

Thanksgiving 2007 HOW TO SAY THANKS

Since this week is Thanksgiving week we're going to take a break from our series, "Winning the Battle of the Mind" and we will be back in that series next week. Because this is Thanksgiving week I want to talk to you about what the Bible says about "How to Say Thanks."

I find it interesting that research agrees with what the Bible has been saying for thousands of years. Research agrees that one of the healthiest emotions a person can have is the "attitude of gratitude having an attitude of thankfulness." See both research and God's word, the Bible says having an "attitude of thankfulness and attitude of gratitude," makes you feel better. It makes you live longer. It is a stress reliever. It's been scientifically proven that if you're a grateful person, a thankful person in your attitude then you

will live happier and healthier life. So how do we develop this attitude of gratitude? How do you develop an attitude of thankfulness?

The first thing we need to understand is that when God created you He created you and He says, I want you to be **appreciative** and if you choose to live with the attitude of appreciation, if you choose to live with the attitude of being thankful you will both be happier and healthier than you would be if you didn't... Notice what God says to us in the next two scriptures. He says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 "*Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*" Then in Colossians 2:7 He says, "*Let your lives overflow with joy and thanksgiving.*" LB

So what is God saying to you here in these two scriptures? I believe He wants us to develop the attitude of

gratitude, to continually be grateful, to give thanks always in every season of life.

But how do you that... how do we develop that attitude? And that's what we're going to look at this morning – the Apostle Paul – was a pro at expressing thanks. He was a master at it. He lived a life of perpetual thanksgiving and not only to God but also to other people. In fact in every letter that Paul wrote in the New Testament, he thanks God for the people there. God uses Paul to teach us how to be appreciative, how to have the attitude of gratitude.

Why express appreciation?

The reason for expressing appreciation is found in the meaning of the word itself. The word “appreciation” means literally “to raise in value.” When something appreciates it raises in value. If you bought a home in the

this area fifteen years ago you know the meaning of appreciation. Likewise if you've ever bought a new car and you've driven it off the dealers lot the moment it's off the lot it starts depreciating.

To appreciate means to raise in value. That's not only true of things, but it's also true of people. When you appreciate somebody you literally raise their value. We ought to appreciate people because it increases their self worth. It increases their value.

The Bible says *“Encourage one another and build each other up,”* 1 Thessalonians 5:11. Ephesians 4:29 *“Speak what is helpful for building others up according to their needs.”* God says I want you to develop the attitude of building other people up with your words, with your actions. One of the deepest principles in human nature

today is all people have the deep craving to be appreciated.”

I read about in England they have a thing called “Dial a Compliment.” If you’re feeling kind of bad, if you’re run down, and just need some appreciation you just Dial a Compliment and they brag on you over the phone.

I also read this week there’s an organ company in San Francisco that produces an organ called the Concert Master Organ. There is a built in tape in the organ and whenever you finish playing it breaks out into automatic applause, like if you were in a Concert Hall. That’s the kind of organ I’d like to have. I could play Chopsticks and when I stopped I could stand up and it would be applauding me! Now this may sound funny and it is but what it confirms to me, we love to be appreciated. We all like to

be appreciated. We all like to feel good about what’s going on in our lives. Have you ever noticed when a child gets hungry they get cranky. We’ll when people get hungry emotionally they get cranky too. I know a lot of people who are starving for appreciation.

Paul teaches us how to be appreciative. He teaches us three things I think you ought to appreciate in people and they need your appreciation

1. Paul says in the book of Philippians, which by the way is a thank you letter appreciating the people of Philippi. He says one thing to appreciate is people’s loyalty. **Loyal people are to be appreciated. (PAUSE)** When somebody has stuck with you, in the good times and the bad times... when they’ve been faithful through thick and thin. Paul says I appreciate those who have... This is what Paul’s appreciating in the Philippians. Notice in 1:3-

5 *“I thank God for you every time I think of you because of the way in which you’ve helped me in the work in the gospel from the very first day until now, both now that I am in prison and also while I was free.”*

What’s he talking about? See they were great supporters of him in the good times and the bad. They prayed for him. They cheered him. They were always supportive of Him, they appreciate him by encouraging Him... They were his cheerleaders always saying, “Go for it, Paul!” And Paul say’s to them, I want you guys to know that I just appreciate you because you’ve been loyal towards me, yes you’ve been loyal to god but you have also been loyal to me and you’ve been supportive, you’ve stuck with me.

Paul appreciate their faithfulness. He says, *“You’ve been with me from the very first day.”* A few weeks ago you all appreciated me and right now I want to appreciate

you. Just like Paul did the people of Philippi. If you’ve been here from the first year, the second year or whenever you began coming, I appreciate each of you. You’ve put up with all the changes in our growth. You’ve been positive through those changes. You’ve been patient with my mistakes and my sick jokes and I just want to say I appreciate you because you hung in there. I thank God for you every time I think of you because of the way in which you’ve helped me in the work in the gospel from the very first day until now... You are so loved and appreciated.

I think one of my greatest joys is when I see the faces of the people I know in this church that I can count on. You people are incredibly loyal. Honestly, I think if I’d said, “Folks, we’re going to go out and storm hell,” you’d go out and buy a squirt gun and I appreciate you so much.

Paul says learn to appreciate people's loyalty. So Let me ask you today. Who has been loyal to you that you need to appreciate? Paul says appreciate them.

2. Then he says in the next verse in Colossians, we need to **Learn to appreciate people's differences.**

(PAUSE)

Not just their loyalty, but we also need to appreciate their differences. Don't insist that everybody thinks and acts and feels just like you do. Learn to enjoy people's uniqueness. Their is individuality. Differences aren't wrong – they're just different. But actually they are a strength but that is for another message.

Colossians 3:12 *“Be patient and tolerant with one another always ready to forgive if you have a difference with anyone, for you were called to live as one united body and always be thankful.”*

What's Paul is saying here? He's saying appreciate people's differences. Everybody's beautiful in their own way! We need differences. Differences provide balance in our church. We need each other and Paul says learn to appreciate the fact that people are different. Thank God that we're not all the same. First of all, “How boring that would be. If you're all like me... ugh! Variety is the spice of life. God says learn to appreciate your differences. They're not wrong. They're just different. Paul says do you want to be grateful? Be appreciative of people's loyalty and then be appreciative of people's differences. The fact is we are all different. Differences provide balance. Appreciating them is a mark of maturity.

3. He says there's a third thing you ought to appreciate. He tells the Thessalonians he says we ought to **Appreciate people's effort.** (PAUSE)

In other words don't take it for granted regardless of the results. 1 Thessalonians 1 says "*We always thank God for you, how you put your faith into practice and how your love made you work so hard.*" He says you make the effort. He says appreciate when people put forth the effort, whether it's perfection or not, appreciate the effort...

Do you have any little helpers around your house? I remember a time when my kids were little and they decided they'd clean the house. So they got out the Windex – put the Windex on the wood and the wood polish on the windows. They tried their little hearts off to vacuum. I don't think they got a whole lot done but I appreciated the effort they gave. Now on the other hand

when Edna-Wynne got home she didn't have the appreciation I did... It was one of those things you had to be there to appreciate it.

Paul says appreciate people when they work hard. What's the point he is trying to make here to us? The point is you don't have to be perfect to be appreciated. Too often we don't receive appreciation till we reach that perfection. Instead of appreciation for the effort we get judgments, we give them pokes for their non-perfection, instead of strokes of our appreciation of their effort.

What am I trying to say here, I'm just saying, Appreciate people's efforts. Ask yourself why am I making a big deal about this? Let me tell you how important this point is; It's so important God put it in His top ten list, the Ten Commandments. He says "Honor – appreciate – your father and mother." He says I want you

to develop the attitude of gratitude. Why? Because everybody needs to be built up. We need to appreciate people's loyalty and we need to appreciate people's differences and we need to appreciate people's effort.

Whether they get the job done, whether it's perfect or not, just appreciate.

When was the last time you thanked your mate or your parents or a friend for an effort they made on your behalf?

Two thousand years ago God came to earth so you could get to know Him. He came to earth in the form of a human being. His name was Jesus Christ. He walked around the earth for thirty-three years so people could see, "That's what God's like!" The Bible says that He came to bring us back to God, to restore that relationship. And that He died on the cross for you.

You may say, "I don't understand it all." That's ok. Just understand that He did it for you. It's a gift.

In gratitude you ought consider giving Him your life.

Prayer: Let me just have a time of quiet silence here.

Let me ask you, who do you need to be grateful for? Who do you need to appreciate this week? Some behind the scenes people? Maybe somebody who's just stuck with you. They've been faithful through thick and thin. And you can count on them. Maybe they weren't super talented but they were there and you knew it. Friends that's important. Maybe there's somebody who's really different from you and rather than appreciating you depreciated your differences. Instead of bragging, you're nagging. Your differences aren't wrong, they're just different. Just pray something like, "Lord, help me to be mature. Help me to appreciate people's uniqueness. And help Lord to see that

it's not a matter of right or wrong. It's just a matter of we're different." A lot of marriages are dying of starvation. People are starving for appreciation. They're not finding it at home so they're looking for it in other places. If you would just make a commitment in your heart and say, "I'm going to compliment my mate at least once a day for the rest of this year," I guarantee you it would make a difference in your relationship. There's a tremendous powerful tool available to you: and it's called the power of praise.

Then would you appreciate people's effort? Your parents. They weren't perfect. Nobody's perfect. You aren't either and neither am I. But at least you're trying. Appreciate the effort. Your husband/your wife, your parents, your kids.

Then express your gratitude to God. Would you say something like this in your heart? Say, "God, thank You for all that You've done for me. I owe You everything, even my life." Just say that to Him in your heart. "Help me to be more grateful." Jesus Christ, loves you and He has a plan for your life. No person is here on this earth by accident. God made you for a purpose. Success to God is to get right in the middle of God's plan. The starting point is to get an association, to get a relationship with Christ. I'm not talking about a religion. You may be Catholic or Protestant or Jewish or Mormon or Baptist or Buddhist or Presbyterian. I'm not talking about a religion here. I'm talking about a relationship to God. Many people know about God but do they *know* Him. He wants to know you. He wants to be your friend. Would you say something like this? "Jesus Christ, help me to know You better. I don't

understand it all but I ask You to come into my life and
make Yourself real to me. As best as I know how I want to
do what's right. I want to live for You. Out of gratitude.”
Would you pray that in your heart? If you did I believe
God heard you. I believe He did. . .

At this time Phil Bradshaw will come forward and join me
at the pulpit:

We are going to have communion today I thought it would
be a wonderful thing to do going into the Thanksgiving
Week.