Give Thanks

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**Foundational Scripture:** Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:15-17; 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17-18

**Intro**:

* The idea or spark for this sermon was largely derived from two sources. The first is a podcast that my wife and I really enjoy listening to and it has become a major part of our weekly spiritual intake that is tailored and suited to help everyone get better in their spiritual and physical lives but especially so for the Christian. The name of the podcast is: ***“Excel Still More”*** and it is available on Apple for subscription or you can listen to it on the website which is listed at the very bottom of your outlines. The podcast was created and is being run by a preacher from Texas, Kris Emerson, and he does a great job week in and week out challenging people to do better and get better with respect to life in general but more importantly with respect to God.
* The second source is an article from a website called Jamesclear.com. The website was founded and is being run by a guy by the name of James Clear. He is the author of the New York Times Bestseller: ***Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones.*** I haven’t read this book myself but I’ve only heard good things about it. On his website, he wrote an article pertaining to giving thanks that we will touch on a little later. The link to his website where you can find that article and plenty of other helpful information is listed in your outlines below.
* The idea of giving thanks is nothing new to us and it’s on almost every page of our OT and NT. There are a wealth of examples, stories and illustrations of how gratitude or giving thanks changes lives both physically and spiritually. We ought always to give thanks for it is God’s will for us (1 Thess. 5:17-18). This morning, I want to share with you two aspects of giving thanks that will hopefully help us to improve our overall perspective of God and life and improve our relationships with each other.

1. **Giving Thanks to God: How it Re-shapes Our Perspective**
   1. It should probably go without saying that we should always give thanks to God regardless of our circumstances and lifestyles. The God who made us and gives us everything should always be at the center of our minds with respect to thanksgiving.
   2. One of the most horrible sins in the OT is ingratitude. This was especially seen in the wilderness after God led Israel out of Egyptian bondage. Instead of offering their thanks, they complained and groaned every waking opportunity they could get and God hated that (cf. Ex. 14:11; 15:22-27; 16:1-12; Num. 11:1-9, 31-35; 20:2-13; Phil. 2:14).
   3. Failure to give thanks to God is often the root cause of apostasy, immorality and sin (cf. Rom. 1:21). The thing about giving thanks to God is even though we are well aware we need to do it sometimes we’re so busy with other things that we don’t do it. Sometimes we just forget and other times we just don’t want to. None of these excuses are appropriate.
   4. When we give God the thanks He duly deserves as often as we are called to do it, it re-shapes our entire perspective about Him and life in general:
      1. **Dependence**
         1. When we give thanks to God and show Him the gratitude we should, we begin to recognize the many blessings that we have and enjoy. Based on my experience, when I list out the blessings God has given me, I realize that without Him I am nothing and I would be nowhere.
         2. An attitude of thanksgiving to God recognizes that the blessings we have are gifts that He gives us not things that we are owed (cf. Jam. 1:17).
         3. When we fail to give God thanks, we may start to think that we are independent and the things we have are the work of our hands but such an attitude will eventually lead to our demise.
      2. **Appreciation**
         1. Giving thanks to God helps us to learn to appreciate things more. We appreciate what He has given us and we appreciate the quality of what we have been given despite negative situations.
         2. When things are especially going bad, we appreciate the little things even more because those things are what gives us hope and optimism. We complain less and appreciate more.
      3. **Compassion**
         1. When we list out all the things we are thankful to God for and we reflect on them, we may realize how people around us have less or a lesser quality. This light bulb moment does two things.
         2. It helps us to be more compassionate since we start to understand not everyone may be as well off as we are and it cultivates an attitude of sharing and further thanksgiving.
         3. Giving thanks to God creates a greater sense of humility. When we come face-to-face with a person or situation that is clearly worse than ours and we have been complaining, it teaches us to be humble and kind.
      4. **Happiness**
         1. Giving thanks to God helps us to be happier and more satisfied. We are happier because we realize everything depends on God and He is faithful (Lam. 3:22-23).
         2. We are happy because our entire perspective of life has changed. We start to appreciate the little things just as much as we do with the bigger things. We smile more and wake up more optimistic each day.
         3. We grow to be more compassionate instead of callous. We complain less and rejoice more. We share more and hoard less. All these things are the result of giving God thanks. It re-shapes our perspective.
2. **Giving Thanks to Our Neighbors: How it Improves Our Relationships**
   1. We are also to give thanks to our neighbors (fellow human beings). An attitude of thanksgiving towards one another goes a long way in so many different aspects but perhaps the most important thing it does is that it improves the level and quality of our relationships.
   2. We can’t expect to have this attitude with our neighbors if we don’t have it towards God (cf. 1 Jn. 2:9-11). The NT epistles is filled with so many examples of the saints expressing their gratitude and thanksgiving for each other (cf. Rom. 1:8-12; 1 Cor. 1:4-9; Col. 1:3-8; 2 Tim. 1:3-7).
   3. The struggle for us, sometimes, in giving thanks to one another is determining when and how should we give thanks. On his website, James Clear wrote an article entitled: ***Make Your Life Better by Saying Thank You in These 7 Situations.***
   4. I want to share these 7 things with you this morning in order that we might observe how they make us and the people around us better by improving our relationships:
      1. Say ***“Thank You”*** when you are receiving a compliment
      2. Say ***“Thank You”*** when you’re running late
      3. Say ***“Thank You”*** when you’re comforting someone
      4. Say ***“Thank You”*** when you’re receiving helpful feedback
      5. Say ***“Thank You”*** when you’re receiving unfair criticism
      6. Say ***“Thank You”*** when someone gives you unsolicited advice
      7. Say ***“Thank You”*** when you’re not sure if you should thank someone
   5. James’ article illustrates that saying *“Thank You”* or giving thanks is almost always the right thing to do with respect to most situations. Chances are that by saying *“Thank You”* in both positive and negative situations, we may improve our relationship with that person and change their perspective on life and God as well.

**Conclusion:** Thanksgiving is a cornerstone theme of the bible. It is so pivotal and so essential that if we fail to do it, everything will fall apart. But if we give thanks to God as we should and as often as we can, if we say *“Thank You”* to our neighbors when we should and even when we don’t want to, perspectives change, lives are remodeled and relationships are drastically improved. It’s amazing how something that seems so incidental like “giving thanks” can either break us or make us. May we all strive to give God the thanks that He deserves and may we all seek to always have an attitude of thanks toward our neighbors.

**Sources:**

Clear, J. (2018, June 11). *7 Times When You Should Just Say Thank You, But Don't*. Retrieved from https://jamesclear.com/say-thank-you

Emerson, K. (n.d.). *The "Excel Still More" Podcast w/ Kris Emerson: Weekly Spiritual Insights*. Retrieved from <https://excelstillmore.life/>