



Giving thanks in all circumstances

Isn't it true that we are more likely to ask God for things than we are to say 'thank you'? I know it is true about me!

I recently listened to the testimony of a pastor with three kids telling the following story. They were in a really tight place financially. One day, with their crying baby on his one arm and trying to quickly vacuum the house with the other hand, he reached his end. He knelt on the carpet and cried. Then he prayed an awkward prayer saying, *Lord from this day, I will only pray for the needs of others, and give thanks for my own, because I know You are faithful and You know what we need in this home.*

He went on to tell that for years after that day, as a family they kept giving thanks to God for what they needed, declaring their trust in His goodness and faithfulness. And they had everything that was needed for years! I was deeply moved and convicted by this extraordinary testimony of faith.

Scripture is clear that we can ask God for His provision for all our needs – Philippians 4:6 - *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God...* And also in Luke 11:9 - *"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."* So, it is not wrong to ask God for our needs. However, giving thanks to God as a daily habit is a very healthy spiritual discipline to cultivate in the life of every believer.

Times of thanksgiving

Following are situations when you may consider special times of giving thanks to the Lord.

1. On special occasions

Think about how heaven rejoiced when Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:10-14). Think about the jubilant singing and dancing when Israel escaped the Egyptian army through the Red Sea (Exodus 15). So great was that song to God, that one day we will hear the song of Moses sung in heaven (Revelation 15:3)! There are many more Biblical accounts of saints giving thanks to God when He did something special in their lives. It is no small thing to God when we make special effort to give thanks for a newborn baby, a first day at school, a graduation, an engagement or marriage, and many more special occasions.

Think about special things that have happened in your life – write them down – give thanks for each one with a grateful heart!

2. When the future is uncertain

Imagine what Mary felt when she found out she was going to be pregnant with Jesus while not being married yet? Yet she agreed to the greater plan of God, without knowing what the future would hold (Luke 1:38)! Perhaps you are facing a new job, a promotion, the selling of a house, the move to another city or country? Putting our trust in the Lord and giving thanks for His wisdom prevailing in, over and through us into the future is very pleasing to the Lord. He loves those who trust in Him – He will look out for them, make a way for them, giving them a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11).

Think about times in your life when you were out on a limb and God came through for you. Even right now, if circumstances require a leap of faith – give thanks to the Lord, telling Him that you know He is trustworthy, that He is faithful, and that He has your best interest at heart.

3. I am so down and out, not feeling like it

Everyone has days or seasons when God feels distant or silent. The reasons can vary, for example, when you feel overwhelmed by emotions of grief or when life seems so monotone or boring and you seemingly do not see sense in what you are doing. Consider reading Psalm 13 as an encouragement. No one knows exactly how long Job's troubles lasted, but some accounts report that apparently when he was restored, he lived a long time! The Holy Spirit within us spurs us on to praise and worship God through every season of our lives, not only when things are going well.

Think about your life – do you feel distant from God or that life is without purpose? Know today that this is only a 'feeling' and feelings cannot be trusted! While you wait for God's next assignment in your life, give thanks for every little and great thing you can think of. Purposefully and intentionally keep seeking God's face and giving thanks to Him!

4. When your heart is breaking

Think about Job who lost his livelihood, his home, children and standing in the community, all within a few short hours. However, he never cursed God, but trusted in Him (Job 1:21). Think about David who lost so much, even a child. However, he always took up a song, a psalm, and gave thanks and praises to God (Psalm 69:29-36). The passage in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 is so clear on this subject: *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* This is the will of God for you!

However hard it may seem at the moment, just open your mouth and give thanks to the Lord for being with you right now, despite any immediate hardship you face. That you are not alone. That you trust Him to help you get through this. Give thanks to the Lord for any small thing that may come to mind – praise your way to overcome.

5. As you come together

How easily we can have a family get-together and completely forget to speak about or to God at all! Every time a family gathers and there has not been any trauma since they last met, it is a great

occasion to give thanks. If you are the eldest or leading figure in the family, it is of great joy to your heavenly Father if you make some time for the family to give thanks to the Lord for His goodness towards them. Just give everyone around the table the opportunity to say a short word of thanks to God for something in their life. It is a sweet aroma to the Lord. It is a lovely opportunity to take communion together as the Holy Spirit leads the occasion.

Think about your family, brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces – give thanks for each one by name, for their lives and what they are doing. Thank God for each one who has already accepted His sacrifice and has come to salvation, and that He is giving time for the rest to come to faith and salvation. Give thanks for those without families of their own who have found a home in your family. Give thanks to the Lord for all He has done in your family.

6. Having a Bible and the privilege to pray

Can you imagine not having access to a Bible in a language you understand? There are still thousands of languages across the globe without any portion of the Bible. This means that people speaking those language have very little or no way of even knowing that God exists, let alone knowing about the cross of Jesus Christ. Yet here we are, with Bible translations in so many languages we do understand, even different ones in one language. God speaks to us through His Word, He convicts and corrects us, guides us and disciplines us (Hebrews 4:12). Even more than that, we have the privilege to speak to the Living God, the Creator of the universe!

Think about the treasury at your disposal to have access to a Bible, whether it is in print, audio or on your mobile device! Give thanks to the Lord for His great mercy towards you, that you can take it up and read at any moment. That you can grow in your relationship with Him daily without hindrance. Give thanks to the Lord for so many giving their lives for the Bible to be translated into new languages. Give thanks to the Lord that He is your Father and that you can speak to Him, anytime, anywhere!

7. Thanksgiving for God's indwelling presence

O precious gift of the sweet presence of the Lord in the heart of man! It is wonderfully explained by the Lord Jesus Himself in John 16:13 - *However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.* Often times we do not 'feel' His presence, however Scripture is clear He dwells within those who are children of God. Romans 8:9 - *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.* Without the leading of the Holy Spirit we will be lost in this world, without comfort, direction or protection.

Think about the precious gift of the Holy Spirit within you. Give thanks to the Lord Jesus for dying for you on the Cross, for being raised from the dead, and for the same Holy Spirit who raised Him from the dead dwelling in you now (Romans 8:11)! Give thanks for His leadership in your life, for comforting you, and for resting within your heart, daily cultivating a deeper love for the Lord within you.

In conclusion

These are but a few thoughts you may consider adding to your daily life of giving thanks to the Lord. You can extend the list by adding what He personally shows you to give thanks for. Enjoy living a life of abundance, of praise and worship, of thanksgiving and exalting the Lord as the love of your life!