



# Thanksgiving Week A Thanks-filled Life

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Gratitude is one of the simplest Christian practices—and one of the hardest to maintain.

- Most of us can feel thankful in a moment: when life is peaceful, when things go our way, when blessings are obvious.
- But Scripture calls us to something deeper than momentary appreciation.
- The Bible calls us not merely to *feel thankful*, but to *live thankful*—to cultivate a posture of the heart that remembers God’s goodness, trusts God’s character, and sees God’s hand even when circumstances shift.

Thankfulness is not accidental. It doesn’t appear automatically when life becomes easy. In fact, some of the most grateful people in the world are the ones who have endured the hardest things. Why? Because gratitude is not a reaction; it’s a **choice**. It’s something you **cultivate**. It’s something you **carry** with you into every season of life.

## **Psalm 103:1–5**

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name!*

<sup>2</sup> *Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits,*

<sup>3</sup> *who forgives all your iniquity,  
who heals all your diseases,*

<sup>4</sup> *who redeems your life from the pit,  
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,*

<sup>5</sup> *who satisfies you with good  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

David is not sitting on a mountaintop when he writes these words—he's preaching to his own soul.

- David knows his heart forgets.
- He knows gratitude leaks.
- So he speaks truth to himself: *Remember who God is. Remember what God has done. Remember the goodness you've received.*

Psalm 103 lays the foundation for a life of gratitude—not a life that ignores hardship, but a life that sees God clearly. Because when you see God clearly, gratitude becomes natural.

### **What are the key elements of a thankful life?**

What does it take—practically, spiritually—to build a life where gratitude is not just a momentary feeling, but a steady way of living?

Let's walk through five essential practices that shape a truly thankful life.

## **I. A Thanks-filled Perspective**

### **A Thankful Life Begins With the Right Perspective**

— **“Bless the Lord... and forget not all His benefits.”**

Gratitude doesn't begin with a feeling; it begins with a **perspective**—a way of seeing life through the lens of God's goodness rather than our circumstances. And one of the greatest spiritual disciplines in a thankful life is learning how to *remember*. Remembering is a choice. Remembering is intentional. Remembering shapes the heart.

### **A. Perspective Remembers What God Has Done**

Human nature has a built-in bias: we remember hurts more easily than blessings.

- A criticism sticks longer than a compliment.
- A disappointment overshadows a dozen answered prayers.
- A moment of frustration can eclipse a week of God's provision.

This is why the Psalmist commands us to “forget not all His benefits.” He’s telling us:

**Your heart will drift toward the negative unless you train it toward gratitude.**

**James 1:17**

*“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”*

In other words, if anything good has entered your life—big or small—it didn’t come from luck, or chance, or your own strength. It came from the steady, unchanging, generous hand of God.

## **B: Gratitude Journal vs. Complaint List**

Imagine two notebooks:

- One filled with complaints
- One filled with blessings

The complaint list grows frustration, anxiety, and bitterness.  
The gratitude journal grows faith, peace, and spiritual clarity.

You become the person of whichever list you keep.

**Perspective is shaped by what you rehearse.**

If you rehearse frustration, you will become weary.

If you rehearse God’s faithfulness, you will become thankful.

## **C: How to Practice a Thanks-Filled Perspective**

Here are practical, doable steps to cultivate the right perspective:

### **1. Make a daily list of three things God has done recently.**

- Not generic blessings—specific ones.
- Specific gratitude builds specific faith.

### **2. When discouraged, rehearse God's faithfulness before rehearsing your frustration.**

- Before venting... pausing.
- Before spiraling... remembering.
- Tell your feelings who your God is.

### **3. Speak gratitude out loud—your heart follows your mouth.**

- Say: "Thank you, Lord."
- Say: "God, You've been good."
- Saying it activates remembering.

## **II. Rooted in God's Presence**

### **A Thankful Life Is Rooted in God's Presence, Not Circumstances**

**Philippians 4:6–7 — "Do not be anxious... but in everything by prayer... with thanksgiving..."**

A truly thankful life isn't built on perfect circumstances. If it were, none of us would ever experience it. Life is unpredictable.

- Circumstances rise and fall like the tides. Some seasons feel light; others feel heavy.
- But gratitude rooted in the **presence of God**, not the conditions of life, can remain steady through both storms and sunshine.

Paul tells us that in every situation—good or bad—our response is to pray *with thanksgiving*. Why?

Because thanksgiving is not a reaction; it's an **anchor**. It connects us not to what is happening around us, but to the God who is with us in the middle of it.

## **A. Gratitude Flows From Who God Is**

Our circumstances may shift daily, sometimes hourly. But God's character never wavers.

**Circumstances may change, but God's character never does.**

If God is faithful today, He will be faithful tomorrow. If He is good in sunlight, He is good in storm clouds.

**Thanksgiving anchors you to His presence.**

Gratitude redirects your mind from what's uncertain to the One who is unchanging.

**It reminds your heart: "God is here. God is near. God is enough."**

### **Hebrews 13:5–6**

*Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." <sup>6</sup> So we can confidently say,  
"The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear;  
what can man do to me?"*

Not distant. Not passive. Present.

A thankful heart is rooted not in perfect days but in a perfect God.

### **Thermostat vs. Thermometer**

A **thermometer** simply reacts to the temperature around it.

- If it's hot, it says it's hot.

- If it's cold, it says it's cold.

A **thermostat**, however, doesn't describe the environment—it **sets** it.

Many people live like thermometers:

- If life is good, they're grateful.
- If life is stressful, they're anxious.

But a thankful person is a **thermostat**.

They choose gratitude *first*, and it changes the atmosphere of their mind, their relationships, and their day.

Gratitude sets the temperature of the heart.

## **B: How to Stay Rooted in God's Presence**

1. When anxiety rises, pause and pray:

**“Lord, thank You that You are here right now.”**

This one sentence shifts your focus from the problem to the Presence.

2. Replace fear-filled thoughts with gratitude-filled truths.

Instead of:

“I don't know what's going to happen.”

“God, thank You that I'm not facing this alone.”

Instead of:

- “This is too much.”

- “Thank You that Your strength is enough for me today.”

Gratitude uproots anxiety and plants peace.

# III. Choosing Gratitude

## A Thanks-filled Life Chooses Gratitude Even When It's Hard

### **1 Thessalonians 5:18**

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

*Notice: It says **in**, not **for**.*

### A. Gratitude in Trials Is an Act of Trust

Gratitude is a choice—especially when life hurts.

When life is difficult, gratitude becomes more than a positive attitude—it becomes an act of faith.

#### **We don't thank God for evil, sickness, or loss.**

God is not the author of evil. He takes no pleasure in injustice or suffering.

#### **We thank Him in those seasons because He is still working.**

Gratitude says: "This situation is not good... but God is good in it."

#### **Gratitude becomes a declaration of trust:**

"Lord, I can't see the full picture, but I trust Your heart."

### **Romans 8:28**

"We know that for those who love God all things work together for good..."

Not all things *are* good, but God weaves them for good.

### **Habakkuk 3:17–19**

Even when the fields are empty and the flocks are gone, "yet I will rejoice."  
Joy chosen, not felt.

**Gratitude becomes a rhythm of trust.**

In trials, gratitude becomes the language of faith.

**The world notices when Christians praise God in prosperity.  
But they *listen* when Christians praise Him in adversity.**

### **How to Choose Gratitude When Life Hurts**

1. Ask: “What is God forming in me through this?”

Not everything is good, but everything can be used by God to grow you.

- Patience
- Compassion
- Endurance
- Deeper trust
- A story that will one day help someone else

**Trials shape what comfort cannot.**

2. Practice “thankful confession.”

This is the discipline of speaking gratitude even when your feelings are struggling.

Examples:

- “Lord, thank You that You are with me.”
- “Thank You that You won’t waste this pain.”
- “Thank You that Your strength is enough for today.”

You’re not thanking God for the trial—you’re thanking Him for His presence in it.

Thankful confession realigns your heart with God’s truth.



## IV. The expression of Thankfulness

### A Thankful Life Expresses Itself in Worship and Generosity

**Colossians 3:16–17 — “With thankfulness in your hearts to God...”**

#### A. Gratitude moves us to worship

- Worship is the overflow of a thankful heart.
- Thankless hearts rarely worship well.
- Luke 17:11–19 (the one leper who returned)

#### B. Gratitude fuels generosity

- Thankful people are giving people.
- You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.

#### **2 Corinthians 9:6–8**

*The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully<sup>[a]</sup> will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup> Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency<sup>[b]</sup> in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.*

The Jordan River vs. the Dead Sea

- One receives and gives and is full of life.
- The other receives without giving and cannot sustain life.

Thankfulness keeps you flowing.

#### Ways to live thanks-filled

1. Increase generosity in one area this week.
2. Begin worship each day with “Thank you, Lord...” instead of “Lord, I need...”

## V. A Thankful Life Recognizes God’s Gifts and Uses Them for His Glory

## **Ephesians 5:20 — “Giving thanks always and for everything...”**

A genuinely thankful life has its eyes open. Paul calls us to give thanks *always* and *for everything*—not because every moment feels good, but because every moment contains evidence of God’s goodness if we’re willing to look. Gratitude doesn’t just change our attitude; it changes our **awareness**. It trains us to see the fingerprints of God in places we once overlooked.

## **Gratitude Awakens Awareness**

Gratitude and awareness are inseparable.

You cannot be grateful for what you never stop to notice.

- **God’s gifts surround us daily—but it takes humility to notice them.**

Pride says, “I did this.”

Entitlement says, “I deserve this.”

Gratitude says, “This is a gift from God.”

The thankful life recognizes that from the moment we wake up until the moment we fall asleep, we are living in a world overflowing with the generosity of God.

Gratitude sharpens our vision to see God in places we once walked past without a second thought.

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **A Life That Shines**

1. A thankful life is a powerful witness.
2. It stands out in a culture of complaining.
3. It reveals the character of Christ in us.

Thankfulness is not a moment—it is a mindset.  
Gratitude is a choice long before it's a feeling.  
A thankful life is a *Christ-shaped* life.

**Closing Challenge:**

- What is one area where God is calling you to shift from complaining to gratitude?
- Who is one person you should thank today?
- What blessing have you taken for granted that you need to recognize again?

**Psalm 118:24 — “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”**