



REJOICE IN GOD'S BLESSINGS: THE GIFT OF GRATITUDE

Last month we talked about how we could rejoice in God forever, even if he never did another good thing, simply because of who he is. While this is true, God is incredibly active in the world - doing good constantly - and this gives endless reasons to rejoice!

The Bible is full of stories of those who praised God for the good he did. The Israelites stopped and gave thanks when they were saved from the Egyptians (Exodus 15:1-21). Hannah rejoiced when God answered her desperate cries for a son (1 Samuel 1:26-28). King David worshiped when God saved him from his enemies (2 Samuel 22:1-51). When God's people noticed His good works, they could not help but rejoice.

Like these faithful followers of God, we too are surrounded by the good works of God. The Bible says that all things are held together by God (Colossians 1:17). While maybe God didn't mean it so literally, I like to imagine that the flowers don't bloom just because of science but because God whispers to each one, 'It's time! Open up now.'

James says that '**every** good gift and **every** perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights' (1:17). God could have made the entire world black and white. He could have left the spots off a leopard or the stripes off a zebra. He could have made all food taste bland, never created salt or cumin. He could have created one type of flower instead of the colorful array that fill the earth. Why is the world so infused with beauty if not to display His goodness so His children could delight in Him?

Being ones who notice and appreciate God's goodness, doesn't just impact our spiritual lives. Scientific studies show that gratitude has an impact on our health! Those who practice gratitude have less stress and depressive symptoms, make more progress toward goals, have more energy, feel closer in relationships and are 25% happier. (The writers of the Bible knew this long before modern Scientists figured it out! Check out Proverbs 17:22.)

The amazing thing is, these remarkable results come from simple practises, such as writing down 3-5 things we are grateful for each day. We are created to be worshippers! And being ones who notice God's gifts is part of who He designed us to be.

Devotional Study

MARCH

*Rejoice in God's Blessings:
The Gift of Gratitude*



1. How are you doing at noticing and appreciating God's good gifts around you? When is it natural for you? When does it take intentionality? Where would you like to improve?

What are some practical ways you can integrate gratitude into your daily routine, even in the busyness of life?

2. Read Philippians 4:6, Psalm 107:1, James 1:17
What do these verses teach us about gratitude?

3. Proverbs 17:22 says "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."

Now take 3-5 minutes to write down as many good things as you can think of in your life, past or present. As you write, thank God for these blessings. In the group devotional, share some of the ideas you noted down. Afterwards take a moment to reflect, how does remembering God's goodness and thanking Him for His blessings, make you feel?

4. Read Matthew 14:6-21

This story contains so much lack. Jesus has just lost his cousin and close ministry partner. His time with God to grieve is taken from him by the crowd. Him and the disciples minister all day and are tired. And then there is the obvious lack of food to feed the thousands of hungry people. Yet notice what Jesus does when He lifts the food. He gives thanks.

What does this teach us about gratitude in the midst of lack?

Where are you experiencing lack in ministry?

How can you practice gratitude in the midst of the lack? And what impact do you think it could have?

5. We have been focusing on expressing gratitude to God, but some of the scientific results mentioned above come from expressing gratitude to others. The Bible also commends us to encourage one another every day (1 Thes 5:11, Heb 3:13).

Is it easier for you to focus on the strengths or weaknesses of those around you? Why?

How do you show gratitude to your family, colleagues, and neighbors currently? Do you think they feel appreciated by you?

What is one action you can take this week to let someone know you appreciate them?