

LIFE IS BETTER TOGETHER!

Forming A Grateful Soul

Key idea:

We are called to form a grateful soul by consciously taking time to notice and give thanks to God for His many blessings and trusting Him to work for our good in all circumstances.

Key text:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Be joyful always; ¹⁷ pray continually; ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Key points:

1. It is God's will and command that I develop a joyful, praying life of gratitude, and I should recognize that ingratitude is a foundational sin.
2. There are three key parts to forming a grateful soul:
 - a. Take time to notice God's hand of blessing all around
 - b. Specifically give verbal thanks to God for His blessings
 - c. Trust and thank God even in tough times
3. There are many things I regularly experience that are filled with God's Presence, work, and blessing for which I should give thanks:
 - a. My life, which is the gift of God!
 - b. My breath, which is truly miraculous in its intricacy
 - c. Creation, both in space and on the earth
 - d. Food and drink
 - e. Family, friends, and community
 - f. Other items each of us may enjoy such as music, a good book, a campfire, a beautiful drive, camping, etc.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. Do I often think of gratitude as being important for my Christian life, and of ingratitude as a foundational sin?
3. How often do I verbally give thanks to God for something? Many times a day? Once a day? Once a week?
4. What is the difference between simply giving thanks and forming a soul that has a disposition of gratitude?
5. Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote the poetic lines below. According to this, where might I see and experience God's Presence? Why does she refer to a common bush being afire with God? What is the difference between taking off my shoes and sitting around and plucking blackberries?

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries.

6. How often do I notice my breathing? Do I tend to notice it when all is going well, or only when it is affected by sickness? Is this true in other areas as well?
7. When I consider the list of things for which I should give thanks (Key Point 3a-e above), which do I most regularly think about and give thanks to God? Which do I do the least?
8. A saying of unknown origin asserts "We see the world not as it is, but as we are." What does this teach me regarding gratitude? How does this point me towards the importance of how my soul is shaped and formed?
9. What practice can I do this week to help me form a grateful soul?
10. Who will I call or see to encourage this week? Who can I encourage to worship this King this coming Sunday?