

PLOT TWIST

"A HEARTFELT THANKS"

LUKE 17:11-19

This Week's Core Competency

Personal God - I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life. Psalm 121:1-2 - *"I lift up my eyes to the hills-where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth."*

There are few things that warm my heart as much as seeing my two-year-old twins give thanks without me telling them to say "thank you." I have tried to think why that is, and this is my conclusion: I am simply pleased to see that they are developing grateful hearts. It never feels the same when I have to tell them to say thank you.

Obviously, on those occasions the gratitude is not coming from them, rather from my promptings, thus it is not true gratitude. However, I find that more and more, they are expressing their thanks when they receive something, either by saying the words or by a hug or some other act of gratitude. A grateful heart deepens our relationship, it sets my kids on a path for greater maturity, and it prepares them for a life of godly living in correct response to God's grace. In the same way, we, as children of God, should be looking for ways to express our gratitude to God for His grace to us.

The *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* defines gratitude as the "natural expression of thanks in response to blessings, protection, or love. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, gratitude is not a tool used to manipulate the will of God. It is never coerced or fabricated in one's mind; rather, gratitude is a joyful commitment of one's personality to God" (Walter A. Elwell and

Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 551). In essence, thanksgiving, or gratitude, when given to God, is a form of worship and deepens our devotion to God.

Why do we give thanks to God? Quite simply, because He deserves it. He is worthy of our thanksgiving. Can you remember a time that you were truly thankful? I remember when an eye surgeon in DFW offered to give me and my wife Lasik eye surgery for free. Wow! What a blessing! Our myopia was corrected and we said farewell to our glasses and contacts. We couldn't say enough to give thanks to the surgeon. Words could not express what we felt, though we certainly tried to show how grateful we were through words, and gifts. It made me stop and think. I realized that though he was merely correcting my vision, my response was the utmost of gratitude. Yet, how much *more* gratitude should I be giving the One who gave me sight from the start?

The sweetest moments with our Lord come when we take the time to remember all He has done and how He continues to bestow His grace, and then take the time to thank Him. Often we water down our gratitude by saying something like, "Thank you for everything." When we do so, we rob ourselves of the opportunity to reflect on so many wonderful things God has given and for the intimate and personal ways He is at work in our lives. Deeper intimacy and fellowship with God, as well as maturity, come to those who take time to thoughtfully reflect on God's magnificent work in their lives and give Him thanks for it.

day 1

ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Luke 17:11-19

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

14 When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him-and he was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

*Circle the word "Now" indicating *time* in v. 11.

*Draw a box each occurrence of the word "loud" in the passage.

*Underline each command in the passage.

*Double underline each question in the passage.

*Bracket each response you find in the passage.

*Asterisk each verb in the passage.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Why do you think Jesus traveled near Samaria instead of on the common road, *away from* Samaria?
2. Why did Jesus send the lepers to the priest prior to healing them?
3. Jesus' command was to go to the priest. Do you think the grateful leper made it all the way to the priest and then returned? Support your answer.
4. Was the miracle based on the lepers' faith or on their obedience? Explain your answer.
5. List the different parts of the Samaritan's response to his healing.
6. What implications for Israel are seen in Jesus' three questions in vv. 17 and 18?
7. In v. 19 Jesus said the leper's faith made him well. Does this imply that this leper was the only one whose healing "stuck?"
8. Given the Samaritan's response to Jesus' grace, how should we as believers appropriately respond to God's grace in our lives?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the many blessings you have received from God over the course of your life.

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Toward the end of his life, Jesus set out for Jerusalem from Galilee. He took the road less traveled along the border of Galilee and Samaria and along the way encountered a group of men who were bonded together by a disease which was slowly eating away at their body: leprosy. The episode not only provided yet another way in which Jesus displayed his power and authority to the disciples, but also taught an important lesson about the response that God desires from his followers.

It is interesting that as Jesus entered the village the men came to Christ with a need. They stood at a distance for fear they were contagious, and they called out in a loud (remember this adjective) voice. In calling Jesus, the lepers addressed him as Master. The word is used six times in the New Testament and all in the Gospel of Luke. Note that this word is almost always used by the disciples. The fact that the lepers used this title to address Jesus "indicated a measure of faith in Him" (Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Lk 17:11).

Interestingly, they do not ask to be cleaned, but rather for Jesus to have "mercy" on them. In the Greek, "have mercy on us" is simply one word. Whenever this word is used there is a belief that the person who is being asked has the power and the ability to grant what is being requested. This would be the same as asking a billionaire if he would give you a million dollars. There may be doubt about the request being granted, but this word indicates there is no doubt about the capacity to grant the request. It indicates an added measure of faith and a belief that Jesus had power to heal them.

Jesus responded immediately to their faith, when he saw them, and sent them to show themselves to the priest. Note that Jesus takes the time to see the ones in need. This might seem like a simple act, but it is a part of a compassionate heart and it is worth taking special note: Prior to acting with compassion, Jesus took the time to see people where they were.

The command Jesus gave is important, because tradition would require that the one who was healed present himself to the priest after being healed. In this case the lepers were on their way to present themselves without having yet been healed. The change in the order of the process seems to indicate that Jesus wanted them to further demonstrate their faith. To leave Jesus' presence without being healed was a risk for the lepers. What if they went on their way and came close to the priest and they were not

healed, and were turned away, but at that point Jesus could not be found? In any case, the text indicates that there was no hesitation and they went immediately to the priest, thus showing their faith. While they were on their faith journey to the priest, Jesus healed them.

I have always read verse 15 to say that while on the way to see the priest, the one leper returned before even making it to the priest. While this might be implied, it is not stated in the text. It is plausible that when he saw he was healed [after seeing the priest, emphasis added] then he returned to find Jesus and glorify Him. This seems a logical possibility given that Jesus had commanded them to go to the priest, and though they were healed on the way, perhaps the thought lingered in their mind that unless they went to the priest the healing may not "stick," but we can only speculate on this point. The important thing, however, is that this man returned.

Take note of this leper's response as detailed in the text: 1. He came back to Jesus; 2. He praised God in a loud voice; 3. He threw himself at Jesus' feet; 4. He thanked Jesus. It is important to note the extravagance of his gratitude. In a recent conversation with Pastor David about this passage, we noticed a link in verse 15 and verse 12. In both verses the word "loud" is seen. However, the word in Greek is different. The force of the word in verse 15 is much greater than in verse 12. In addition to this word, the extravagance of the man's actions seems to indicate that his adoration (gratitude) exceeded his desperation. This is an important point of application. Often our requests to God are far more fervent and heartfelt than our thanksgiving is after God has granted our request.

It makes no sense that nine of the ten lepers lacked gratitude, given God's lavish grace. As a matter of fact it is downright insulting to Jesus. The author has gone out of his way to explain that the man who returns is a Samaritan, thus elevating his response to extraordinary. Jesus, however, asks three particularly probing questions which leave no doubt as to his disappointment: "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise God except this foreigner?"

In an indirect way, it is possible these questions were an indictment of Israel. "The lack of gratitude by the other nine was typical of the rejection of His ministry by the Jewish nation. He alone had the power to cleanse the nation and make it ceremonially

clean. However, the nation did not respond properly to Him. The nation accepted the things that Jesus could do (such as heal them and feed them), but it did not want to accept Him as Messiah." (John A. Martin, "Luke," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, vol. 2, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2, 248).

In the opening, article I spoke of my kids' gratitude. There is a helpful lesson in comparing our relationship with our kids with our relationship to our heavenly Father. When I give my kids something, there is absolutely nothing they can give me in return that I need or want other than for them to give me love in return. I love when my son or daughter grabs my hand and pulls me to sit with them on the couch. I cherish those close

moments with my kids. I suspect that God desires the same response from us. I believe that He is not as concerned with gifts or actions that we might give in return; rather, as a Father with his children, he desires that we draw near and in love and devotion, express our gratitude as we deepen our fellowship with Him.

Israel had been given so much and yet it was the foreigner who realized he had to return and worship and give thanks. We have also received more than we can even begin to describe. God has lavished his love upon us. May we relish every opportunity to reflect on what God gives us and may we take the time to be with Him, lovingly thanking our Father.

The Message of the Passage

Because God has lavished his grace upon us in so many ways, draw near to him in worship, gratefully acknowledging and thanking Him for his wonderful blessings.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 *living questions* to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living questions*:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 11 **border between** "Jesus was traveling *along the border between Samaria and Galilee*. Galilee was Jewish; Samaria was occupied by Samaritans, who were despised by the Jews (see the commentary on 9:52-53). The exact location is unknown, but that Jesus was near the border accounts for a Samaritan (a "foreigner," 17:16, 18) in the group of lepers" (Bruce B. Barton, "Luke," *Life Application Bible Commentary*, 399).

v. 13 **have pity** These four words are merely two in the Greek: *eleeson hemas*. It is interesting to note that in any request of the lepers implies an element of faith that the giver is able to give what is requested. Furthermore this request occurs 13 times in the New Testament, but *never* in classical Greek literature. "The word is unknown in classical Greek. The Greeks and Romans coined no term for 'gift to the poor,'" (Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 428). I find it interesting that the concept of someone showing compassion is not found in secular Greek literature, but only in the New Testament.

v. 14 **show yourselves** In the Old Testament God set forth that the unclean must be cleansed first. Then they were to go to the priest for confirmation of cleanliness prior to their readmittance into society. It is actually a very long, drawn out process (Leviticus 14). Jesus however, sends them to the priest prior to them being healed. This appears to be a great command which gave the opportunity for the lepers to exercise their faith. They were taking a bit of a risk by entering a community while still being lepers. "Jesus was asking the lepers to respond in faith that, by their obedience, what they desired would happen. All the men responded in faith, and Jesus healed them on the way" (Barton, 400).

v. 15 **saw/healed/came back** This is a curious verse in the passage. This order may imply that as soon as the leper discovered he was healed, he returned to Jesus before even seeing the priest. This is possible, but it is also a possibility that he went to the priest, thus obeying Jesus' command, and then he returned to Jesus.

v. 15 **loud voice** In the NIV, this term appears twice. In the Greek it is two separate words. In verse 13, the translation says: "they lifted up their voices." In verse 15 it reads: "praising God in a loud voice." The word used in the second occurrence is *megales*, which carries much more force than the first "loud voice." It seems a fair conclusion that the intensity of the Samaritan's gratitude overshadowed the intensity of his initial plea.

v. 18 **this foreigner** Often when the author supplies us with details in the way that he highlights the race of the grateful leper, it is noteworthy. By giving us this little detail, it puts his response in a different light. "The Samaritans were a race despised by the Jews as idolatrous half-breeds. The surprise of this story is that this Samaritan, used to being despised by Jews (except perhaps for his fellow lepers), would dare to go to this Jewish healer and prostrate himself before him. But this man's faith went deep enough that he saw God's hand in the healing. Once again Luke was pointing out that God's grace is for everybody" (Barton, 401).

v. 19 **your faith** The part of this phrase that says "has made you well" is translated with the word: *sesoken*. This word is derived from the word saved. For this reason, some translations read: "your faith has saved you." As a result of this translation some scholars believe that at this moment the leper was saved and brought into the family of God because of his faith in Christ. "But as much of a foreigner as he might be, this man is now sent off by Jesus as a person who has experienced the salvation that Jesus came to bring. None of the others, despite their new-found freedom from leprosy, receives this special blessing." (John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, WBC, vol. 35B, 848). This may be a stretch to conclude, given that we don't know what the Samaritan believed. However, it does seem to be that Jesus bestowed an added blessing in light of the leper's response.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

For me, Thanksgiving and New Year's have something in common. Much like my resolutions that sometimes last until my birthday (January 10), the commitment I make to be thankful in all things all year long often wanes by the time the chaos of Christmas arrives. I am gently reminded through our passage this week that my gratitude to God should be extravagant. It shouldn't be just a simple "thank you" or nod in God's direction. It should be a fall-at-the-feet-of-Jesus-and-proclaim-it-loudly kind of gratitude. The leper in our story today had much to be thankful for - he got his life back. I received life too when Jesus rescued me. "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15). Here are some ideas to help your family remember to be more thankful this week: (1) Make a list of the alphabet and come up with a blessing beginning with each letter. (2) Using a timer, give each family member one minute to list things they are thankful for. Longest list wins! (3) Get outside and toss a ball around. Each time you catch it, name something for which you are thankful. (4) Resurrect the art of thank you letter writing. Pick someone who has had an impact on you and write him or her a note. What a sweet surprise that will be when the mailbox is opened! Have a blessed Thanksgiving!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Luke 17:11-19.

1. What did the men with leprosy ask of Jesus?
2. What did he tell them and what did they do?
3. What did the one man do when he came back?

What Do You Think

1. Why did the men have to stay at a distance from Jesus?
2. Because they were separated from everyone else, how do you think these men felt?
3. Why do you think the other nine men didn't return to say thanks?

What R U Going To Do

When Jesus told the men what to do they obeyed immediately. As they obeyed, they were healed.

Obedience brings blessing. Make a point to obey immediately each time you are asked to do something this week.

What difference did it make?

Core Comp

Core Comp: Personal God - I believe God cares about everything in my life.

Memory Verse

Psalm 119:9-16

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.