

Be Thankful

Lesson for Sunday, September 8, 2024

NOTE: Once again, this lesson will need to be organized with the end in mind. We want to give our class time to work on the thankfulness portion of their prayer lives in class. That means you need to budget your time accordingly. A good recommendation for a 35-minute lesson: 20 minutes on the topic and 15 for the application.

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ Make the statement: It's pretty obvious that our culture is very far from God. Read Romans 1:29-32. We are living in a Romans 1 world.
 - Ask: *How do you think we got here?* (Don't let this go too far!)
- ⇒ The reality is that the Bible tells us exactly how this downward trend began, and it is found in Romans 1. Read verse 21 and emphasize: "Neither were they thankful."
 - When we become ungrateful, it puts us on path that runs away from God.
- ⇒ Last week, we looked at beginning our prayer time with praise – we acknowledge Who God is.
- ⇒ The next section of our prayers is thanksgiving – thanking God for what He has done. That is our topic for today.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. The Principle: 1 Thessalonians 5:18
 - a. This is an amazing verse when we slow down to read it. *It is God's will that we are thankful.*
 - b. Think about that. We are really good at making the Christian life complicated. We often comment that we are praying about God's will for a specific situation. We don't have to pray about being thankful! It is God's will that we are thankful in every situation.
 - c. Notice this verse does not tell us to give thanks "for" everything.
 - i. There are things we encounter in this sin-filled life that we are not thankful to experience.
 - ii. Many are like the little boy who was asked to pray for dinner. Before he bowed his head to pray, he looked at the dish. Then, closing his eyes he prayed, "Lord, I don't like the looks of it, but I'll thank you and eat it anyway."
 - d. We are instructed to give thanks "in" all things. Wherever we are, whatever we are experiencing, there are things to thank God for.
 - e. The reality is: We have much to thank God for!
2. The Practice
 - a. Thankfulness comes from old word = "Think-ful-ness."
 - b. The more we think, the more thankful we will be. To develop a thankful heart, we have to slow down and think.
 - c. First, think of when we are not grateful
 - i. Discontentment: We have a natural desire for more.
 - ii. Self-Sufficiency: Instead of being thankful and depending on God's daily provision, we depend on ourselves. We depend on our money, our talents and our possessions.
 - iii. Forgetting God: God warns us not to forget Him as our Source, the Giver of ALL we have.

- iv. We Claim Ownership: We talk about MY money, MY car, MY possessions, etc.? The Bible teaches that every good thing you have is a gift from God. Without His provision, you would have nothing.
- d. Before moving into the application part of the lesson, take a moment and practice being thankful right there in the class. Here are two options you can consider:
 - i. OPTION #1: Go around the class and have each person say what they are thankful for. Instruct them to give a one-word answer (no explanation): family, spouse, children, Jesus, Bible, FBT, job, etc. Smaller classes may want to go around the circle more than once!
 - ii. OPTION #2: Give them one minute to write down as many things as they can think of that they are thankful for. Let them share some of their list and how many things they thought of in one minute.

APPLICATION:

Encourage the class to pull out their prayer journal/cards.

- ⇒ Have them title the first section: God's Extraordinary Blessings.
 - These are the spiritual blessings God has given us: salvation, the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, forgiveness, etc.
 - Give them time to begin a list and then have them share in order to give ideas to others in the class.
- ⇒ The second section: God's Ordinary Blessings.
 - These are the daily things we often take for granted: health, a home, a car, a job, coffee!
 - Give them time to start their list and have them share with each other.
- ⇒ The third section: Yesterday's Blessings.
 - This is a list you begin to add to daily. When slow down in our prayer time and think about what has happened in since our last prayer session.
 - What did you pray for yesterday morning that God answer during the day?
 - Seek to add to this list every day.
 - As an exercise, give the class time to think back through the last week. What did God do that they should be thankful for? Encourage them to begin their list.
 - If they are comfortable, have the class share some of what they listed.
- ⇒ Instruct: Each day, we begin with praise and then move to thanksgiving.
 - Encourage them to be specific in their gratitude.
 - This is a section of their records that tends to grow over time.
 - It is also a tremendous encouragement in the days ahead as you look back and remember all that God has done for you!