

Gratitude

'Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever'

Psalm 106:1

We humans have a tendency to focus on what is lacking, on what is wrong, on what should not be. Scripture is full of encouragements to reflect on what we have, on what is good, on what is - and then to thank God for His care and provision. An atheist may enjoy good health and take pleasure in watching the sun set – but is never thankful for these things. To be thankful is to admit our indebtedness and to acknowledge a giver. Are you a thankful type of person?

Gratitude and joy

When our needs and desires are met, it is easy to be thankful. We are encouraged to thank God for our marriage partner, for food, and for all the good things “which God has created to be received with *thanksgiving*” (1 Tim. 4:3-4). When the reconstruction of the wall round Jerusalem was completed, the Levites “were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of *thanksgiving*” (Neh. 12:27). Our gratitude towards God and other people must be expressed. Gratitude and joy are clearly connected. Grateful Christians are happy people! And as they express their gratitude, they make other people happy.

Gratitude and faith

I notice that some people in the Bible are grateful before they have evidence of a good outcome. When Daniel heard that his life was seriously in danger, “he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, *giving thanks* to his God, just as he had done before” (Daniel 6:10). Before resurrecting Lazarus, “Jesus looked up and said, ‘Father, I *thank* you that you have heard me’” (John 11:41). God’s promises

are as firm and sure as God Himself. We will experience peace and joy as we trust His promises (Phil. 4:6-7). That is why we can also thank God for His promises.

What do you see?

We can see people and events very differently. The apostle Paul had enough experience with people and churches to know how many things can go wrong. And yet we find him frequently thanking God for them. To churches he often wrote “I *thank* my God every time I remember you” (Phil. 1:3). To a slave owner he wrote, “I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers” (Phlmn. 1:4). When we can see something of Christ in the Christians we meet or work with, we shall also find reasons to thank and rejoice.

An excellent antidote

Choosing to live with a grateful mind-set is very healthy. Gratitude is the best antidote to depression. Gratitude is the best antidote for bitterness or resentment. Gratitude is the best antidote to greed or jealousy.

Choosing to be thankful

It is no surprise then, to discover that our heavenly Father urges His children to see His good hand in the details of life and to “be thankful”. To be thankful is also an act of obedience. God is delighted when we “sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs *with gratitude* in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:15-16). To see God’s hand in our life, we must keep our eyes open. About a year ago, one of our daughters began to write down every day things she is thankful for. She is numbering them and is now well over one thousand. Stop a moment. Can you see evidence of God’s good hand in your life today? Choose to say ‘thank you’ to God, your partner, your parent, your child, your fellow believer, your neighbour. Choose to be a thankful type of person!

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