parenting, or marriage can I choose to encounter challenging situations with worship and praise, declaring to both the watching world and the watching cosmos that Your love really is better than life? Fill me with this gratitude as I go out into my day

I name before You now the things that I have allowed to dull my longing to sit in Your presence. I ask that You would fill me with such hunger to be near You and such discipline in my weakness that compromising my time with You wouldn't even feel like an option.

I bring before You now a friend who has not only been willing to compromise their time with You, but has bowed their knee to a different king altogether. Spirit, show them how tenderly you love them. Show me a way today that I can be a representation of that love to them. Move within their life with mercy and the power that shuts the mouths of lions to draw them back in allegiance to Your kingship.



"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 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. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

Philippians 4:4-13

Paul is telling the church at Philippi that it is possible to have a peace that doesn't make sense by any earthly understanding. In situations where the world would see it as entirely normal and even reasonable to react with fear and anxiety, Paul says that as a believer, I have the power, through the Holy Spirit, to be supernaturally peaceful in every situation I face and because of that supernatural power, no matter what circumstances I face, I can face anything that comes my way through Christ who strengthens me.

This is very different from the world that encourages us to live within our boundaries and avoid situations and people that make us uncomfortable. Paul says we can press into hard and risky things because our circumstances aren't what define our peace. Our God defines our peace.

He goes on to suggest that this peace of God seems to be closely tied to thanksgiving. He tells the church that their ability to overcome anxiety works hand in hand with their ability to rejoice and be content in their circumstances. Choosing to focus on the things that are true, honorable, commendable, and pure, rather than the negative and dark aspects of the world, brings about this supernatural peace. This peace from the Holy Spirit works in tandem with the choice to be thankful.



Prince of Peace, You alone offer me a peace that can overcome my greatest fears. Help me to see the ways I can trust in Your goodness. Today, give me a peace that does not match the circumstances I find myself in and that radiates out to those around me, making them long for the source of such unusual calm. I confess that sometimes even the act of being joyful and grateful seems beyond my ability. As I move into this day, help me to notice the good and beautiful things you have filled my life with and filled Your world with. Teach me to slow down and have eyes to see the wonder around me.

I pray for a situation that is not reflecting Your good and right and beautiful plan for the world . Push back the forces of darkness that seek to rule in Your place. Show me ways to bring light to this situation through intentional intercession or physical means. I thank You that You have given power to the prayers of Your people, and I ask You to give us that power to fight darkness today.



"The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, 'As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever.' Elkanah her husband said to her, 'Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the LORD establish his word.' So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. And she said, 'Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore, I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD,' And he worshiped the LORD there."

1 Samuel 1:21-28

In this surprising story of gratitude, Hannah does something that doesn't make a whole lot of sense. She has longed for a child so desperately, but after God grants her request, she takes the very thing she's been begging for and gives it back to God. She doesn't cling to Samuel with overprotective possessiveness out of fear of loss; she gives him away because she knows that everything that we have in this world is a means to God's glory and purposes. And she does it all with gratitude, trusting that God can provide for her and fulfill the longings of her heart.

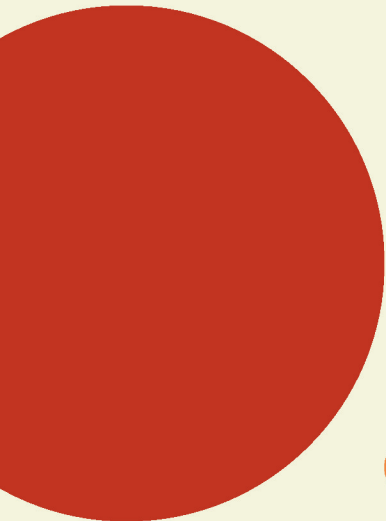
Take a moment to think about your own blessings in your life that you are tempted to cling to too tightly. It could be material things like your home or possessions, your career, or a person. It could be your time. Ask God to show you the things you are not currently holding with an open hand.



Generous Father,

I accept Your abundant gifts with gratitude today. I ask that, through receiving them, You would form me into a person of generosity. Help me never to cling too tightly to the blessings You have given me, but hold them with an open hand, longing to be an instrument of Your blessing to others. Show me a way today that I can use Your generosity to bless others.

Lord, bring to mind now a person, group, or organization that is in need of Your generosity through the use of the times, skills, or material blessings You have given me. Help me to give lavishly of what I have as I have lavishly received.



"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Colossians 3:12-17

The context for gratitude in this passage is people living in community with one another and letting God's word dwell richly among them. They are people who sing together and eat together and talk about the things of God when they're together, encouraging one another with scripture and songs. This is part of how Paul tells us we live a life of gratitude. Not just committed personal devotion. Not just finding ways to be generous and serve others, but doing all of these things in the context of a life that is shared in community. Showing gratitude for that community by being merciful to them when they mess up and patient with them when they are frustrating. Using gratitude to help us submit to those around us and desire their good.

Take a moment to ask the Holy Spirit to help you evaluate your own life in community. What are some things you are thankful for and how can you encourage your community today through scripture or a song? Ask God to guide you to someone who needs an encouraging word.



Loving God, I confess the ways that my actions towards others sometimes reveal a deeper ingratitude. My impatience can reveal that I don't fully appreciate the depths of the mercy I receive. My inability to forgive others shows that I don't comprehend the depth to which You've had to forgive me. Help me as I go into this day to treat people with the generous love you have showered on me.

I see the ways that You desire both communion and community for me. Show me the ways I am holding back from those things, and give me the courage and commitment to experience Your goodness through those things. Open my eyes today to opportunities to press into those avenues that You have provided for my good.

Bring to mind now someone I have neglected to show Your generous love to by denying them my patience, forgiveness, or peace. Show me how I can seek peace with them today and fill me with courage and boldness to follow through.



"Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. Now, when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' But Jesus said, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' They said to him, 'We have only five loaves here and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children."

Matthew 14:13-19

An interesting thing in this passage is that Jesus expressed his gratitude for the miracle before it even happened. We could be tempted to write this off as his foreknowledge because of his divinity, but this example of gratitude and faith tied together is seen in both the early church and throughout the church's history. George Mueller, who founded an orphanage in Britain in the 1800s, was known for his unwavering faith in God's provision, running his entire orphanage on faith alone. On one occasion, when they had nothing to feed the children, he gathered all 300 of them at the tables, stood, and thanked God for the meal he knew would fill their empty plates. As soon as he said amen, a baker knocked on the door and said he had not been able to sleep all night and felt compelled by God to bake three batches of bread and bring them to the orphanage. Immediately after this, a knock at the door interrupted their thoughts, and a milk cart had broken down. They wondered if they could take the milk before it spoiled. Gratitude and faith seem to be inextricably linked.

What areas are you withholding a thankful attitude until you see God's provision? Or, conversely, is a complaining, negative, or skeptical attitude hindering your faith, whether in seeking God's provision or in believing in what He will do? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the ways these things might be holding you back.



Faithful Father, I thank You that scripture tells me that I am able to trust You with every atom of my existence. I thank You for all the ways I've seen Your faithfulness in my own life.

I bring before You a situation in my life that I have been trying to handle in my own strength. Help me to see You first as the Way Maker and not the last resort. I thank You for the ways You've shown Your power to me before. Give me the faith to believe in Your faithfulness for this situation

I pray now for a situation in the world that I have prayed for, but have not truly believed You will intervene in, whether it be salvation for a world leader, peace between two countries, or an issue like human trafficking or persecution. Give me the faith to believe that none of my prayers are beyond Your reach, and fill me with gratitude for the ways I believe in Your good intervention even before it happens.

I pray also for a friend who needs their loaves and fishes multiplied. I ask You to work a miracle of provision until they eat and are satisfied.

“And all the people said to Samuel, ‘Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king.’ And Samuel said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.’”

1 Samuel 12: 19-25

The root of the sin of Israel in wanting a king was ingratitude. They looked around at the other nations and felt like the lot that God had given them in life was lacking, which was pretty ironic since the lot they had was Him. They had the King of Glory, and they wanted a king of this world so that they wouldn't be left behind. When they finally see their folly, Samuel tells them the way to walk in repentance is through gratitude. To stop chasing empty things and understand their great inheritance.

Take a moment to reflect on your own life. How are you chasing after empty things that the world chases after instead of being content with what God has for you? Is there anyway you are frustrated at your lot in life? What ingratitude do your longings point to, and what lies are you believing about God's desire for your good?

Merciful and loving Father, I confess now the ways that I have not trusted You to provide good things for me and sought instead to make good things for myself outside of Your better way. Help me today to be aware of how the plans You have for me are better than any plan I could make for myself.

Tender God, slow to anger and rich in mercy, I thank You that even though my heart longs for lesser things so often, You are so quick to offer me mercy. Thank You for Your gentle leading of my heart and Your promise to never forsake me.

I think of one person You have placed in my life that I have been tempted to view with ingratitude. Show me a way today that I can show my gratitude to You in this difficult relationship by doing good to them.

I pray for someone else I know who is overwhelmed by guilt or shame. Help them today to feel Your tender mercy enveloping them, knowing there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Show me ways I can remind them of your loving kindness.



"Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies...

I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs."

Psalm 69: 1-4, 30-31

In the middle of one of his many tumultuous seasons of life, David gives thanks to God for being his steady source of salvation. He is always honest about his situations and despair, but he always brings it back around to worship and thankfulness, and he goes so far as to say that his thanksgiving is more pleasing to the Lord than his sacrifices. God is more pleased with his grateful heart than his religious strivings. If you read the entire psalm, David gives a long account of his woes, then abruptly bursts into song about how amazing God is and how good He has been and will be. He is raising a hallelujah in the presence of his enemies. And he believes that worship in the midst of hardship is the most pleasing thing he can offer to God. Not going through the motions of religious activity. Not faking it till he makes it. Genuine joy that makes his bones cry out. And that's why David, with his many foibles, was a man after God's own heart. His gratitude and joy could never be stifled because he genuinely just adored God.

Take a moment to think of your own Christian walk. Ask the Spirit to show you ways that you have replaced true, deep gratitude with going through the motions of service for God instead of gazing lovingly at God, thankful for just His presence.



Father God, giver of all good things, help me to long for You the way that David did, making my eyes so full of Your goodness and love that the problematic parts of my life grow dim in comparison. Open my eyes today to the ways You're pouring out Your love for me, even in the complex parts of my day.

Loving God, make me mindful today of the times I am yielding my actions to You but not my heart. I ask that You reverse that within me through the Spirit who has the only power to truly change my heart. Help me to overflow with love and gratitude towards You until my hands just can't help but do good out of the abundance of good You have done to me.

Lord, bring to mind someone today who is burnt out and going through the motions of life with You, with none of the joy. Show me a way I can help carry their burden and remind them of Your tender care.

DAY 10

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Matthew 26:26-29



Jesus wasn't just blessing the food here. He thanked God for the bread that represented his body that was about to be broken open as he was tortured and killed. He thanked God for the cup that represented his blood that would be splattered across the ground the very next day. He was thankful for the very things he stood in earnest dread of. Jesus was expressing the most valid form of what gratitude means in the Bible- being joyfully grateful for everything because you know the One who holds the future and you are able to trust His plans.

What must it have been like for the disciples in the years that followed as they became leaders of the early church, taking the Lord's supper as they remembered that last night with their Lord before His death. As they remembered his actual broken body and spilled blood. As they remembered the holes in his hands after the resurrection.



How does it move you to worship knowing that Jesus expressed gratitude for the cross? Are you thankful, not just for the calling God has given you, not just for the good that will come from it, but for the sacrifices themselves? Do you see the actual sacrifices as being for your own good?



Generous Father, I thank You today for the thing You have called me to lay down to have more of You. Help me to view my sacrifices with joy because they are for You, and I will not give to You "that which costs me nothing."

Jesus, may I never be dulled to the gospel. Stir up in me a fresh awe every time I hear it. Every time I eat the bread and drink the cup. Make it new to me and fill me with fresh gratitude.

I pray for someone I know who is in the midst of sacrificing something as they walk out what You have called them to. Give them eyes to view their loss with joy today and help them see a glimpse of their good reward.

I ask also that you bring to mind now someone who doesn't know the saving power of Your gospel. Give me boldness and opportunity to share Your good news with them.



"Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORDS's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.

Psalms 118: 19-26

This psalm was often used in the church in religious ceremonies. It was sung as a hymn during passover and later when taking communion. It has been a celebrated hymn of God's people through the centuries.

Worshipping to the same words believers have used makes us mindful of the unity we feel with believers that transcends time and space. It helps us see the tapestry God weaves in our lives as he knits us together with other believers in our own community, using the good and the hard to grow us in his likeness. It is no accident that He has placed us in context with people that we don't agree with everything about and who don't share our preferences. It is this constant dying to self and being stretched through differing views that He uses to form us and sanctify us more in His likeness. The very things that tempt us to run from relational tension are the things that are making us look more like Jesus. Learning to yield. Seeing opposing perspectives deepens the compassion and nuance of our own. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Those who love the dream of a Christian community more than the Christian community itself become destroyers of that Christian community even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest, and sacrificial.

Do you rejoice in the community God has placed you in, or do you tend to grumble and complain, wishing it fit more into an idealic version of church I dream of in my head?



Triune God, I thank you that you made me to live in community with others. I name now the places that I have not felt grateful for the people You have placed me with. Give me fresh eyes to see the people around me with Your love and mercy. Fill me with joy at the opportunities to grow as i, a difficult person, live life with other difficult people. Make us all look more like You together.

I pray now for a person in my community who has been particularly difficult for me to love. Open my eyes to see them with the tender love that You see them with. Soften my heart to love them with gracious generosity.

As I prepare to take my prayer time into the coming day, I think on the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

If we do not give thanks daily for the Christian community in which we have been placed, even when there are no great experiences, no notieicable riches, but much weakness, difficulty, and little faith, and if, on the contrary, we only keep complaining to God that everything is so miserable and so insignificant and does not at all live up to our expectations, then we hinder God from letting our community grow according to the measure and riches that are there for us all in Jesus Christ.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6: 19-21

The significance of Jesus' teaching on a mountain was not lost on His original audience. The law given on a mountain was being expanded as Jesus issued a new law of love for believers to follow. He was deepening the teaching of the law to encompass attitudes along with actions. He was saying that citizens of the kingdom of God have different priorities than the world.

Contrary to what the world would have us believe, the temporary things of this world are not of any actual value, but will all be destroyed with time. Jesus was teaching that when we spend our time treasuring temporary things, that's what we're formed into, people with temporary zeal for temporary things. We cannot pour our time and money into things of the world and hope to become people with an eternal mindset. The root of chasing possessions is a lack of being satisfied with the eternal things God sets before us. Our ingratitude tells us we need that and a bit of the things the world loves.

Reflect on your own life. Are your priorities and attitudes aligning with the kingdom of God, or do you view Jesus' teaching as a good standard but sometimes unrealistic in the world today?

In what ways are you tempted to treasure things that will not last? How is chasing after these things preventing you from fully embracing all God has for you?



Father, I confess the ways I've seen Your law of love and different priorities as optional. I want to be fully in Your kingdom with my thoughts, priorities, and attitudes. Thank You for loving me patiently as I learn to yield to You.

Help me to always focus my gratitude on the Giver rather than the gifts. Set my treasure and, therefore, my heart on eternal things.

Lord, what is one place today I can invest my time, energy, and resources in something eternal instead of something temporary? Show me something temporary that I'm pouring my heart into, and something eternal that I can exchange it for.

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! With my lips, I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies, I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word."

Psalm 119: 9-16

The writer of Psalm 119 is reeling with excitement at God's law, so much so that he can hardly contain himself. He is grateful for God's Word in his life. It's reminiscent of the feeling of new love, when the thought of seeing the other person leads to all kinds of effort to steal a moment with the object of one's affection. This is the psalmist's attitude toward the Lord and His Word. It can be hard to imagine that much enthusiasm for our daily quiet time when we sometimes treat it as just another item on our to-do list.

He tells us that delighting in the Lord and His Word is actually the path to staying pure in life. Setting our affections on Him is the thing that protects us from foolish decisions and keeps us out of sin. Even the good we do, when done correctly, is just an overflow of a life lived gazing at God and being changed as we do.

Think about your own time with the Lord in prayer and His Word, even sitting in silence in His presence. Do you count the minutes until you're with Him again, losing sleep and stealing any minutes you can to be with Him? Does your heart beat faster at the thought of time with the Lord? Or is it more of a drudgery or a chore? Be honest with God today as you let Him search your heart.

Intimate God, I confess the ways I have become numb in my time with You, going through the motions with no real affection. Awaken within me a longing for Your Word. Bring it back to life as it was in the newness of my salvation. Make me grateful for the opportunity to hear from the God who created all things.

Lord, help me to be changed by Your word. To read it and take it with me into my day, meditating on what You have taught me there. Help me to be grateful for access to Your Word. Today, give me a verse to keep in my mind and bring it back to me throughout the day, setting my affections on Your law.



I pray now for a people group that does not have access to Your Word, whether because of oppressive laws or the lack of the Bible in their language. Give them access to the Words of life from the One who loves them.



"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'"

Revelation 21: 1-4

Being grateful in all circumstances, thanksgiving in faith, and gratitude as a weapon against sin, it will all come together one day in a pure and perfect gratitude that doesn't have to be fought for, but is realized. Heaven and earth will be fully renewed, and God will be with man. All our hope is in this. All our hope is in Jesus. We press on now because our eyes are set on a glorious future that cannot be dimmed or shaken by present trials.

Take a moment to sit in worshipful gratitude at the thought of it.

How has not focusing on this hope made me less grateful for my current life? How could focusing on this hope more be a protection from the temptation to be ungrateful?



King of kings, I long for the day when the old passes away and the new comes, and You reign over us in perfect peace. Until that day, help me live in gratitude because the hope I have is greater than any present trouble.

Because of this hope, I can be thankful and joyful in all circumstances. As Jonathan Edwards asked, "Stamp eternity on my eyeballs." Help me remain continually aware of my future glory, and give me the strength to live my life in a way that is congruent with Your incredible future victory.

As I wait for that future, show me a circumstance today where I can spread Your perfect love and peace. Who in my life isn't experiencing that peace? Bring someone to mind now.

Open my eyes today to opportunities to spread this hope to those around me. Give me eyes to see chances to pray with people, have eternal conversations, or reach out with encouragement. Take my eyes off myself and give me eyes to see the needs around me.



