
Alright. How is everybody doing today? It is good to see you. We are one church gathering in multiple locations in this great city that we love. I want to say hello to our North campus, Downtown, West, anyone watching online or maybe you're listening to this on a podcast during the week. Last, but certainly not least, our Northwest campus. How are you guys doing?

Before we get rolling I just want to celebrate. Thursday night was worship night across all of our campuses. We had about 2,000 people here across all of our campuses. Most stayed after to serve for our fam ministry. We had nearly 300 journey bags that were put together, nearly 50 hygiene kits, and 185 gifts for DCS workers were prepared. My favorite stat is we had 140 children, kids who are in the foster care system, who were prayed for by name. Thank you, guys, for coming, worshipping, and serving in that. That was just an amazing deal.

And if this is your first time to be with us, I'm just really, really glad you are here regardless of what campus you might be joining us from. Next weekend we begin a brand new series of messages that is going to take us all the way into Christmas. Come back next week and get in on the front end of that.

Today we are wrapping up a series we've been in simply called *6 Words that Can Change Your Life*. So really the big idea behind all this is we are looking at six ordinary words that can make some space for God to come into our lives and do his thing. For God to speak and move in ways in our lives that oftentimes get overlooked.

We've looked at words like wow, help, sorry, enough, and no. Today I want to look at this word that we oftentimes underestimate or we overlook the significance of in our lives. I know I do. It is simply this word:

Thanks

I had a good friend who was telling me a few months ago that he was meeting someone in downtown Indy for dinner. He was on his way to the restaurant, parked his car, and was walking down the sidewalk. He gets up to the front door of the restaurant right at the same time a young girl in her 20s got there.

He opened the door for her. That was apparently the wrong thing to do. She sort of gave him this look and was a little put out. She said this, "I got it," and walks on it. He was like, "I'm sorry? I'm going to assume the best, that she has a really good reason for feeling that way. I don't know what was going on with her."

She sits down at a table with her friends. He gets done with the guy he is with. The waiter brings him the bill. He said, "Hey, why don't you bring me the bill from her table? I'm going to take care of it." The waiter has no idea what was going on. He brings the bill over and was like, "Should I tell them who it is from?"

He was like, "Wait until I leave, and then tell her it is from the guy who opened the door for her." I don't know if he got his point across. Something tells me he probably didn't. But that is funny, regardless of how you look at it.

Studies reveal that showing gratitude is really good for us. It improves psychological and physical health, it reduces depression, it boosts energy levels. You sleep better. You live longer. Not to mention, the person you are expressing gratitude toward, it just makes their day.

And so, I think most of us know that expressing gratitude is a good thing, but I think out of all the words in this series we've been looking at, this is the one we can maybe be tempted to look at and go, "It's not that big of a deal." After all, it's just kind of like good manners. It's something we know we need to do, and we need to do it more. It doesn't mean we will. It's kind of like eating healthy and working out, I know I need to do it and I know I need to do it more, but that doesn't mean I will.

I think a lot of this perspective we have toward gratitude comes at an early age. It's the way we are taught to express gratitude. It's mostly transactional. Here's what I mean. It's one of the very first words we teach our kids to say. We have something they really want. Maybe it is some candy, maybe it is a toy. We hold it out toward them and they reach for it, and what do we do?

"Ah-ah-ah, what do you say?"

"Now?"

"No, not now. We say thank you."

What ends up happening is that we are teaching them that in order to get what I want, I just say, "Thank you," but my heart is not necessarily changed. I know you don't want to eat the vegetables on your plate, but you need to take the thank you bites. There is no heart transformation that is taking place.

I think many of us think that thanks or gratitude is simply good manners, but it certainly wouldn't be a sin we would need to repent of. I don't know, in my 20 years of pastoring I don't think I've had anyone come up to me and say, "Pastor, could we talk for a minute? I need someone to listen to me and pray for me. I'm really, really struggling with something."

"Okay, what is it?"

“I don’t say thank you enough. I’m just really struggling with this.”

I’ve never once had this happen. I think we look at this as if it’s not that big of a deal. It’s like a sin that God winks at. God is up in heaven like, “Hey, J.C., Holy Spirit come here. Check this out. Look at how ungrateful they are. Isn’t that cute? Look how selfish and how much gossip and complaining is going on with them. Isn’t that cute? They’ll grow out of it.”

Here’s what I know. It’s not much, so pay attention. I know right now that I need to hear thanks from people in my life more than I think I do. Maybe some of you are like me in the sense that you work really hard, but you don’t do it for thanks. You’re a self-starter, you’re goal oriented, you’re going to get stuff done. In fact, you have a hard time receiving gratitude.

If anyone says thank you, you’re like, “Ah, yeah.” You brush it off.

Like in the church-world, super-spiritual, this is how we do it. “Thank you so much for serving.”

“It’s all God. It’s all God.”

You’re just like a rubber wall. It can’t get through. Would you just receive the thank you? Because I’ll tell you what happens is after years of that, even decades of that, some of you right now are cynical, burned out, and angry. And you don’t even know why. There could be a number of reasons for that, and maybe one of them is you don’t receive thank you enough. Maybe it’s because you haven’t been willing to receive it, and you get to this place where you’re just like burned out.

Here is the second thing I know. I know that people in my life need to hear me say it, not just think it, not just feel it, but they need to hear me say it more than I think they do.

I was with a group of pastors last week. There were about six of us. I knew one or two of them, but I didn’t know everybody. We only spent two days together. It was a really good conversation, a really good dialog. At the very end of our time, the facilitator of the group, right before we went to the airport said, “Hey guys, I want you to go around the room. I want you to look at each other, and express your gratitude toward one another. Just say thank you for something you’ve noticed about this other person’s character and their contributions to the group.”

And we had just met. We had only spent 48 hours together. I was like, “I don’t know how this is going to go.” And so, we spent a little time thinking about it. We went around the circle and I’ll tell you what, things got deep really quick. There were tears that were shed. Every time someone would be the person who we were expressing gratitude to, their whole body language changed.

In fact, at one point in the group there was a guy who was really going through a difficult time. And one of the guys expressed his gratitude, mentioning one or two things he had noticed about him. Here is what the guy did. He threw his head back, closed his eyes, began to cry and took both hands and slapped them on his face. He began to weep. And something tells me that an expression of gratitude was long overdue in that guy's life. What about you? What about the people you know and love?

You know, in the New Testament we are repeatedly urged, like repeatedly, to be grateful. The question I want to answer in our short time together is why. Why are we repeatedly urged to be grateful? Is it because God really wants us to be people with polite manners? I don't think so. I don't think that is a bad thing, but I don't think so.

Why is it God wants us to be grateful?

To begin to answer that question, I want to look at an interaction Jesus has in Luke 17. If you have a device with a Bible on it, go ahead and turn there. If not, I'll walk through these passages on the monitor beside me.

Look at what it says picking up in verse 11 of chapter 17. "As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria." There were these two regions. There was a separation between the two. Actually, the Galileans and Samaritans hated each other.

"As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy," and we've talked about that before. Leprosy was this horrible disease with no known cure. It was highly contagious. If you had leprosy, people didn't want to be around you. They didn't want to have anything to do with you. It was a death sentence.

So, ten men had it, and they "**stood at a distance**," and now you know why. They were "crying out, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' He looked at them and said, 'Go show yourselves to the priests.'" That's kind of an interesting thing to say. Now there was an eight-day cleansing ritual the priests of that day would do. That's possibly what Jesus is referring to, meaning they knew about that.

But he didn't say to go to the priests and have them do the eight-day cleansing ceremony. He doesn't say that. He said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." It's almost as if, knowing what's going to happen, Jesus is setting up a little show and tell here because it says, "And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy." NLT 17:14

I love how theologian J.C. Ryle puts it. He says, "Help met them on the path of obedience." That's a little side note. You might tuck that away, put it in your back pocket. That's not the primary point of this message, but maybe some of us need to hear it. Some of us are waiting for God to come through, and then we'll obey. God says: Why don't you obey, and then I'll come through?

You see, the Holy Spirit is a conservationist. He only gives power where it is needed. So, these guys have no guarantee of anything. Jesus says, "Go show yourselves to the priests." As they go, and I love this, as they were walking along they were like, "Hey, I don't have that rash anymore. I've been healed. Jesus has cleansed me of my leprosy."

Now check this out in verse 15. "**One** of them, when he saw that he was healed, **came back** to Jesus," only one came back "shouting, 'Praise God!' He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, **thanking** him for what he had done. This man was a **Samaritan**."

So, this indicates right here that out of the ten there were a good number of them who were Galileans. In other words, they had a homefield advantage. But this guy, the one who was healed, and maybe possibly the only one who was healed was from Samaria, meaning he is the only one who took the effort, the time, and the energy to come back to Jesus to say thank you.

It would have required him to go out of his way. He would have had to take time off work, he would have had to go back through border control. That would have taken a long, long time. Nobody liked the long lines. He would have had to have had the paperwork.

The guys who were there from Galilee, and it's only a 15-minute drive by camel at most, they don't even bother to go back to Jesus to say thank you. No, it was the one outsider, the one Samaritan, who came back to express his appreciation to Jesus.

Catch Jesus' question here in verse 17. "Jesus asked, 'Didn't I heal **ten** men? Where are the other **nine**? Has no one **returned** to **give glory** to God except this **foreigner**?'"¹

Now Jesus here seems genuinely surprised. And Jesus wasn't genuinely surprised hardly ever. One of the things you'll notice as you read through the gospels and Jesus' life and ministry is there wasn't very much that would catch him off guard. He had that whole foreknowledge thing going for him.

In fact, one time, Jesus was talking to this rich, young ruler, this guy who comes to Jesus. He was trying to justify himself through religious means. He comes to Jesus and says, "What do I have to do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus says, "Why don't you follow the commands?" He was like, "I've done all that since I was young." Jesus was like, "That's amazing. Very few people have. Why don't you sell everything you have and give it to the poor?"

¹ While the NLT translation uses the word healed, most translations use the word cleansed in both verses 14 and 17. For example see NIV, NASB, ESV, NKJV

Jesus wasn't saying that was what was needed for salvation. Jesus knew what his heart needed to hear. So, the young guy goes: I'm out. I'm not going to do it. So, he taps out and walks away. And Jesus was not surprised by it. Jesus wasn't like: Oh man, stink. I didn't expect you to bail. Come back, let's re-negotiate here. He didn't do that. Jesus was not taken off guard, because he knew the young man's heart. He let him walk.

How about this? How about the day Jesus met Judas for the first time? Do you remember Judas? Judas, one of the disciples, betrayed Jesus, selling him out for a few pieces of silver? Could you imagine the day they met? "My name is Jesus. What is your name?"

"I'm Judas."

"Oh, you're the guy I forethought about. I know where this is going." And yet, the amazing thing about Jesus, knowing what Judas would do, Jesus still invited him into his life.

Jesus was very rarely ever surprised. But here? He seems genuinely surprised at their lack of gratitude, and even a little bit hurt. And you know what? I don't blame him. We've all been there. Have you ever done something nice for someone? Maybe you picked up the bill. Maybe you went out of your way. Maybe you gave the compliment. Maybe you helped someone move.

Maybe you waved someone in front of you in heavy traffic. You didn't have to, but you're a good person. And you waved them in front, and they didn't even acknowledge you. They didn't even give you a thank you wave. Everybody knows you do the thank you wave. What did they do? "Mr. and Mrs. Entitlement, I didn't know the king and the queen were in town, or I would have stopped traffic completely." So, you do something nice for them, and they don't express gratitude in any way, that stings a little bit.

These nine men, they never came back to say thanks. Now, they were religious enough to know where to go find a priest to do the eight-day ritual cleansing. But their hearts hadn't been changed. There wasn't anything about the grace of God that came through Jesus that had changed them in any way.

Now, here is what I'm guessing. I'm guessing word eventually gets back to these other nine that Jesus was a little miffed. I'm just guessing. Here is how it probably happened. The one guy who got healed, the Samaritan, he probably posted it on Instagram. He was probably like, "Look at me. I'm totally healed. #blessed." And he's doing the story and all that.

The other nine guys were like, "We were too. Isn't it so great?" And he said, "By the way, we need to talk. Jesus is kind of irritated with you."

Have you ever been in that situation? Have you ever had a friend, a family member, or an in-law, through another person say, "I really wish they would have said thank you?" Oftentimes we get super-defensive. We make excuses. I can just imagine the excuses that came out of these nine guys' mouths.

"Well, I was going to. I didn't know Jesus was doing it for the thanks. Is he really that insecure?" It's like, "I've got a lot going on over here in Galilee. I was on my way to Starbucks to get the gift card, and I was going to do the handwritten thank you. He didn't wait long enough."

I'm sure there were all kinds of excuses they had. It was worth me actually, this past week, doing an inventory of my own heart going, "Why don't I express gratitude more than I should?" And I just actually came up with a list. See if you can identify with any one of these, or maybe all of them.

Disappointment...Unmet Expectations

Yeah, you did something nice for me. I really appreciate that, but it wasn't what I wanted. It wasn't what I needed. Like, that was your love language, not mine. Thanks, but no thanks.

Oversight...I meant to

I had every intention of it. I just got busy. I didn't get around to sending the email. It was on my radar, and then one week turned into two, then two turned into three. Then it just would have been awkward if I did something after that. Enough time has gone by.

Assumption...they already know how I feel

It doesn't need to be verbalized. They know. But do they? And actually, even if they do it would be nice to hear it.

Underestimate...it's not really necessary

It's polite, good manners, but nothing more than that.

Embarrassed...it will be awkward

I have a hard time expressing myself. It would be easier not to. I think a lot of guys struggle with that. I'm not saying ladies don't. But I think this is especially true for us guys.

Apprehensive...I have a hard time expressing myself

How will this be perceived? Are they going to think I'm trying to kiss up? I don't want to kiss up.

Entitlement...somebody owes me

Entitlement is somebody owes me, and until I've received what I am owed, I'm not saying thank you to anybody. Entitlement is the thing that locks us up more than anything else.

Several months ago, I was on my way to a meeting in the middle of the afternoon. I needed an afternoon pick-me-up, so I decided to swing through a Starbucks on my way to the meeting. I'm in a hurry so I went through the drive-through and somebody just completely cuts me off, goes right in front of me.

I was trying to be good. Here is the deal. They had this long, drawn-out order. It took forever. They had to wait for the egg bytes to heat up, whatever. So, I have this thing and I'm like, "I'm going to be late." I pulled up to the window for my simple, little drink. The lady comes, she hands it to me and she says, "The car in front of you paid for your drink because they felt bad for cutting you off."

Man, I hate that. You want to talk about cutting you down to size. It was as if somebody put a mirror in front of me and all I could see was Mr. Entitlement, as if they owed me something. Their small expression of gratitude convicted me.

I want to give you two more.

Envy...I don't want them to get a big head

I see what other people have, and it's hard for me to express gratitude. Have you ever heard someone say that? "I was going to compliment you, but I didn't want you to get a big head." Well, thank you. I didn't know it was your job to keep my head small.

Can I just say that that should never come out of your mouth, like ever? Even if the person does have a big head, even if he has a pride problem, let God shrink his head. You just express gratitude, give encouragement. It'll be God who will use your encouragement to humble him. Maybe he will.

Let me give you one more.

Worry...all I can see are the problems right in front of me

All you can see are your problems and the things that aren't going well for you. You're like, "If those things would resolve themselves, then I'd be happy. All I can see are the problems in front of me." That will lock down gratitude faster than anything.

You see, what Jesus says next to this Samaritan is really fascinating. He says this in verse 19. "And Jesus said to the man, 'Stand up and go. Your **faith** has **healed** you.'"

That's really interesting that he puts it that way. I had to kind of go back and re-read it this past week. I was like: Wait a second. Weren't all 10 healed? And they weren't. This is actually the first time and the only time this word is used in the whole passage.

If you go back and read it, Jesus cleansed the lepers, but the Samaritan one was the only one who was healed [see footnote 1]. And that's an interesting observation. They were cleansed of their leprosy, but they weren't healed. And it's a subtle warning for many of us. We may be asking for God to deliver us from our circumstances, free us from something and he will. But it doesn't necessarily mean our hearts will change. You can be cleansed, but not healed.

You see, what Jesus is after is transformation. He's not after your religion. He's not after your behavior. He's not after your moralism. He is after your heart, which means he won't always give you what you want. God refuses to be a cosmic vending machine, where the only time I go to him is when I want something. And if he doesn't give me what I ordered, he must not be good or he must not be real. Or maybe, "You're just not God."

And Jesus is really concerned about the shaping of your heart. I don't know about you, but it's been the difficult seasons where I don't get what I prayed for, I don't get what I want, that actually drive down to a heart level to this place called transformation.

Transformation is never a Transaction

That's the problem with treating gratitude like manners. We kind of treat it like it's a transaction, but it's not. Jesus is more interested in the development of our hearts. I think this is what a guy named Paul was trying to get at when he writes this to a young leader he was mentoring named Timothy.

He says this in 2 Timothy 3:1-2. "You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times." And we would all go: Yeah. "For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and," "...**ungrateful.**"

That seems to be a little bit out of place. Ungrateful? Really? Like, why is that in there. It seems to be a bit out of place. It's there because one of the marks of the journey toward transformation is a heart of gratitude. Some of the most humble, secure, confident people say thank you a lot.

So, what does gratitude do? Let me run through a few things. If you're taking notes, these are the things to write down. Or take a picture of the screen to take them with you.

This is what gratitude does:

Helps put things in **perspective**.

It right-sizes things. It's like a set of corrective lenses for my entitled eyes.

So, my wife and I, when we got married we had an outdoor ceremony. I've talked about this before, but some of you may not have been around the last time we talked about this. We got married in her uncle's back yard in June in southwest Missouri, where the weather can change on a dime.

The whole day it was sunny and beautiful out, and then about 30 minutes before the wedding ceremony was to start a dark cloud parked itself over the house where we were getting married. You may think I'm exaggerating, but I'm not. Her uncle had a radar. There was actually a cloud that would not move, and one mile in every direction from the house it was sunny.

And 30 minutes before the ceremony started it just poured. It wouldn't let up. We were waiting, postponing the ceremony. We waited about 30 minutes, 40 minutes, and we were finally like, "We've got to get this show on the road." I'm like, "God, what do I need to repent of? I must have done something wrong. This is horrible."

And so, we start to have the ceremony in the pouring rain. It was amazing. The musicians almost got electrocuted. The groomsmen were soaked all the way through their tuxedos. There was a guy in the crowd who volunteered to get one of those large umbrella tables with the big umbrellas. He held the thing, standing in between us; he was shaking the whole time. The dude was amazing. We do the ceremony. We get done and got through the receiving line, and then the cloud moved and the sun came out.

We were receiving people in the receiving line and there was this group of girls from the Caribbean islands. I didn't even know them. I don't even know how they got there. They were like friends of somebody, or something like that. Don't you have something better to do? But they came to our wedding, right?

They are coming through the receiving line and they walk up to us with these big smiles. They said, "You must feel so blessed." I was like, "What are you talking about." They said, "It rained on your wedding day. It poured down rain on your wedding day." They said, "In our culture rain is a blessing, and it's so clear to us that God is blessing your marriage."

I was like, "I totally knew that," like I knew where they were going with that. "We're so grateful." I almost had to pull my wife off them. She actually responded really, really well. We realized we could be grateful.

Even then? Even in a circumstance like that? Well, in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 it says this. Say it with me out loud at all of our campuses, “Be thankful in **all circumstances**,” you mean all? Even the bad ones? Even the difficult ones? Even the tough ones? That’s what it says. It says in every circumstance, “Be thankful, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”

You mean it’s God’s will for me that I would go through tough times? No, it’s God’s will for you that he would shape your heart. It’s God’s will for you that you would be transformed. It’s God’s will for you that you would live a less entitled life and live a grateful life. That’s God’s will for you.

I think that for many of us, we think in order to be grateful we’ve got to be happy. And it’s the exact opposite. We express our gratitude and then happiness comes. You can be thankful in every situation. Think about that this week.

That means I can be thankful when someone compliments me, or criticizes me. That means I can be thankful when someone gives up their seat for me, or stays where they are (like a lazy bum). That means that when I’m late for a meeting, I can go in and express gratitude meaning I can, instead of walking in and offering an excuse like, “Traffic is really bad,” I can say, “Thank you for your patience.” Watch how that changes the meeting. Because you’re not entitled when you walk in.

You can say, “Thank you so much for sharing that with me.” “Thank you for the feedback.” “Thank you for the unsolicited advice.” “Thank you for cutting me off in traffic.” You can even thank the person who is being rude. “I’m so grateful I’m not having a crummy day like you.” Just try it and see what that word does for your whole demeanor.

Here is the next thing:

Reminds me it’s not about me.

And this is so huge. Because we live in a world and in a culture that makes it all about us. I think I’ve even seen a billboard that says, “It’s about you.” So, we just feel like everything just circles around us. What gratitude does is it shapes your heart and builds your character. It’s one of the fastest ways to take the spotlight off yourself. Gratitude helps me get over me.

And I would say this is a human thing, but this is an especially difficult thing when it enters into the church family. When entitlement begins to enter into our Christian lives, that’s the thing that brings everything to a screeching halt.

I want to show you this graph. This is actually one of the very first times I’ve kind of publically walked through this. I hope it makes sense, and I’ll just continue to tweak it as we go. I think it’s helpful.

Here is a scale from -5 to +5. This is a spiritual journey. So, -5 would represent maybe the most hardened, cynical atheist. Like the lead singer for a satanic metal band or something—so, hardened atheist.

+5 — +3 — 0 — -3 — -5

People don't just switch from -5 to +5. It's a walk, a journey. You begin to open up, soften up, and you begin to meet people, God begins to work in your life. You get to this place of neutral. You are open.

And then the place of salvation would be on the plus side. You are growing as a Christian all the way to +5, no matter what that looks like. It is a growth toward discipleship and spiritual maturity.

I've been in church long enough to know there are some pitfalls here. I think our church is really good at reaching out to -3s and all the way through +3s, but there is something that happens right here (+3) in our spiritual walk.

It's happened in my life. I've seen it. I've noticed it. And I would say it is entitlement. Meaning you've been following Jesus long enough to forget who you were. You've been following Jesus long enough to forget how amazing grace is, and that you didn't deserve any of it. You've been following Jesus long enough that actually you don't have very many unchurched friends anymore, and it is easy to judge and be legalistic.

You've been following Jesus long enough that actually the form of the church, meaning the worship, the programs, and the teaching and all that, the methodology has changed and you're not happy about it.

So, we say things like, "I'm not being fed anymore," or "I don't get to serve in the way I want to serve anymore." All of those statements are dripping with entitlement. We've got to be so careful. We get right around this spot right here (+3) and that's when gratitude needs to be re-introduced to our hearts to simply say this, "I don't deserve a thing. It was all grace. And actually, I'm going to go all-in for the mission of God and I'm going to be others focused." Because rescued people rescue people. That's what they do. So, we'll see if I use that again.

Here is the next one:

Builds other people up.

I would say that gratitude is like the fertilizer for the soil of the relationships of your heart. Here is the thing to do a gut-check on. Ask yourself, "Have my relationships and friendships been struggling lately? Have they been falling apart?" And then look at gratitude. Has there been enough gratitude there? The only place in the Bible that it

challenges us to be competitive is showing honor, which is expressing gratitude toward one another.

Here's the last one I'll give you:

It's contagious.

Gratitude is contagious. How about this? Next time somebody comes up and starts gossiping, express gratitude over something and watch how it just stops them. Next time somebody starts to gripe, and complain, or whatever it is—to whine, just begin to be grateful. Because those words are contagious too, when you begin to express gratitude—that is contagious.

The language of **arrogance** is complaining and criticizing.

The language of **humility** is gratitude and encouragement.

When I can't be grateful, that's me basically saying, "Other people and God, they still owe me," rather than, "God doesn't owe me a thing. It is all grace, so I'm grateful there."

A preacher by the name of Charles Spurgeon preached in London several centuries ago. There is a story about him. He was talking to a lady in his church. He was explaining the gospel to her, leading her to Christ. She was a very talkative lady to the point where Spurgeon couldn't get a word in edgewise. If you know anything about Charles Spurgeon, that's saying a lot.

And so, he is trying to lead her to Christ. He gets to this place where it clicks for her, and she responds. And then she says this, "Oh, Mr. Spurgeon, if Jesus saves me he will never hear the end of it," and that's a pretty good picture of gratitude. That's what can get you beyond +3 in a healthy way. "If Jesus saves me, he'll never hear the end of it. I'm going to continue to be grateful even when the circumstances don't seem to call for it."

And some of us, we don't get a pass on this one. It's not like we go, "I'm not that good at gratitude." Actually, none of us are. That's why we need to learn gratitude. That's why it needs to be a daily practice where we remind ourselves to be grateful.

So here is this week's homework. I want you to go out and say thanks this week as much as you possibly can. I don't want you to make it a transaction, I want it to come at a heart level. I want you to say thank you to somebody and then tell them why you are grateful.

Go out of your way to say thanks this week:

- *To someone you've been taking for granted*
- *To someone who never asks for it*

- *To someone you've been avoiding*
- *To someone it's long overdue*
- *To a pastor that's impacted you*
- *To another pastor in our city*

Let's be that church. Let's be that church that says, "We're just going to express gratitude freely and often." Why? Because it's good manners? No, because changed hearts demand it. I'm going to live a life of gratitude because of what Jesus has done for me.

There's an author and a theologian by the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He lived during World War II and he was a part of a group of people who were trying to take out Adolf Hitler. I think that was so cool. My life is so boring. Dietrich Bonhoeffer got arrested, thrown into prison, where he would eventually be sentenced to death just before the war ended.

And Bonhoeffer wrote some of his most profound writings in that prison cell. One of them was a statement that reads like this, "It is only with gratitude that life becomes rich." He wrote that in a prison cell, knowing he would never see his family again, knowing that death was waiting for him, and he still managed to be grateful.

And I've got to ask, "What about my life? Can I not express gratitude?" Do you want a rich life? And I'm not talking about monetary wealth, but a full, rich, joyous life. Be grateful and it will follow that.

So, here's what I want us to do at all of our campuses. I want you to bow your heads and close your eyes, not because that's what turns the on switch on for God to listen to you, but for focus and for privacy.

We are wrapping this series up. Today is the last day of the series. Here is what I want to simply do. I want to pray a prayer over you. I'm guessing there is somebody here and maybe this message or this series has hit you in a pretty significant way. Maybe not every message was equally applicable, but there was something that really hit you. Maybe it was today. Maybe you realized that you've been living an entitled life, and you didn't even know it. And you just need to be more grateful.

Maybe you realized that on that scale from -5 to +5, you are a +3 moving toward entitlement. You are making this church experience all about you. You don't want to go there. So, maybe God needs to do some business with you. Maybe you need to get back on mission, realize it's others focused.

Maybe today you've been playing the religion game and you've been trying to make yourself worthy in God's eyes and you just can't do it. It's led to burnout, cynicism, and anger and you need to respond to the gospel, maybe for the first time, or maybe once again.

So, I just want to lead us in a prayer and I want you to make these words your own as we invite the Spirit of God into this place.

Father God, we come to you right now and we need what you have. There isn't anything we can do to justify ourselves in your eyes. There isn't anything we can do to pay off the debt we owe. And we just need to hear that we are loved just as we are, and that all of it is a gift, all of it is grace, and it comes through Jesus. So, Father, forgive us when we've lived entitled lives. Forgive us when it's been difficult for us to be grateful.

Father, forgive me when I've made this life, when I've made my marriage, when I've made my friendships, when I've made my church experience all about me. I don't want that any longer.

Father, today I realize I don't have a relationship with you. So, I want to respond to the offer you've made that comes through your Son, Jesus. I admit to you that I am a flawed sinner, in need of the grace that only you can give. And so, I ask that you would forgive me. I can't give you much, but I can give you my whole heart. So, I open it up to you today and ask that you enter in. Save me, not just for eternity, but that you would save me for something here on this earth. I give you my life, in Jesus' name. Amen."

Now with your heads still bowed, eyes closed just for another second, I just simply want to ask if God did something there, whatever it is. Whatever application it was, maybe you received Christ, maybe you were just like, "I need to apply this truth to my life." If God just did something, if you just had a moment there, would you just raise up your hand really quick?

There are hands going up all around the room, which means you're not alone. We're all into this together. This whole morning came down to this moment, where the Spirit of God just wants to do a work within you. Let's let him do what he does. Let's make some space for him to work. We'll spend a few moments just with him, and then in a minute or two the team will lead us in our response of worship.