



The Power of Thanks | Chad Bruegman | 11.18.17

LG Weekly

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer the following question:

Are you one of those shoppers that go out on Thanksgiving night, Black Friday, or Cyber Monday? If so, why and explain your strategy?

SHARE

There are seasons in the rhythm of Red Rocks Church when it seems timely and appropriate to break from a teaching series in order to allow our teachers the freedom to talk about messages that have been weighing on their hearts for our church family. Over the next few weeks our pastors will be speaking on some really important topics from both the old and new testaments.

This week, Chad spoke about the power of thankfulness.

When we think of being thankful, it can feel disingenuous at times to express thanksgiving when we are going through difficulties and struggles. Think about your life right now, you might be in a time of great blessing where you like your position, but others around you may not think the same way. You might be in a position that is compromising and painful—maybe something happened and you are dealing with the pain of someone else's poor decisions. In the middle of suffering, we often forget the power of thankfulness.

Yet, your position in life does not have to affect your disposition in life.

We can go through trials, yet remain full of joy and thanksgiving to God and what He has done inside of each and every one of us who know him.

Read Psalm 100:1-5, Psalm 16:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and John 16:33

God's word tells us we 'will have trouble' in this world; what trouble are you facing today?

What does it look like for you to 'give thanks in all circumstances' and how do you do that in tough times?

G R O W

Philippians is one of the most loved of all of Paul's letters. Written to the church in Philippi, the first church he founded in Europe (Acts 16), this community was close to Paul's heart. The church supported him in his ministry, so Paul's tone throughout the letter is one of intimate friendship and gratitude—almost like missionary support letters today. Yet, Philippians is a prison epistle, a letter Paul crafted during one of his imprisonments (Phil 1:7). And somehow, despite his circumstances, one of the key themes that oozes out of Philippians is joy. In only 4 chapters, the words for “joy” or “rejoice” appear more than a dozen times!

Ironic isn't it? Paul, a man of unparalleled tenacity as a church planter, itinerant preacher, entrepreneur, and leader, is stuck in a prison cell awaiting probable execution. Yet he writes to his friends about how he is able to rejoice through his faith in Christ.

Read Philippians 1:12-18

How many of us in times of suffering choose joy? If the answer to that question is an honest, “not me”...you're not alone; the Philippians too had reason to dwell on their terrible circumstances, call it a day and bring out the gallon of ice cream to numb the pain of reality. Paul gives us potential reasons for their lack of joy when he eludes to the community's growing problem of disunity (4:2), the pressure of false teachers (3:2), the illness of their friend Epaphroditus (2:25) and Paul's imprisonment itself! Like Chad said this week, it's far easier to focus on what we often cannot change, the circumstances around us, than spend time changing what we can—our attitude.

In *The Gifts of Imperfection*, Dr. Brené Brown acknowledges some of what keeps us from cultivating joy and gratitude as regular practices in our lives.

“Joy and gratitude can be very vulnerable and intense experiences. We are an anxious people and many of us have very little tolerance for vulnerability. Our anxiety and fear can manifest as scarcity. We think to ourselves:

- I’m not going to allow myself to feel this joy because I know it won’t last.
- Acknowledging how grateful I am is an invitation for disaster.
- I’d rather not be joyful than have to wait for the other shoe to drop.”

What gets in the way of your ability to express gratitude (to God, family/friends, strangers)?

Paul lets us and the church in Philippi in on the secret of how to choose joy and begin changing our attitude regardless of our circumstances.

Read Philippians 4:5-7

When our attitude is formed out of the position of our hearts, molded over and over by intentional decisions to be thankful and come to God in prayer, the peace of God is promised to us. And in a culture plagued by anxiety and worry, the “peace of God” is desperately needed. Paul encourages us to come to God in constant prayer and thanksgiving, offering up not just everyday “requests,” but the real *stuff* of life. As we lift up our circumstances and heartaches that stem from real suffering, the peace of God not only replaces anxious thoughts, it guards our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus (4:7).

What does it mean that the peace of God guards your heart and mind? When have you seen the effects of the peace of God guarding you in your own life?

How could having a grateful disposition and choosing to practice gratitude contribute to your inward peace?

If coming to God in prayer and thanksgiving results in the indescribable peace of God, how would experiencing that peace tangibly change your life today?

M O V E

Read Philippians 4:8-9

In his final exhortation to the people of Philippi, Paul records a memorable list of virtues that make up a wholesome thought life and encourages the church to follow his example. He concludes with a final admonition to “practice these things” and again promises the peace of God as a result.

What does that mean for us today? Joy and gratitude take practice. Unfortunately for us, a thankful heart is not the default disposition of the human heart. Except for when Thanksgiving rolls around each year at the end of November, we tend, instead, towards expressing fear, scarcity, comparison and greed. Thus, an attitude of thanksgiving has to be developed. The good news?! Like Chad said, “what starts out as a discipline eventually becomes a desire.” The more we intentionally discipline ourselves to practice gratitude, the more we will have a natural desire to be genuinely thankful and experience the power of thanksgiving.

What sacrifice of praise do you need to offer to the Lord today? Is there something you've been meaning to thank him for?

What practices, exercises, or activities can you and your family set up today that will begin the effort of intentionally practicing gratitude in your home and life?

P R A Y

As a group, spend some time offering up words of gratitude for where the Lord has you and the gifts he has given you. If you are in a coed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to share more freely. Practice making your requests known to God with thanksgiving.

T O G O

Hebrews 13:15

“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.”

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