



# Going Deeper: Gratitude

## Introduction:

The practice of gratitude strengthens our relationship with God and releases fresh perspective and joy in our lives. In the same way that farmers cultivate land, we cultivate gratitude by sowing seeds of regular and intentional thanks. Over time these seeds produce a harvest of a thankful heart in us.

## Gratitude In The Life of Jesus:

Giving thanks marked the life of Jesus. The Gospels record Jesus giving thanks:

- Before The Feeding of the 4000 (Matthew 15)
- Before The Feeding of the 5000 (Matthew 14)
- When Raising Lazarus From The Dead (John 11)
- At The Last Supper (Luke 22)
- On the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24)

## Gratitude In The Life of Jesus's Disciples:

This way of living marked his disciples as well. In Scripture gratitude is meant to mark:

- Our Core Values (1 Thessalonians 5)

- Our Worship (Psalm 100)
- Our Prayer Life (1 Timothy 2)
- Our Thought Life (Philippians 4)
- Our Conversations (Ephesians 5)

## Examples From Church History:

Corrie and Betsie ten Boom were Dutch sisters who loved Jesus and helped protect Jews from the Nazis. The Nazi's arrested the sisters and sent them to a German concentration camp.

The living conditions at the camp were awful. In the barracks beds were stacked to three levels high to squeeze as many prisoners in as possible. Rancid straw covered the beds. This straw smelled so bad that it made the sisters nauseous and was a breeding ground for sickness. To make matters worse, the barracks were infested with fleas.

The weight and stench of it all overwhelmed the sisters with despair. They began to pray and ask God for help. Suddenly Betsie exclaimed, "He's given us the answer! Before we asked, as He always does! In the Bible this morning. Where was it? Read that part again!"

Corrie took out the small Bible they had smuggled into the camp and turned to their reading from that morning. "*Comfort the frightened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus ...*" (1 Thessalonians 5:14-18).

"That's His answer," Betsie replied "Give thanks in all circumstances!" That's what we can do. We can start right now to thank God for every single thing about this barracks!"

Corrie was not encouraged and asked, "Such as?" To which Betsie listed:

- They were assigned to the same barracks.
- They had been able to sneak in their Bible.
- They had an opportunity to minister to the women with them.

Corrie was starting to go along with it, but then Betsie said something shocking:

- For the fleas!"

For Corrie this was too much. How could they be thankful for the fleas?

Betsie responded, “ ‘Give thanks in all circumstances. It doesn’t say, ‘in pleasant circumstances.’ Fleas are part of this place where God has put us.”

Reluctantly, Corrie gave thanks with her sister for the fleas.

As time passed they realized that unlike the other barracks, the guards never came in the barracks the ten Boom's were stationed in. This allowed the sisters to minister and share the Gospel freely with the women around them.

Later they learned the reason why the guards wouldn't come in. It was the fleas. Those fleas that had been such a discouragement when the sisters first came, were actually a protection for them. Because the guards didn't want to get fleas, they left these barracks alone. This saved the sisters from verbal and physical abuse and gave them an open door for ministry in the midst of the camp.

When they realized this, Corrie's mind went back to the early days of giving thanks, and now had fresh perspective to see God's presence and work in her life.

## **Other Inspirational Quotes:**

*“It is only with gratitude that life becomes rich!” –Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

*“In 12 years of research, in all that time, I have never interviewed a person who describes themselves as joyful who did not actively practice gratitude. . . . Practicing gratitude invites joy into our lives and when I say practice I don’t mean merely an attitude of gratitude or feeling grateful, I mean practicing gratitude. These folks shared in common a TANGIBLE gratitude practice.” -Brene Brown*

*“It is not joy that makes us grateful. It is gratitude that makes us joyful.” – David Steindl-Rast*

## **Putting It Into Practice:**

To start your quiet time, begin by listing out 5-10 things you are thankful for. Make a habit of doing this every day. Over time this list will grow and will become a powerful reminder of God's presence and provision in your life.