



## **GROW. PRAY. STUDY.**

The Church of the Resurrection – Weekly Guide

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**November 12, 2017** *With Grateful Hearts* “Made for Gratitude”

### **Scripture:**

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever. *Psalms 136:1*

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten men with skin diseases approached him. Keeping their distance from him, they raised their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, show us mercy!” When Jesus saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” As they left, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw that he had been healed, returned and praised God with a loud voice. He fell on his face at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus replied, “Weren’t ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? No one returned to praise God except this foreigner?” Then Jesus said to him, “Get up and go. Your faith has healed you.” *Luke 17:11-19 and 1*

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. *Thessalonians 5:16-18*

### **God knows gratitude is good for you**

#### **MONDAY 11.13.17 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18**

“Gratitude is a sentiment we’d all do well to cultivate, according to positive psychologists, mental health clinicians and researchers who seek to help everyone create more joy in life. Feeling thankful and expressing that thanks makes you happier and heartier—not hokier.” \* The God who created us seems, given what the apostle Paul wrote, to have anticipated this growing body of research by a few thousand years!

- A handbook for Bible translators noted, “In some languages it is strange to direct anyone to be joyful, since...joy is regarded as being dependent upon outside circumstances over which one has no control. The implication of Paul’s words is that real joy depends on one’s relation to God, which is permanent and unchanging.” \*\* When have you found that you can be grateful for God’s love and God’s promises even in life’s toughest moments?
- How much do the positive qualities of life Paul listed in this passage (e.g. rejoicing, praying, being thankful) appeal to you? How can you nurture an inner appetite for the good? In what ways do you find that choosing to nurture anger or complaint (about yourself, others or life/God) reduces your appetite for the good things God offers?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I’m grateful you didn’t call me to give thanks FOR every situation. Even giving thanks IN every situation is often a challenge. Keep growing that capacity in me. Amen.

\* From Lauren Aaronson, “Make a Gratitude Adjustment.” *Psychology Today*, March 1, 2006, found at [www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200603/make-gratitude-adjustment](http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200603/make-gratitude-adjustment).

\*\* Paul Ellingworth and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1976, p. 121.

## **Jesus appreciated gratitude**

**TUESDAY 11.14.17 Luke 17:11-19**

In Jesus' day, "leper" meant a person with one of a variety of visible skin diseases. People thought all lepers were highly contagious, so they feared and shunned them. Jesus healed a group of ten such men—rejected and outcast due to their visible skin diseases. We see how isolated these sufferers were. They raised their voices and called to Jesus while "keeping their distance from him." But of the ten, only one Samaritan came back to say, "thank you."

- All ten were "cleansed." When the Samaritan came back to express gratitude, Jesus used a stronger word that can even mean "made whole" or "saved," saying, "Your faith has healed you" (verse 19). Pastor Bruce Larson wrote, "The other nine were merely cleansed. If ingratitude is more deadly than leprosy, they were in worse shape than before. Only one came back and was made whole." \* What blocks gratitude in your life? What helps you remember to thank God every day?
- When one healed man returned to give thanks, Jesus asked, "Where are the other nine?" The text didn't tell us. Use your imagination and your knowledge of human nature: where do you think they might have been? If you had been one of the ten, which do you think is more likely: that you'd have returned to express your gratitude, or gone about your business?

**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, you even cared about people everyone else avoided. Which means that no matter what my problems, you care about me, too. And for that I thank you deeply. Amen.

\* Bruce Larson, *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 26: Luke*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, p. 250.

## **Jesus himself often expressed gratitude**

**WEDNESDAY 11.15.17 Mark 8:1-8, Luke 22:14-19, John 11:35-42**

The creator of the world, the ruler of the universe, chose to "become flesh" and live on earth as a human being (cf. [John 1:14](#)). Would you expect such a being to have the ultimate attitude of "entitlement," to demand everything that was his by right? Well, we know Jesus didn't do that. As he gave us a model of what it means to be fully human, the gospels showed that his healthy human life included giving thanks in many different settings.

- The Greek root of the word "Eucharist" meant "to give thanks." As you read Luke 22:14-19, picture Jesus eating with his disciples, with the cross just ahead. On what realities do you think he focused to be able to "give thanks" at that moment? In what ways can you include the healing, strengthening power of gratitude in your prayers, even in hard times?
- Do you think Jesus' reasons for praying were different from your reasons for prayer? Why do you believe Jesus prayed at all, and didn't just say, "I'm the son of God—I can handle this on my own"? If you had been one of the first disciples, what difference, if any, do you imagine you would have noticed in Jesus after he had been praying?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, at one point, praying, you said, "Thank you for hearing me. I know you always hear me." Help me share that confidence, and say "thank you" for it more often in my own prayers. Amen.

## **Gratitude keeps spiritual life from being choked out**

**THURSDAY 11.16.17 Luke 8:4-8, 11-15**

The image of growing seeds Jesus used to illustrate spiritual growth made sense, not only to people in the farming area around the Sea of Galilee where he told this story, but to any of us

who've ever tried to garden or grow a lawn. Even good seed, Jesus said, can't grow strong in poor or untended soil. Living as God's wishes us to means cultivating an open, "good soil" heart. When we do that, "concerns, riches, and pleasures of life" won't be able to crowd out the good fruit God is at work to bear in us. (You can read Jesus' more detailed teaching about how life's concerns impede spiritual growth in [Matthew 6:25-34](#).)

- Jesus knew some people (the hard-packed path) never even start to respond to God's message. But some, he said, start, but their growth is "choked by the concerns, riches, and pleasures of life, and their fruit never matures." As one Christian counselor wrote, "People and circumstances can have more than one aspect—and this applies to both the good and bad. We can choose not only to see (or fear) the bad but also to look at and appreciate the good." \* How can you allow God to direct your vision so that life's concerns don't choke your spiritual growth?
- What wishes and concerns most often compete with God's kingdom to be the top priority in your life? What key choices have made your heart more open to God's work in cultivating a "good soil" spirit? What shifts in attitudes, actions and values would move you further in the direction of being "good soil" for God's Word to grow in?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I'm grateful that some days it's easy to sense your power guiding and growing me. Other days a dozen urgent things seem to try to choke you out of my life. Help me learn how to "weed" those days, to keep my faith life growing strong. Amen.

\* From an article about gratitude posted at <https://seattlechristiancounseling.com/articles/positive-psychology-gratitude>.

## **Gratitude for "food and clothing" fosters contentment**

### **FRIDAY 11.17.17 1 Timothy 6:6-10**

Too often, the news (particularly financial news) is full of words like "worry," "uncertainty," and "fear." Yet the traveling preacher and craftsman ([Acts 18:1-4](#)) who wrote these verses had little money and no retirement plan (in a human sense, at least). His words about "being happy with what you already have" might make us think he'd read this research: "Gratitude turns your attention to what you do have instead of what you don't, Philip Watkins, an Eastern Washington University psychologist, suggests.... People who recognize the blessings they have tend to think they'll get happiness from things like fulfilling relationships—which, research shows, are the real sources of satisfaction." \*

- How rich (or poor) are you, by the measure these verses suggest? If your "contentment quotient" is strong, how did it get that way? If your quotient is lower, ask God to help you raise it. Research suggests strongly that using your gratitude journal is one good way to do that. In a culture flooded with messages meant to make you want "more," how can you avoid both pride and shame related to your material "success"?
- Have you at times in your life felt trapped in "the rat race"? Do you now? What is godly contentment worth to you (or, if you don't have it, what would it be worth to you)? How can the principle Paul stated in verse 7 help you to move toward greater gratitude, contentment and peace?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I admit—too often, I don't want to be happy with food and clothing. Help me blunt the constant thirst for "more," and learn the peace and gratitude that you offer me. Amen.

\* From Lauren Aaronson, "Make a Gratitude Adjustment." *Psychology Today*, March 1, 2006, found at [www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200603/make-gratitude-adjustment](http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200603/make-gratitude-adjustment).

## **Gratitude for God's works is always in order**

### **SATURDAY 11.18.17 Psalm 92:1-5**

This week, we've looked at some of the psychological research that is confirming what the psalmist wrote long ago: "It is good to give thanks to the LORD." Here's one more bit of research related to the gratitude journals Resurrection is giving us: "Take just a few minutes each day to jot down things that make you thankful, from the generosity of friends to the food on your table or the right to vote.... List-keepers sleep better, exercise more and gain a general contentment that may counteract stress and contribute to overall health." \* The ultimate source of joy in Psalm 92 was God's loyal love and faithfulness, realities that are always with us if we just recognize them.

- In verse 2, the psalmist spoke of expressing gratitude to God in the morning and at nighttime. In what ways have you, or will you, build recognizing and expressing gratitude into your habit patterns, so that you don't always have to try to remember to do it? Spend some time today praying about choices you can make to incorporate gratitude more fully into your daily practices as a Christ follower.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you made me for praise and gratitude. When I'm tempted to grump my way through a day, remind me of your ever-present love and faithfulness—and help me to be grateful for them. Amen.

\* From Lauren Aaronson, "Make a Gratitude Adjustment." *Psychology Today*, March 1, 2006, found at [www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200603/make-gratitude-adjustment](http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200603/make-gratitude-adjustment).

**Family Activity:** Create a family giving chain. Cut several sheets of colored construction paper into strips. Every week, give each family member one strip of paper. Have each person write his or her name on the paper strip and one way he or she served or gave to others that week. In addition to giving of time and energy, also include ways your family is giving money to church and others. Form the first slip into a circle and staple or tape the ends together, then add to that circle by connecting the strips together to create a chain. At the end of each month, review the acts of giving your family has shared in. Thank God for the privilege of giving to God and to others.

### **Prayer Requests** – [cor.org/prayer](http://cor.org/prayer)

#### *Prayers for Peace & Comfort for:*

- Roger and Kay Novak and family on the death of their son Jeffrey Novak, 11/4
- Ted Chael and Mike Chael and families on the death of their brother David Thomas Chael, 11/4
- Katherine Carlson and family on the death of her sister Joan Cuthbertson, 11/3
- Tammy Worley and family on the death of her son Justin Taylor Worley, 11/2
- Jim Poplau and family on the death of his sister Kristy Poplau, 11/2
- Marsha Murray and family on the death of her husband Mike Murray, 11/1
- Family and friends of Arlene Shuler on her death, 10/31
- Susan Yoakum and family on the death of her husband Steve Yoakum, 10/30
- Kristin Hadel and family on the death of her father Robert E. "Bob" Shanklin, 10/30
- Family and friends of Blanchie Coolidge on her death, 10/30
- Linda Collins and family on the death of her mother Wilda Lawhorn, 10/28