

WAYS TO EXPRESS “GRATEFUL” – NESS

Continuing with our series “FOREVER GRATEFUL” may I call attention to my proposed definition: Biblically speaking, **to be grateful** is to be “*full of feelings of joyful satisfaction which will overflow into expressions of praise for the One who has blessed us.*” Today, I’d like for us to give thought to “**ways to express “grateful”- ness.**” When someone blesses you – be it with a gift or an act of kindness – how do you show your gratitude?

VERBALLY: Of course, the most common way is in the moment. We probably just say, “*thanks*” or “*thank you.*” If we are particularly grateful we might say “*I can’t thank you enough*” - or “*I really, really appreciate this.*” As simple as they might seem, it means a lot to a giver to hear such expressions of gratitude. We can choose to elaborate. “*You don’t know how much this means to me.*” Taking it up a notch, we might tell others how blessed we were by someone’s thoughtfulness. There’s something especially complimentary in hearing from a third party that something you said or did or gave was appreciated. **Consider these passages...**

Give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! (1 Chronicles 16:8) **“Sing praise to the LORD, you saints, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.”** (Psalm 30:4) **“I’ll give You thanks in the great assembly; I’ll praise You among many people.”** (Psalm 35:18) **“Let’s come into His presence with thanksgiving; Let’s shout joyfully to Him with psalms.”** (Psalm 95:2) We can and should express gratitude to God in prayer. We can and should sing praise to Him for all He’s done, - even expressing our thankfulness with shouts of joy at times. We can and should tell others how much we appreciate God’s kindnesses and blessings.

IN WRITING: If you’ve never written a thank you card, I’d suggest that you’ve missed opportunities to express gratefulness. Have you not been touched by “*thank you*” cards – especially when they’ve been personalized? At times, I’ve even thought that Hallmark might do well to make “*Thank you for the thank you card*” cards. Ever received a thank you letter? I have, and sometimes it’s been just the encouragement I have needed to get me through the rest of my day. Thank you cards from children are so precious. I know that parents or grandparents might be encouraging them to do this, maybe even giving them quite a bit of help. Doesn’t matter. It warms the heart. May I encourage you to write a “*thank you card*” to God? What might it look like? There’s a sample in today’s bulletin. If you’re going to list all He’s done for you though, you’re going to need a bigger card. Maybe you’d prefer to write a letter. What’s the point? It’s not like you can send it to Him. Or can you? You may not have His physical address, but if you’ll write down your expressions of gratitude, I assure you He will get the message. According to Romans 8:26-27, the Holy Spirit will carry your thanksgiving to the heart of the Father. In Deuteronomy 6:9 God’s people were instructed to do something interesting...

Once the love of God and the teachings of God were written on their own hearts, they were told: **"Write them on the door frames of (their) houses and gates."** Why? It was meant to be a visible reminder to all who passed by, especially those living under their roof. We can - and I believe we should - **journal our heartfelt gratitude** to God. Try it and you'll find a blessing in the process as you recount your many blessings.

WITH GIFTS: I'd be surprised if you've neither given or received *"thank you"* gifts. Some token of appreciation for an act of kindness. A few weeks ago, one of the ladies in the church here gave Nina and I some fresh homemade bread as an expression of her gratefulness for our ministry. I confess that I fell off the wagon of my low carb diet long enough to enjoy a piece. Nina often gives what she calls little *"love gifts"* as tokens of appreciation for the ladies in her class, the kids in Kids worship, servants in the church...well, it would be easier to list whom she hadn't given one to.

Did you know that the Scriptures address the issue of *"thank you gifts"* for God? Here are just a few examples: **"When you offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the LORD, offer it of your own free will."** (Leviticus 2:29) **"Offer to God thanksgiving; pay your vows to the Most High."** (Psalm 50:14) **"I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship."** (Romans 12:1) We could - and should give thanksgiving gifts to God.

IN OUR STEWARDSHIP: This has to do with managing our blessings responsibly. What do we do with what we've been given? Most of us would be upset if we learned money we gave a homeless person was used for drugs or alcohol. We intended for it to be used for more noble purposes. Yet, think on that a minute. Is God ever disappointed in what we do with His gifts? Do we ever abuse them? Are we using them selfishly, if at all?

Imagine you gave someone a decorative wall hanging, but when you pay a visit a few weeks later you don't see it displayed. What do you think? There could be a legitimate reason. Nina and I received a beautiful anniversary plaque this summer that we really love, but it has yet to be hung because we're redecorating. Still, if it never gets displayed what might that communicate to the giver? I've a relative who is particularly hard to buy for. I've often tried to buy him gifts I think he'd like and find useful; tools, coats, sporting goods, etc. that he actually indicated he'd like to have. Most of it is still in the box or tucked away in a closet. I believe he was grateful that I cared enough to get him a gift - but when he doesn't use what I've given, it doesn't *"feel"* that he is grateful for the gift. Ever wonder what God thinks if we don't put to use our gifts from Him?

In *"the parable of the talents"* (Mathew 25) Jesus refers to one who did that very thing as a **"wicked, lazy servant."** Neglecting God's gifts cost him the greatest gift of all - His eternal presence. Need I say more? **We can and should express gratefulness. / But, will we?**