

## ***The Attitude of Gratitude, Week 1***

### **WHY IT MATTERS Deuteronomy 8:10-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

Let me ask you a question:

- If I told you there was something you could do that would make you happier, healthier, closer to God, and closer to other people,

WOULD YOU DO IT?

#### **John Kralik was lost – both physically and spiritually:**

52 years old, divorced twice, living in a cheap apartment, strained relationships with his children

- He had his own law firm, and he had worked hard all year—long, grueling hours—
  - o and by the end of the year he had made nothing –
  - o in fact, he lost money
- The woman he was dating had just broken up with him
- A million dollar verdict that would have solved all his financial problems had just been overturned
- He had lost the lease on his law office

So on New Year's Day, John Kralik took a hike up Echo Mountain in Pasadena, California

- And while he was up there hiking, he got lost
- And as he wandered around lost, and he thought about his current situation, he also thought about his unfulfilled dreams:
  - o He wanted to be a writer
  - o He wanted to be a judge

He said, "I wanted to be more than just another lawyer slinging hatred for a living."

And then John Kralik heard a voice

- A voice he didn't recognize, but a voice outside of himself
- And the voice said,

*"Until you learn to be grateful for the things you have, you will not receive the things you want."*

- And as John Kralik sat on the ground, lost in the woods, he thought about his grandfather, who taught him the value of saying, "Thank You"
- And he thought about the fact that he had all this stationery with envelopes that had the return address of the office he was just about to lose

And John made a resolution—that he would take that stationery and write thank-you notes:

- He would write one thank-you note a day—every day—for an entire year

Well, he got up, and he found his way off the mountain, and the first thank-you note he wrote was to his son,

- And he realized he didn't have his son's address
- So he called him to get his address
- And his son said, "You know what, Dad? I need to stop by and take you to lunch."
  - o Which he did—and while they were eating, John's son repaid a loan of several thousand dollars.

As John Kralik went through that year, thanking somebody every day, he changed:

- His mood changed
- His outlook on life changed
- His compassion for other people changed

And as he changed, his life changed.

And today John Kralik is a judge in the Superior Court of Los Angeles County

And he's a New York Times bestselling author:

- His book is called, *A Simple Act of Gratitude: How Learning to Say Thank You Changed my Life.*

## 1 Thessalonians 5 says,

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (New Revised Standard Version)

Rejoice... How often? *Always.*

Pray ... How often? *Without ceasing.*

Give thanks ... when? *In all circumstances.*

Have you ever given thanks for an insect? How about a whole roomful of insects?

Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch Christian who was sent to a concentration camp by the Nazis, because her family hid Jews during the holocaust

And of course, it was horrible, but she and her sister Betsie (imprisoned together) were strong Christians and they continued to pray, and when the guards didn't stop them they even held Bible studies in the prison

Corrie and Betsie were moved from camp to camp

- And then one day they were moved to Ravensbruck
- And it was the worst camp they'd ever seen
- The barracks were overcrowded and dingy and infested with fleas

And one day Corrie and Betsie read 1 Thessalonians 5:18 – “give thanks in all circumstances”

- Betsie said, “We're going to thank God for every single thing about this new barracks”

-Corrie said, “Betsie, there's no way even God can make me grateful for fleas.”

- Betsie said, “Corrie, it says ‘all circumstances,’ not ‘pleasant circumstances.’”

And so Corrie Ten Boom and her sister Carrie stood there in the middle of that filthy barracks and thanked God for fleas.

As it turned out, they lived at that prison camp for months,

- And they did Bible studies

- And they held worship services
- And they ministered
- And they led people to Christ

And they were surprised that the guards never interfered –

- at other camps, the guards wouldn't let them hold Christian meetings, but here, it was not a problem

Later they found out why: The guards would not enter the barracks because of the fleas!

***“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances.***

***For this is the will of God ... for you.”***

And maybe it's the will of God because God has always known what science is now discovering:

Studies conducted at major universities over a 10-year period show that people who practice gratitude have

- more energy,
- more optimism,
- more social connections
- and more happiness than those who do not practice gratitude

They're also less likely to be

- depressed,
- envious,
- greedy,
- or alcoholics.

They earn more money, sleep more soundly, exercise more regularly, and have greater resistance to viral infections.

A recent study at the University of Georgia discovered that the "most consistent significant predictor" of happy marriages was whether or not the spouses expressed gratitude.

A recent study from three universities (and one of 'em is Harvard) found that gratitude reduces impatience

So if you've ever prayed, "Lord, grant me patience, and do it NOW"

- Maybe what you need to do is start practicing gratitude.

In today's Old Testament Lesson from Deuteronomy 8, the people of Israel are just about to enter the Promised Land

- A land flowing with milk and honey
- It's what they've been dreaming of for all these years

But before they go in, Moses says, "Be careful! Watch out!"

Because when you get comfortable, three bad things can happen:

- 1- You get prideful – "I did this"
- 2- You forget God
- 3- When you forget God, you start to follow other gods

Practicing gratitude – intentionally giving thanks – is the antidote for all three of those things!

### **So here's what we're going to do:**

For the next 25 days, we're going to help you develop

#### **The Attitude of Gratitude**

We're asking you to do three things between now and Thanksgiving:

- 1- Keep a gratitude journal – each day write down five things you're grateful for that day
- 2- Write a thank you note (or text or email) to somebody every day
- 3- Say, "Thank you" as often as you can, to as many people as you can, throughout the day.

In 1617, shortly before the Thirty Years' War broke out in central Europe, Martin Rinkart became a pastor in the German city of Eilenburg.

Eilenburg was a walled city, and as the war developed, refugees flooded in. Overcrowding led to food shortages. By 1637, the situation was so bad that refugees fought in the streets for dead cats and birds. Plague soon followed. Each of the city's four pastors held ten or more funerals a day. Overwhelmed, one ran away. The others died, leaving Rinkart to bury them. Though alone, he continued to hold all the funeral services himself, sometimes for as many as fifty people a day.

In May of that year, his own wife died. By the end of the year, the refugees had to be buried in trenches without services.

Martin survived the entire war, pouring himself out in charity, giving away all the food and clothing he had obtained, except just enough to preserve his own hungry family. He even mortgaged his future earnings.

And yet—in the midst of all that death, despair, and deprivation, Pastor Rinkart sat down one day and wrote this prayer for his children to say at dinner time:

Now thank we all our God  
With heart and hand and voices;  
Who wondrous things has done,  
In whom this world rejoices.  
Who, from our mother's arms,  
Has blessed us on our way,  
With countless gifts of love,  
And still is ours today.

Let's stand together and sing Martin Rinkart's beautiful Thanksgiving hymn.