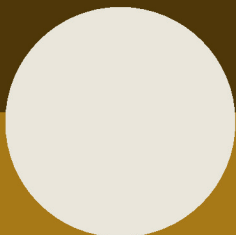


CORNERSTONE BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP



14 DAYS OF THANKFUL THANKFUL THANKFUL TEEN

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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



These verses are part of a letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to a church he had started in Greece in the city of Thessalonica. He wanted to tell the believers there how people who follow Jesus are supposed to live their lives. The teachings of Jesus focus on how important it is to love God and treat others well. A lot of the ways of Jesus were the opposite of how the culture in Greece worked, just like they're the opposite of a lot of the ways our culture works. Paul was trying to teach the people not to treat people the way they saw everyone around them treating people, or even with the systems of wealth and slavery that were part of their society, but to love people the way Jesus would, even if they aren't like you or don't agree with you. He told them one important part of how we treat people is by being thankful in our lives. It spills over into how we treat others. If I'm thankful because God has been so patient with me, it makes sense that I would be more patient with other people when they mess up or frustrate me. If I'm thankful and content for what God has given me, I'm less likely to be jealous and compare myself to others, which can cause lots of problems in my relationships. Paul actually says that being a thankful person is as much a part of the life of a Christian as doing good and avoiding wrong.

What is a relationship where you are currently struggling with being kind? What ways could being thankful help you view that person with more love and grace?



Merciful Father, I thank You for the ways that You have shown me mercy. Help me to become a thankful person by constantly looking at Jesus and the ways He has loved me. As I spend time with You, make me into a person of love who looks more and more like Jesus.

Lord, help me to notice people today who need more of Your love, mercy, grace and patience. Help me show them those things on Your behalf today, helping them know that they are loved by You.

Live It Out:

Write out the names of people you know, particularly people who are more difficult to like. Next to each name, write something about that person you are thankful for (everyone has something you can be thankful for!) Pick one name on the list to encourage by telling them what you are thankful for about them. This was very common among the early church! Start a new trend of gratitude baiting.



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

These verses are kind of an odd place to find a story about being thankful. Jonah is running from what God has asked him to do and finds himself at the bottom of the sea, surrounded by seaweed, waiting to drown. Go back and read all the descriptive words. He must have been terrified as he waited to die. Then God sent this very unusual rescue, being swallowed by a fish. It's not the way we would probably want to be helped, but Jonah is so overjoyed inside the dark stink of the fish that he bursts out in a prayer of gratitude.

Take a minute to think about your own life. What is a way God has protected you that you didn't really want? Maybe through a consequence that was for your own good but felt about as good as being inside a fish. Or maybe it's a rule that feels as confining as being trapped in a stomach. God wants us to be thankful for all the things He send in our lives to bring us back to Him, even the hard things.

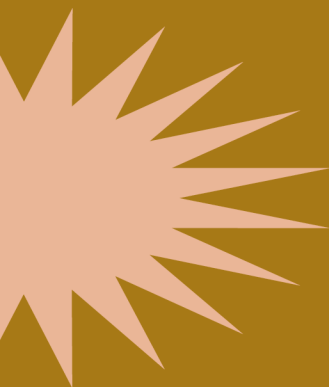


Patient Father, thank You for all the ways You chase my heart down- storms and fish, parents and teachers, friends...
Help me learn to be thankful like Jonah for the ways You keep me on the right path. Teach me to love Your way and see it as for my good.

Lord, bring to mind someone whose life feels dark, like the bottom of the sea. Send them a way of rescue today to bring them back to the light.

Live It Out:

Jonah was running from his mission because he didn't want God to forgive people he thought of as enemies. But Paul tells us that people are not our enemies, evil, and the powers of darkness are our enemies. Every person is someone trapped in that darkness that needs the love of Jesus, even people we think of as our worst "enemies". Who is someone you consider an enemy? What do you think it would take to make a bridge in that relationship? Ask God to show you one small step you could take today towards showing that person love.



"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

When Daniel was faced with the choice to compromise his faith or die a very unpleasant death, he didn't hesitate at all to decide which choice to make. He kept doing what he always did. He didn't even change the time or location of his prayers to try to protect himself. It's challenging to see how bold and dedicated Daniel was. Most of us are willing to change our commitment to prayer based on how sleepy we are. Or we choose little distractions over God, like our phones and watching TV.

Not only was Daniel bold, he was thanking God in the middle of this terrible situation. Sometimes the things going on around us in the world or in the government can make us afraid, sad, and overwhelmed, but Daniel received terrifying, unjust news, and responded with thankfulness and faithfulness. When we see things happening around us that are unjust or out of our control, our job as followers of Jesus is to be thankful and faithful to God. We want to be the same steady people no matter how things change in the circumstances around us. That's what being faithful looks like.

Take a minute to think about your own life. Are you so faithful to prayer that you wouldn't give it up even if your life depended on it like Daniel's did? Or do you see time with the Lord as something you have to do, like a chore? Ask God to show you the attitudes of your heart.

Loving God, I thank you for people like Daniel who help me have goals of how to live my life. I confess that I do not feel as bold or committed as he did. I confess that I often feel like reading the Bible or praying is a chore. Help me be awake to a new love for time with You. Let me encounter You in a way that helps me understand Your nearness and power. Breathe new life into my time with You that makes me seek You again and again, eager to spend time with You.

Lord, I pray for a hard situation in the world or some hard news that I know someone has just found out. I thank you for the ways we will see Your love and power through this situation. I ask you to make the people involved feel bold and strong by your power. Draw them into Your presence and show them the miraculous way You're going to provide what they need.

Live It Out:

Make an appointment with God and keep it this week. Schedule a time on your calendar, or book a slot in a prayer room, and then treat that as nonnegotiable as you would any other commitment like school, sports, or work. Write "Make an appointment with God and keep it!" on a sticky note and hang it somewhere you will see to remind you to keep making time for God and sticking to it!



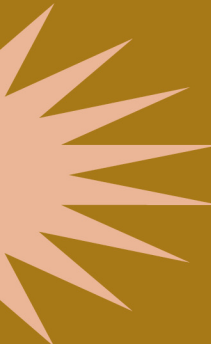
"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all 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

Today's verses are from another letter written by Paul, this time to the church he started at Philippi. Philippi was a city in Rome at the time of the Roman Empire, the time of gladiators, togas and the Colosseum. Paul was telling the believers here that they had special power to feel peace when it didn't really make sense because they had the Holy Spirit living inside of them and giving them power.

In the first few centuries after Jesus, one of the ways Christians were persecuted was by being thrown to wild animals in arenas. Perpetua, Felicity and Ignatius were a few of the well known stories of people who died because they refused to renounce their faith in Jesus. But the thing that people talked about afterwards was not that they were killed, but the remarkable peace they had when they were facing death. It was so unusual that even the guards couldn't understand it and wrote about it in their letters and journals that we're able to read today. That peace in every circumstance was so amazing to people that it actually made more people want to follow Jesus even though followers were being killed.

It's unlikely we will face wild animals like Perpetua, but we do face hard situations. Paul says we can face these things with joy and gratitude because the power of God's Spirit lives in us. We can actually face anything because Christ is giving us strength.



God my Strength, give me peace in the middle of everything I will face today. Help me not to panic or be overwhelmed, but give me peace that doesn't make sense to the rest of the world. Help me to really feel that I can do ANYTHING because You give me power.

Prince of Peace, bring a friend to mind who needs Your peace today. Help them feel so peaceful that they're surprised by their calm feelings. Give them power and strength for whatever they are going through and show me ways I can love them well.

Live It Out:

Sometimes God uses us to show other people He is thinking about them. Ask God to show you someone today that you could do something special for (write a note, take them a coffee, make them cookies...) so they know God hasn't forgotten about what they're going through.



"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

Today's verse come from the Old Testament, telling a story of a woman named Hannah who had spent years praying for a child. One day, she was praying so passionately that the priest thought she was drunk. When she told him what she was praying for, he promised her that God was going to give her the child, and He does! But something surprising happens after God answers her prayer. She takes this child she had wanted for so long and gives him back to God. Because she is grateful for what God has given her, she's able to not cling too tightly to her gift. She knows that she can trust God, so she doesn't have to be afraid of letting some things go. Samuel went on to be a great prophet and leader in Israel. God can use our sacrifices and generosity to do big things for His kingdom.

Think of something in your own life that you cling to because you're afraid to lose it. Maybe it's a material thing that you have and don't want to share. Maybe it's a friend. Maybe it's time. Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to show you.

Generous Father, I am grateful for the gifts You have put in my life of people and things. I thank You now for a particular thing that I wanted for so long, like Hannah with Samuel. Help me to hold it loosely and generously, trusting that You are good and want good things for me.

Lord, show me a particular way I can be generous with the gifts You've given me. Show me something You blessed me with because You wanted me to bless someone else through it. Help me to keep my hands open with the things You give me, always looking to do good to those around me.

Live It Out:

Think of something God revealed to you that you are clinging to too tightly. How could you loosen your grip today? If it's a friend, could you introduce them to someone you feel like their friendship would bless? If it's a material thing, could you loan it to someone? Or maybe God is calling you to give it away altogether. If it's your time, how could you share your time with someone else today that isn't for your own benefit? It's okay to start small, we can trust that God wants good for us and honors our generosity.



“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

Today’s verses are out of another letter from Paul. He and his friends were missionaries who would travel around starting churches, but at the time, there was no completed Bible, so the churches relied on these leaders to teach them the teachings of Jesus. Paul would hear things they were doing or teaching that were wrong, or questions they had, and he would write them a letter to try to explain things. These letters would get copied and passed around among the churches and later became part of the compiled Bible. This is from a letter he wrote to a church that his friend Epaphras had started. In all of the letters, he continued to emphasize how important it is to treat people well as followers of Christ, and that part of the way to do that is to be a thankful person. In these verses, he specifies that one of the ways to become that person is by letting the word of Christ “dwell in you richly”. That means that we read and study it, memorizing and meditating on it until it becomes so much a part of us that we actually become like the things we’re reading. When we have the teachings of Jesus on our hearts all the time, the Holy Spirit uses that to help us see people and circumstances through Jesus’ eyes and respond the way He would.

Take a moment to think about your own relationship with God’s Word. Would you say you are letting it “dwell in you richly”?



Intimate Father, thank You that You gave me a way to know You because You love me and want me to know that You love and what Your plan is to fix the brokenness in the world. Thank You for wanting me to be part of it. I confess that sometimes I don't want to dwell with Your Word. Open my eyes to the ways it's amazing and the power I have through knowing You.

God, I pray for a country where the believers don't have Your Word because it's against the law. Get Your Word into their hands through organizations that smuggle Bibles.

Live It Out:

Pick out a verse to memorize this week. Look up a country where it's illegal to have the Bible. Make a bracelet or keychain with the colors of their flag to remember to pray your verse over them.

"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

The disciples had seen Jesus perform miracles, but He still wasn't the first place they ran when they had a need. They were hesitant and skeptical. But Jesus did the opposite- he gave thanks because He was certain of God's provision. This story reminds me of a story of a man named George Mueller, who ran an orphanage in Britain in the 1800s. He ran his entire orphanage ministry off faith, never asking anyone for money or provision except God. One day, the orphanage was out of both food and money. George had the 300 children set the table and sit down for breakfast. He stood and prayed, thanking God for the food He would provide. Minutes after saying "Amen", there was a knock on the door. The baker said he couldn't sleep all night and felt God telling him to make three batches of bread for the orphanage. After he gave them the bread and left, there was immediately a knock on the door. The milk cart had broken down, and the driver needed someone to take the milk. We see from these stories that faith and gratitude are connected. God is not looking for people to ask Him things with skeptical or complaining hearts. He wants us to have faith that shows itself through our constant attitude of thankfulness, knowing God will provide everything we need.

Think about your own life. When you pray, do you pray knowing that God wants your best or skeptical that He wants good things for you?



Faithful Father, I thank You that You want good things for me. I confess that sometimes I don't believe that. Sometimes I don't believe You will answer my prayers when I come to You. Help my unbelief. Fill me with the faith to run to You with my needs and expect You to take care of me. Make my heart more grateful today.

Lord, I pray for a friend who needs a miracle. I pray that their provision will be multiplied, but also that You would multiply their faith. Help them to run to You today and show them how much You love them. Let them feel Your nearness.

Live It Out:

Sometimes we don't pray for things with people because we're afraid God will disappoint us or embarrass us by not answering. Who is someone you could pray boldly with today for healing or an answer of provision they've been needing? Ask God to embolden you to do that today.



"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

Today's verses show Israel making a very foolish choice. God had set the nation of Israel up as His own people, set apart from all the nations around them. He ruled over them as their king. This government was a theocracy (compared to a democracy or monarchy). He led them through His chosen prophets and judges who would communicate to the people on His behalf. But Israel was jealous of the nations around it that had kings. It became embarrassing to them to be set apart and different from everyone else. Even though looking back, we can see that it was kind of absurd to want a human king if you could have God as your king, at the time, it seemed right in their eyes. That's how it often is with our sin. Sometimes, the way God deals with our bad choices is to give us what we want so we see it for what it is. He stops protecting us from ourselves and our own foolishness. So God gave Israel a king named Saul.

After they got their way, they became afraid that God was going to judge them for what they had done. Samuel tells them that God will forgive them if they repent and stop chasing after empty things that can never really satisfy. One big part of not chasing empty things is being thankful for what God has given us, trusting His wisdom in what we really need.

Think about your own life. What are some empty things you are chasing after that won't really satisfy? What are some things you want or have because you want to be like the people around you instead of modeling your life after Jesus' way? Sit and ask God to show you these things.

Gracious God, I confess that sometimes I want empty things. I name some of those things to You now. I confess that sometimes I'd rather look like everyone around me than have more of You. I ask You to change my desires through the power of Your Spirit. Make me want the things that are good for me...Your things.

Father, I pray for a friend who isn't walking with You because they are chasing the things of the world. Draw them back to Your love today and help them see how much better You are than anything the world can offer.

Live It Out:

Get an empty jar. Write the things you thought of earlier on paper and put them in the jar. Put it somewhere you can see when you're tempted to run after these things and let the jar they're in remind you of their emptiness. Pray over the jar when you see it that God would match your desires to His.



"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

Today's verses are part of a psalm written by King David. David was king of Israel, but his life was full of hard things. Before he became king, the man who was already king, Saul, found out that God wanted David to be king instead of him. Saul tried to kill David many times, and David spent years on the run, hiding in caves and mountains. He even pretended to be insane so his enemies would let him live with them. Later in his life, his sons tried to take over the throne, and he found himself in the middle of a civil war. We aren't sure what was happening when he wrote this, but we know that David had many enemies and his life was full of difficult things. What we do know about David from his many writings is that no matter what was going on around him, he always trusted God and gave thanks. When he made mistakes, he always came back to God. His love and trust in God are why he was called a man after God's own heart. David says in these verses that his grateful heart is more treasured by God than his religious rituals. God would rather have his heart than his empty actions.

Think of your own life. Are there any ways that you are going through the motions of the Christian life without feeling the joy and gratitude that should fuel those things?



Loving God, I confess that sometimes I am serving You and doing the right things without any true joy and gratitude. Help me to reverse that. Fill me with such a grateful heart and so much joyful love for You that it spills out into a life of love and good. Thank you for all the ways You love me and that I can trust You with my heart.

Lord, I pray for someone I know who does so much good for others. I ask You to give them energy and endurance by giving them more of You.

Live It Out:

Think of someone you know who serves God in a lot of ways. How could you encourage them or even offer to help them this week so they are better able to serve out of gratitude?

"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



Today's verses are kind of a heavy place to find gratitude. They come in the middle of the last supper Jesus would have with His disciples before He died on the cross. They were eating the Passover meal to remember the way God had rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. But He was using this meal to start a new tradition of remembrance with His followers. It was a symbol of what He was about to do on the cross. Jesus prayed and thanked God for the bread that represented how His body would be broken apart the next day. He thanked God for the wine that represented His blood that would be splattered on the ground. With all of that ahead of Him, things that He dreaded so much that He would ask God that night to take them away, He still gave thanks for them. Because He knew the joy of rescuing His people, and that made it something He was grateful for.



Sit for a moment and think how that would have felt, to be looking at this food and explaining to someone as you ripped it apart that that was what would be happening to you. Think about the disciples and what it would feel like in the years to come when they would take the Lord's Supper with their churches and remember the actual wounds that they saw on Jesus' hands and feet.



Wonderful Savior, I thank You that You were willing, even grateful, to go through the cross on my behalf. Help that to give me courage and conviction when I am called on to make sacrifices. Help me find the joy because I remember Your joy.

Lord, I think of someone I know who doesn't know of Your amazing love. That doesn't know that you were grateful to die because you love us and want to have a relationship with us. Give me the courage, words, and opportunity to tell them. Keep it coming back to my mind until I do.

What is something you've felt God asking you to do, but haven't been willing to say yes to because of the sacrifice it would require? Thinking about the gratitude behind His sacrifice, how could you start to pray that He would move your heart towards saying yes? Ask Him. He will give you the courage and strength to do anything He's asking you to do. He loves your life and your future even more than you do and only leads you in paths that are for your good.



“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

Today’s verses are from a psalm that has been used in religious celebrations for hundreds of years. Churches sang it as part of the Lord’s Supper and in the days leading up to Easter. It’s powerful to think about people singing this together in worship with their community.

Think of your own community and how you have worshipped with them through singing, but also serving, sharing meals, reading God’s Word, and just hanging out. Think of the ways that doing those things has encouraged you and helped you walk more deeply with the Lord.

Think of the adults who are further along on their journey with the Lord who have taken time to share their lives with you and teach you to walk with Jesus.

Part of the way that God graciously shows you love and care is by providing you with a community so that you aren’t wandering through life alone. There will be times in your life when you are overflowing with community and times when you can’t find the place you fit. Times when you’re transitioning out of old friendships and into new ones, and it feels uncomfortable. Remember that God cares about your community just like everything else and will faithfully provide. Pray that He will fill your life with people who grow you closer to Him, and be thankful for the people He does place in your life.



Holy Father, I thank you for the ways You created me to be in community. Thank You for the people in my life who have pointed me to You. I ask You to keep my life full of people who love You and want to follow You as King. Help me to seek out community when I feel lonely, reach out when I feel vulnerable, and be willing to do much for people who only do little for me.

Lord, help me think of someone today who is younger than me or newer to following You. Show me how I can come alongside this person and help them grow their faith.

Live It Out:

Everyone needs to have people ahead of them and behind them on the road of faith. People who are helping them grow and people they are helping grow. Think of a way you reach out to the person God showed you while you were praying, who is younger or newer to the faith. What is one step you could take today towards encouraging their faith?

Ideas: send an encouraging text, set up a time to get together and talk about life, have a conversation where you ask deeper questions.... There are no bad ideas for discipling; we just have to take a step to build a relationship.

DAY 12

“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

Today's verses come in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. This was Jesus' longest recorded teaching, so it gives us a lot of insight into what He considered important. Most of it focuses on how we treat others. Jesus was saying things that went against the culture at the time and go against our culture today (like we saw in Paul's letters). Things like love your enemies, do good to people who aren't good to you, and forgive people over and over. He also said that things that are important to the world shouldn't be important to us —like being rich and having power, or being popular. Jesus told us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. One way we follow Him is by caring about things that will last forever, not about temporary things. Not to store up treasure on earth because all of that is going to be gone someday. One big part of not wanting to keep getting more and more is being grateful for what we already have, instead of wanting something new all the time. In the world of fast fashion, cheap decor, and brands, being content with what we have is a powerful way to stand out and be a light in a world that tells us to constantly consume.

Take a moment to think about your own life. In what ways are you caring about things that don't really matter and storing up treasures on earth?



Loving Father, I name now the way I chase after things that don't matter. But also confess that my heart does long for these things, and it's hard to imagine not wanting them. Even though they aren't eternal, I feel the weight of them in my present. I often do not want eternal things and have trouble even asking for those things. So I ask You to help me want to want eternal focus. Give me the first tiny spark of right longing that You can grow within me.

Gracious God, I pray that you would help the people who are affected by our overconsumption through things like slavery and bad labor practices throughout the world. Help us see the solutions to these problems and how we can help your light shine in these dark places.

Live It Out:

Set a reminder to help your mind focus on things that will last forever rather than on temporary things. Maybe make Matthew 6 your lock screen, or write it on a piece of paper and hang it up. Every time you are tempted to put your hope in buying that new thing that you think will make you happy or popular, pray for God to help remind you what things have true value.

"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."

Psalms 119: 9-16

Today's verses come from the very longest chapter in the whole Bible. It is a type of poem using the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The writer of this psalm found so much joy in God's law that he couldn't help but use his creativity to express how excited he was. A lot of the psalms are like that. Throughout the Bible, we see God giving people specific talents and skills to use in worshiping Him. Gold workers, weavers, builders, musicians—all of these gifts were given by our creative God. Sometimes it's tempting to think of God in a boring or serious way, but that is a misunderstanding of so much of who God is. He is the original maker of beauty and music, color and stars, sunset and kittens. He creates such variety across different landscapes and animal types. He is an artist and a poet, a musician and a designer. He made us taste and smell and feel and see so that we would experience joy and pleasure.

Take a moment to think about the talents and skills God has given you. What are ways you can use those gifts to show your love and gratitude to God today?

Creative God, thank You for the talents You have given me. I'm thankful that when I use my creativity, I am reflecting the ways I am made like You. Show me a way today to express worship to You through these gifts.

Father, show me a way that I can also use my gifts to benefit others. Show me creative ways I can share what you have given me.

Live It Out:

What skills do you have? Are you a baker? Artist? Writer? Musician? Athlete?

Use your skill today in worship and thanksgiving. Write a poem using the letters of the alphabet to describe God, write a song telling of your love for God, bake something and enjoy it with a friend, draw or paint a picture, challenge yourself to push your body to do something difficult, and display God's good design. Find a way to worship God creatively today.



"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

Today's verses come from a book of the Bible that is often misunderstood as scary when it was actually intended to be comforting. As we talked about earlier, at the time the Bible was written, the people obviously did not have all the information we have because they didn't have a completed Bible, so they relied on the teaching and letters from the church leaders. There were lots of things that we know that they didn't understand at all. They were also facing a lot of hardships. Christians were being jailed and killed. They didn't really know what was going to happen- how things would end up. Was this the best they could ever expect? Tradition tells us that one of the people they tried to put to death was the Apostle John. They tried to boil him in a giant vat of oil (I told you there were hard times), and when he miraculously wasn't even hurt, they were so mad that they exiled him to an island called Patmos. While he was there, God gave him a crazy vision about the world and what would eventually happen to everything at the end of time. There are lots of details that people interpret differently, but the main message is this: Jesus is going to return and set the world right. Heaven will come down to the new, perfect earth, and Jesus will be our perfect King, ruling over us forever. In a world full of sin and evil and persecution, that was good news for them, and it's good news for us. This is what all of our gratitude flows from: the knowledge that one day everything will be set right.

Take a moment to think of the things that make you scared or sad in the world. What would it be like to live in a world that doesn't have those things? A world of no sickness, corruptions, fighting, jealousy, natural disasters....

King Jesus, I thank You today that You offer me hope in a world that sometimes feels hopeless. All of my hope is in You. Thank You that one day I will live in the new earth with You as my King. Help my heart to long for that time. Help me to long for Your kingdom fully come.

Lord, I think of a situation in the world that doesn't reflect Your perfect kingdom. I pray that You would shine Your light into this situation. Renew it so that it will be in this situation as it is in heaven.

Live It Out:

What is a situation today that you wish had the light of heaven in it? How could you help bring light to that area? Maybe volunteering, donating, starting a fundraiser, or raising awareness. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide You in how He wants to use You to make earth as it is in heaven.



