

## **PRACTICING AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE**



Practicing an attitude of gratitude – is this just a happy little catchphrase or is it a way of facing each day that changes our perspective on life? **Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.** (1 Thess. 5:16-18 NLT) Is being thankful in all circumstances an impossible command to fulfill, or, is it the key to a fulfilling life?

There’s a wonderful story in the Bible that illustrates the gratitude principle. A king and his people were being attacked by some armies who were much bigger and stronger

than they were. The king and the people were under intense pressure and filled with fear. The king's FIRST response was to speak to God about his situation. He called the people together, led them in a prayer which included GIVING THANKS to God for His presence with them, His supreme power over them, and His history of helping the people who worshipped Him. Is GIVING THANKS our first response when trouble lurks in our minds and circumstances?

God's heart was touched by the king's gratitude for things He had done in the past and also by his trust in coming to Him for help in this situation. Through a prophet God told the king that he wouldn't have to fight this battle and, in spite of the challenging circumstances that were clearly evident, they were not to be afraid or discouraged. They chose to believe God and to act courageously on what God said, and, true to His word, God took care of them. Their part? Sing and give thanks to God. Really?

**The king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising him for his holy splendor. This is what they sang: "Give thanks to the Lord; his faithful love endures forever!" AT THE VERY MOMENT THEY BEGAN TO SING AND GIVE PRAISE, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves. They began attacking each other. So when the army of Judah arrived at the lookout point in the**

**wilderness, all they saw were dead bodies lying on the ground as far as they could see. Not a single one of the enemy had escaped.**  
(2 Chron. 20:21-22, 23b-24 NLT)

When is the last time you tried to sort out a problem situation by singing and giving thanks to God? Sound ridiculous? Maybe, but trusting in God's supreme control and God's plan, and going forward with confidence in God's ability to sort out any problem, is certainly a life recovery principle we need to start applying to our challenging situations. Together, with this particular king and his people, we may be able to return home from our battle with much joy, recognizing that God fought for us and eliminated our enemies.

There are many battles in our lives that are much bigger than we can handle. Often our first response is to worry, work, lie, cheat or scam our way through circumstances, which we project are overwhelming. It's time we did what this king did. We need to FIRST GIVE THANKS for God's goodness to us in the past, then consult with God about our current problem, listen for His direction, act on it, and leave the results with Him. His direction may come through His word, His promptings from the Holy Spirit within us, or another person. Our part is to just do those things that God tells us to do, even if we have to force our minds and hearts to do so. To overcome worry and fear in the face of our difficulties,

we must see our great God as He is -- much bigger than our most troublesome problems.

**“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”**  
(Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV)

This same GRATITUDE PRINCIPLE was demonstrated by Jesus one day when He too faced an overwhelming problem. More than 5000 tired and hungry people were before him in a remote area and His disciples were not feeling hospitable. The disciples told Jesus to send the crowd away so they could find food and lodging in the nearby villages and farms. The disciples were aware of the needs of the crowd and the physical constraints of the area and assessed that it was best that the crowd provide for their own needs. The disciples were unable to see how these needs could be met otherwise. They brought to Jesus the only resources available which were five small loaves (probably bun sized pita bread) and a couple of small fish.

What was Jesus response? **“Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.”** (Luke 9:16-17 NIV)

God knows each of us, what resources are available, and the true nature of our need. God promises to supply all our needs so that we may have enough to generously share with others. ***And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*** (Philippians 4:19 NIV)

WHY GIVE THANKS WHILE STILL FACING CHALLENGES? That's how we acknowledge the truth that God is our provider and that everything we have comes from Him. That's how we remind and encourage our hearts that God truly is with us and we do not face our problems alone. Believing and acting on these truths, WITH AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE, will eliminate fear and produce stability and security within us.

As we practice an attitude of gratitude, regardless of our circumstances, we will find courage for the day before us. We will join with people who through thousands of years have reaped the blessings of thankfulness -- people, such as those noted in the Old Testament, pilgrims in North America, old timers in AA, and others known to us. These people have practiced an attitude of gratitude and have shown us the way forward in our recovery with Jehovah-Jireh, the God who provides.

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. When do I have an attitude of gratitude?  
When don't I?

2. What's my default reaction when I face overwhelming problems?
3. How would I need to change in order to face overwhelming problems with thanks and trust in my Heavenly Father, like Jesus and this king demonstrated?

Heavenly Father Thank you for all that you do for us. Thank you for providing our daily needs of food, clothes and shelter. Thank you for fighting battles on our behalf and helping us stand firm on your word. Thank you for giving us clean hands and pure hearts. Thank you for strengthening us to be people of character and dependability. You have truly blessed us to be a blessing. Thank you for this new season of our lives and for going before us and preparing our way. Thank you that you are Jehovah Jireh, our provider. Amen