



by Nancy Leigh DeMoss

God's Word teaches that thankfulness ought to be a way of life. But in the reality of our daily lives, it is so easy for discontentment, murmuring, complaining, criticizing, or even bitterness to displace the "attitude of gratitude." Cultivating a thankful heart will result in speaking thankful words. But we all need periodic reminders to be thankful, and, for most of us, developing the habit of thankfulness may require some practice!

Here are some practical suggestions for devoting one week to practicing thankfulness. You may even want to include the whole family in this project.

Day 1

Every chapter in the book of Colossians has at least one reference to thankfulness. Read the following verses and jot down a thought that stands out to you (Colossians 1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:15, 17; 4:2):

Someone has defined gratitude as "learning to recognize and express appreciation for the benefits which I have received from God and others." Try to memorize this definition today, and review it at least once each day this week.

Day 2

Before we can express our gratitude, we must take time to recognize and identify the specific blessings that we have received from God and others.

Make a list of all the material and spiritual blessings you can think of that you have received from the Lord. Then stop and thank God for each item on your list.

Spiritual Blessings (If you need help getting started, try reading the first chapter of Ephesians!)

Material Blessings

Day 3

Today, focus on expressing gratitude to and for your family members. Make a list of each member of your family (mate, parents, children, brothers, sisters, etc.). Then next to each name, write one quality about their life for which you are particularly grateful.

Family Members; Qualities I Appreciate

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Take time to thank God for each member of the family He has given you. Then pick three individuals from your list to whom you can express gratitude today, either in person, by phone, or by means of a note. You might want to begin by saying something like this:

"I thanked God for you today, and I want you to know how grateful I am that you are part of my family, and especially for this particular quality that I see in you . . ." (You may want to express gratitude to someone on your list who has been especially difficult to love!)

Day 4

Make a list of other individuals who have blessed or touched your life in some way. You may want to include pastors, teachers, friends, business associates, neighbors, authors, leaders of Christian ministries, etc. As you write each name, ask yourself, "Have I ever thanked that person for the way God has used him/her in my life?" Put a check mark next to each individual to whom you have expressed gratitude.

Day 5

Call or write three people on the list you made yesterday, to express your gratitude for their influence and ministry in your life.

Day 6

Paul instructed the Ephesian believers to "give thanks always for all things . . ." (Eph. 5:20).

One man of God told of meditating on this verse while he was brushing his teeth one morning. He was challenged by the thought of thanking God for everything! He said, "I began by thanking God for my toothbrush. Then I thanked Him for the toothpaste. Then I realized that I had never thanked God for my teeth!" He went on to ask this probing question: "If tomorrow's supply depended on today's thanksgiving, how much would I have tomorrow?"

As you go through this day, try to consciously thank God for all things . . . small things and big things!

Day 7

As you have been focusing on thankfulness, have you found some people, items, or circumstances for which it is not easy to be thankful?

Dr. Helen Roseveare, long-time missionary doctor in the Congo, told of a point in her life when she was shamefully mistreated at the hands of rebel soldiers. She described the painful struggle that took place in her heart, as she sought to make some sense out of the humiliation and physical suffering she had undergone. Then she told of the release and peace that came when she sensed God asking her,

“Helen, are you willing to give me thanks for that which I may never give you the privilege of understanding?”

Make a list of past or present circumstances, events, trials, or relationships for which you may never have given thanks. Then, as an expression of faith and an exercise of obedience, say, “Lord, I choose to give You thanks for _____ and _____, which You may never give me the privilege of understanding.”

In so doing, you will be acknowledging that God is the “Blessed Controller” of everything that touches your life, and that you trust Him and His sovereign choices for your life.

Difficult things for which God wants me to give thanks:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Now that you’ve spent a week focusing on gratitude, we’d like to challenge you to make a lifetime habit of giving thanks. In fact, you’ll discover that the whole world looks different, when you learn to see it through eyes of thankfulness!