

## “The Heart of Gratitude”

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** - Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

**Philippians 4:6** - Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

**Colossians 4:2** - Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

**2 Corinthians 4:15** - For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

### Quotes

**Your thoughts will influence your words, which determines your actions. Your actions will define your habits which make up your character. Your character will determine your destiny. Learn to master your thoughts.”**  
(Lao Tzu)

**The other one is, one must live the way one thinks, or end up thinking the way one has lived.”** (Paul Bourget)

Thoughts are important because they shape the direction of our lives. The spiritual practice of prayer, meditation, and contemplation are all about training our thoughts. Because how we think and how we look at things is the key to how we live our lives. These two quotes make it clear that the discipline of our thoughts is what ultimately determines our lives.

The Apostle Paul was aware of the importance of our thoughts, which is why he provided the early church with training of thought as spiritual guidelines. Most importantly, cultivating gratitude. Paul mentions thankfulness in his letters over 40 times. In the Epistle(letter), Paul often encourages new members of the Christian faith to become mature and be grateful. Why did Paul emphasize this spiritual practice and what motivated him to focus on cultivating a heart of gratitude? By the time of Paul, Psychagogy had become widespread; its basic principles and techniques were accepted by people regardless of their philosophical disposition. (\*Psychagogy is a psycho-therapeutic method of influencing behavior by suggesting desirable life goals. In a more spiritual context, it can mean guidance of the soul.) In the Greek tradition, gratitude is commonly understood as one of the key ointments(remedy) to the wounds of the soul. Paul diagnosed that there is the existence of anxiety in the faith community, and he encouraged them to cultivate gratitude as a medicine to soothe their anxiety.

**What is gratitude?** The Greek definition of gratitude is the emotion of χάρις (Kharis): kindness, good will, grace. In other words, Gratitude is a feeling of appreciation or thankfulness for the benefits or kindness one has received. It often involves recognizing and acknowledging the positive aspects of life or the actions of others that have contributed to one's well-being. Psychological Studies have proven that living a thankful life can boost our physical health such as fewer aches and pains, better sleep, and more. It also can help our mental state or relationships. In the book Emotional Success, the author says, “Making gratitude a daily practice is like taking a vitamin.”

**Gratitude is a choice; rejoice or resent”**

Humility and Generosity



Gratification and Entitlement



1. The first image is from the book of gospel in Luke 7:36-50. One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to his home, having a dinner table. This is a gathering of the respected to discuss important matters. And into this gathering, one woman came but she wasn't invited to this table. As the narrative shows, she is a sinner. Her presence at this gathering seems to interrupt them a lot. In addition, her behavior makes them disputable. She stands behind Jesus, weeping and washing his feet with her tears, drying them with her hair, finally applying the ointment she has brought. She shows extravagant hospitality and offers such a public display of gratitude to Jesus. She must be overflowing with a feeling of gratitude in her heart. Jesus accepted her as she is and heals her illness. The later passage that Jesus talked about parables, the story tells us that she was greatly grateful for forgiveness and restoration that she has received from Jesus. She is now demonstrating her extreme gratitude in public, without caring about what other people think of her.

2. The second image is from the story of Esau and Jacob which shows instant gratification and entitlement. The meaning of Jacob is heel-grabber- someone trying to pull others back so that he can be first, someone who wants to get ahead. Jacob has fought a tendency all his life: tendency to grab, to force, to manipulate. He comes into the world with the promise that God will bless him beyond what he can imagine, but he doesn't trust what God will give him, and he grabs, manipulates, and schemes to get it. He desperately wanted God's blessing, and as a result, he compromised his integrity, filled himself with fear and misery, and broke family relationships. He produced suspicion and hatred and retaliation in family relations. He also underwent the same manipulation, the same deception from Others as he treated them. Along the way, God teaches him, "Don't grab. Trust me to give." God will teach him gently, patiently, repeatedly. Don't force it. I've promised. It will come. Jacob needs to learn to trust God and wait for God's timing. What does it look like if we have such instant gratification and entitlement? I deserve to have more and more and more and try to have feelings of my pleasure and my need. I feel lacking.

**We can choose to be instinctively satisfied, feeling lack, complaining and living in negativity, or we can choose to be grateful, living in humility and generosity, cultivating positivity and grace. The choice is ours. Would you like to learn to master your thoughts? Would you like to live the way you think?**

### **Invitation**

I invite you to join me in this soul training that can change your life if you make it a habit. Thinking, "Over time, it will become more automatic," can rewire your brain. Follow these guidelines

### Soul Training

**Counting your blessings** is a powerful spiritual exercise. 1) Make a list of all the things God has blessed you with, all the things that make life wonderful. 2) Pay attention to the details of your life. Look for the hidden things. 3) Take notice of all those wonderful things you easily overlook. When we are grateful for something as ordinary as curiosity, we are praising God. In every single moment, we have an opportunity to find something worth being amazed by. The more we do it, the more likely it will become a habit.

\*Challenge- staying consistent. Consistency is key. Find a routine that works for you and stick with it.

### **Prayer**

Awesome God, you created the world and all that is in it. You blessed each element of creation with your love. Clear our minds of all the distractions which would draw us away from you. Open our hearts and spirits and let your healing and empowering love flow in us. Help us reflect on the many ways in which you bless us. Help us to place our trust in you, let us give thanks always, for we ask it in Jesus Name. AMEN.