

(2006 Conference) 4.appreciation and Encouragement

by Zac Poonen

Cultivating a spirit of gratitude and appreciation is essential for restoring balance in our lives and experiencing the blessings of God.

Duration: 59:58

Scripture: Matthew 8:10, Luke 1:47, Acts 13:15, Acts 15:31-32, 2 Corinthians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 1 Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 3:13, 1 John 2:1

Topics: "Gratitude And Thanks", "Christian Encouragement"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of appreciation, gratitude, and encouragement in restoring balance in our lives. It highlights the need to express gratitude to God, appreciate one another, and encourage those around us. The speaker addresses the cultural influences that hinder expressions of thankfulness and stresses the biblical significance of being grateful, as seen in stories like the thankful leper and Paul's appreciation for the Corinthians.

Transcript

So, we want to continue to restore the balance in our life. Not by talking about the areas we are already strong in, but trying to consider areas we may be weak in. That's what we're trying to think about, so that this balance that's a bit lopsided right now gets a little more level.

Well, and I want to first of all speak about appreciation, gratitude, appreciation, which I feel is an area we could be a little weak in. Gratitude to God, expressing gratitude to one another, appreciating one another, appreciating what God has done, appreciating our husbands, appreciating our wives, appreciating our children, appreciating and valuing our brothers and sisters, encouraging one another. These are, it's all one area in which we are weak.

I think partly because as Indians, our culture is essentially non-Christian. And whether you like it or not, that infiltrates into us and many, many things that we do are influenced by the culture around us. And gratitude and saying thank you and all is very rare in our country.

In fact, in the English language, thank you and sorry are very, very common words. One of the first things that children are taught to say. But in our country, it's very difficult to even know what is the word for thank

you in different languages or sorry.

Those words are rare in a language. That shows how little it is used. And yet, when you read scripture, there's a great emphasis and place given to appreciating and valuing, being grateful, first of all, to God, being thankful to him and also for one another.

You know, once when 10 lepers came to Jesus, you know the story. Jesus healed all of them. And one man, as soon as he saw that he was healed, immediately he thought, well, before Jesus told me to go to the priest and show myself.

But before I go and show myself to the priest, let me go back and thank Jesus for what he's done for me. Then I'll go to the priest. The other nine went to the priest.

And Jesus, when he saw this one man with a loud voice thanking him, he had come earlier, 10 people had come with a loud voice saying heal us. Only one person came with a loud voice saying thank you. Jesus said, were there not 10 healed? Where are the nine? Now when you read that, you think, is Jesus expecting someone to come and say thank you very much? No.

Not at all. But he was hoping that the other nine would also get the blessing that this one was going to get now. He told him, go in peace, you're made whole.

He received, I believe, salvation. The others got only healing. And Jesus wished that the other nine could also get it.

You know, when you come back to God with a spirit of thanksgiving, you always get more than the other person who just got an answer to prayer. We don't realize what we have missed in our life by not giving thanks to God, by not recognizing what God has done and making thanksgiving a major part of our life. It says in Ephesians in chapter 5, Ephesians 5 verse 20, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

I mean, those are absolute statements. Always means 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All things means all things.

What you call good things, what you call bad things. How can we give thanks for bad things? Because God uses those things which the world calls bad to produce something good in us. For example, when you get a promotion or you get a very high salary, that's a good thing.

You can do a lot with money. You can live a more comfortable life. There's nothing wrong in living a comfortable life.

There's nothing wrong in having a refrigerator or a washing machine or whatever you can afford to buy so long as you don't get into debt. But what if you don't have money to buy any of these things? What if you have to live with very little money so that you're just sort of scraping by? So that's a bad thing. Well, can you give thanks for that? We certainly can.

Those of us who have gone through such times in our life know the tremendous blessing that has come to us in such times of financial struggle. Certainly my wife and I can say that. The first time we got married, when we first got married and the first few years after marriage, it was a struggle for two, three years.

When I look back, that was one of the greatest blessings in our life that I've often said, I wish every person who got married would get a wedding gift from God of three years of financial struggle. It would make a tremendous difference in their life. What were the good that came out of it? We learned to live with little.

And even today we can live with little. We still live with little. If you have more, you can use it for some good purpose.

You don't have to spend it all on yourself. We learned how poor people in India live. We were so poor that we couldn't even rent a house.

We had to live in one room of my parents' home. It's not ideal. It's not the best.

But what to do when you don't have money? I was serving the Lord. I was working among very poor village people, students. They couldn't support me.

But I learned the struggles that multitudes in India have, who have to live with their parents all their life. Many of you don't know that. I know it.

Where did I learn it? God took me through that. He gave me a course in it. And because He gave me an education in it, I can have a ministry to those people which you can never have because you never went through it.

Do you know how you miss something when you don't allow God to take you through what people call bad things? It's not out of choice. It wasn't my choice. But many, many things which we call bad are actually good.

God makes everything work together for good. And He doesn't allow us to be tempted beyond our ability. He never allowed it to continue forever and ever.

It was only three years and that was it. And after that, God provided us with, I mean, it's abundance God has given us now. And He tests us even with abundance.

He tests us to see what's our attitude now. So, what I say is, when we look at it from God's viewpoint and see that God is in control of everything, we are grateful for everything. What about if you are taken to court? I tell you the lessons I have learned when religious people took me to court.

I would never do without it. I have learned some precious lessons that some of you who have never been to court will never learn. You can hear about it from me but you'll never learn it first hand.

A knowledge of God, an experience of God which you can never have unless you go through it. I have not experienced the death of grown up children or something like that. Some of you may have experienced that.

I met a family that had only three children and all three children were washed away in the tsunami. Believers. He saw them going.

Well, boy, I'm sure that brother has gone through things I have not gone through. And I'm sure he can encourage a lot of people I can't. So he runs an orphanage now and I'm sure he can bless those people in a way perhaps none of us can bless those orphans.

Because he saw his own three children being washed away in front of him. Can you imagine what that does to a man? When God allows such a thing to happen, it's something like Job. Losing all your children in a moment.

What I mean is that, and I saw him so cheerful. So what I say is that God, when we look at things from God's viewpoint, we can give thanks for everything. And if you have not, if we are weak in that area, the weight is very little, the balance is, we give thanks when everything goes well, we got a promotion, we got an increment or better job or something like that, a high salary.

But we haven't learned to give thanks in some of the other things which the world calls bad things. Then we are a little imbalanced. We are imbalanced.

Anybody in the world can give thanks when he's rich or... What about the Apostle Paul who had a sickness for which he prayed three times, Lord heal me, heal me, heal me and he never got healed. And the Lord said, no I'm not going to heal you, that's good for you. My grace is sufficient for you.

Who said Jesus never said, your sickness is good for you? He said that to the greatest apostle that lived in the first century. Keep it, it's good for you. Timothy had his sickness, stomach's infirmities, Paul laid his hands on him numerous times, he never got healed.

Paul says, okay Timothy, I can't, I prayed for you, nothing happened. I laid hands on you, you got gifts of the spirit, but when I laid hands on you for healing, nothing happened. Your stomach's infirmities are still troubling you, take a little wine so that you can get some relief from it.

He never got healed. That was Timothy's thorn in the flesh. But he gave thanks for it.

They learned to give thanks. That's what made them men of God. They didn't give thanks only for healing.

They gave thanks when something didn't happen the way they wanted it. That is a balanced Christian who can give thanks in everything. Because he believes that almighty God his Father is in control of everything that happens in this universe.

And it's certainly everything that happens in the life of a child of God. So I want to ask you whether you have learned that lesson. I feel that many of us are weak in it.

We complain about little things. We complain about this thing not there and that thing not there. Somebody said this or somebody done this or somebody doesn't love me or the church doesn't show enough love for me.

I have a very simple solution. If your church does not show love for you, you know what that is? Leave the church. Go and find another one that will love you.

And we will really bless you as you go. God bless you. I hope you'll find a better church.

We won't hold you back. No. I know in a few months you'll come running back when you see what some of the other churches are like.

See, we have got so much that we expect so much. We are like people who are fed chicken biryani and all types of expensive food morning every week. And we haven't tasted what it's like in some of the other churches.

Some of our young people have sometimes gone visiting other churches. Then they have learned to appreciate what they got in CFC. A brother from CFC told me last Sunday that his son was invited by a friend to visit a Pentecostal church.

So he went along. In fact, I encourage all people to go to Pentecostal churches, Roman Catholic churches, CSI churches, all types of churches. So he went along.

And he came back and his dad asked him how was it. He said, Dad, I really learned to be thankful for CFC after going there. It was so boring.

So I didn't know what to do. I just sat down and counted the number of times they said hallelujah to keep doing something. And I counted 143 times they said hallelujah.

I would really recommend that all of you go and visit some of these other churches sometimes. You'll be a lot more thankful for what you have. We're not grateful enough.

We're not thankful enough for what we get. And that's why we are so poor spiritually. Like the nine lepers.

They got healing, but they were so poor compared to this other man who got healing plus God made him rich. He said you are made whole. I want to be like that.

I want to be thankful. One of the things that the Lord taught me many years ago was from that verse where Jesus said, you know that verse towards the end of Matthew 10 where he said, I say unto you, if you've given a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple, you will not lose your reward. Now you all know that verse.

But you know what the Lord showed me from that verse? Jesus showed me that was his nature. His nature was not to forget even a cup of cold water that somebody gave. And the Lord said, do you want my nature? I said, yes, Lord.

Then never forget in all your life the little things that other people have done for you. They may forget what you have done for them. Never mind.

A lot of people forget what Jesus has done for them. The world is full of millions of people who forget what Jesus has done for them. But Jesus does not forget even a cup of cold water that people have given him.

And I have tried my best. When I say I want Jesus' nature, I mean it. And here is an area where I've really sought.

I have tried to remember every person that I can think of in my life who has done some good for me somewhere. Sometimes I've written to them years later and said, brother, I remember what you did for me many years ago. I wrote to somebody the other day and said, I remember what you did for one of my children nearly 20 years ago.

I haven't forgotten it, brother. I'm deeply grateful to you. I think of brothers here who used to take my children to school on the scooter when I was traveling somewhere.

And I've told my children, don't forget those brothers who took you to school on their scooter, who came home, took you to the school on scooter. Don't forget it all your life until the day those brothers die. Be thankful to them.

Be thankful. I want my children to grow up like that. When they go to a home, I say don't ever forget.

Don't forget a cup of cold water or a meal that somebody gave you somewhere. And when one day God prospers you, I told my children, repay them. Repay them.

When you were little poor students, somebody invited you to their home and gave you a meal, when you earn money, repay them. Be grateful. Say more than thank you.

Say it in actions. And I'm thankful that my boys have done that. I want to do it.

I've tried to do it. Many, many people have blessed me and my family. To the best of my knowledge, I try to remember everybody who invited me for a meal.

I mean, I didn't need a meal, but they still called me and I'm very thankful to them because that's the spirit of Christ. He never forgets a glass of cold water. Where is a full meal compared to a glass of cold water? We take too much for granted.

I want to say to you, my brothers, it will revolutionize your life when you put a little more weight on this side of the balance which is so terribly light at the moment of being thankful. Be thankful for those who serve you spiritually. I believe we take that for granted.

I have seen, and you know, we used to live in Vellore. My wife was working for a short while in the hospital there before Sanjay was born. And we saw doctors there.

And I used to see one thing. These people would come from all over North India to Vellore because it was a top hospital. And when they got treated by these doctors and got healed, they were so grateful to them.

Boy, they would take fruits and this, that and the other to them. And, I mean, that was their way of expressing gratitude. But I thought, boy, these heathen people, they appreciate physical healing so much.

And I think many of you do too. But when it comes to spiritual healing, we take it for granted. Now don't misunderstand me.

I don't want all of you to come with fruits to my house tomorrow. That's not what I mean. I don't want it.

I don't know what we'll do with it if you all come there. Please don't. I'm just trying to say that if we don't, if you're not thankful, why did Jesus say, where are the nine? For their sake.

I want to show you an example in scripture. You know, some of these things, like I spoke yesterday on authority, I have been very hesitant to speak for 30 years for one reason. Because, you know, I don't want to say, listen, you fellows should submit to me.

I've got no interest in that. But I always think of the good. I know the good that came to me in my younger days when God told me to shut my mouth and submit to elders who were pretty hard on me.

Right up to the time I was about 35. I went through a lot. God broke me, broke me, broke me, broke me.

And God always said, shut your mouth and submit to them. I shut my mouth and submitted to them. Now I realize why God did it.

I didn't know it then. But God is my witness in no church that I attended in my life did I ever rebel against the elder. I always kept a good relationship with them even if I didn't agree with them.

I never went around speaking evil about them. And I submitted to them even when they disciplined me. They did all types of things.

They were jealous of me, suppressed me. I submitted to them. I kept a good relationship with them even today to those who are alive.

And I want to say now I realize why God did it. Because God wanted to give me one day spiritual authority. I never knew that then.

I never knew what ministry God had for me. And I had to learn to be broken because if you give authority to an unbroken man he will mess up God's work. God has to break a man thoroughly before he gives him authority.

And one way he breaks us is by making us submit to authority in our younger days. That's why I feel sorry for a lot of young people today who are too smart to submit to authority. Okay, I know 20 years from now God will never give you spiritual authority.

And that's why I feel sad for you. I really feel sad as to what God wanted to give you and he won't be able to give you because you're too smart to submit to anybody's authority. I've seen people like that.

I've seen wonderful young brothers who come to us and lost because they don't want to submit to anybody. I can prophesy what's going to happen to them in the next 20 years. That's why I spoke on authority yesterday for your sake.

In the same way here in Philippians let me show you what Paul said. Just like Jesus wanted those nine to be blessed not that he got something out of there coming and saying thank you. No.

He wanted them to be blessed. Now I want you to see this. When I'm telling you to be thankful for those who minister to you not just me but many others who have blessed you.

It's for your sake. I'm not going to get anything from it. If all of you come and say thank you to me what's that going to do to me? Nothing.

But it'll do something to you if you have, I'm not saying using the words but an attitude. See in Philippians chapter 4 Paul says in verse 10 I'm really glad far happier than you'd ever guess. Happy that you're again showing such strong concern for me.

And he says it's not that I have any sense of needing anything. Verse 11 I'm quite content whatever I have. I'm happy with little or with much.

It's all the same to me. Whatever I have, whatever I am I can make it. It's for the one who helps me.

And he says you Philippians know verse 15 that I'll never forget it. That when I first left Macedonia to preach the message no church helped me out financially except you. You were the only one even when I was in Thessalonica.

You helped me out financially not only once but twice. Now listen to this. Not that I seek a gift.

Paul says I don't want a gift. But I seek the profit that will come to you when you learn to give. So when Paul received a gift from the Philippians he didn't get all excited and say boy I've got some money.

No. He was not like today's preachers. He said I'm quite happy.

Before I got it I was happy. After I got it it didn't make me any more happy. But I think of the blessing that will come to these fellows now.

And that's what excited Paul. And that's what Jesus felt sorry about that those nine missed something. Not that he was going to get something.

I don't believe that we should be expecting thank you from anybody. The Lord taught me that many years ago. I think of a young brother who frequently stayed in my home and whom we in the early days when the church used to meet in our home many people stayed in our home.

After the meeting at night they would stay and sometimes they would just get up and make coffee on their own in the kitchen and go to college or go to work. And after some time that brother left and went to some other place and he left the church as well. But he never seemed in all his life and all the years and this is going back 25 years.

He never seemed to be thankful for all that we did for him. In those years. He forgot it.

And I used to think why this guy we did so much for him the guy doesn't even seem to be thankful. And the Lord said there's something wrong with you. With me? What did I do? The Lord said you did that unto man.

You should have done it unto me. Oh ho. Thank you Lord.

I thought he was wrong. I realized I was wrong. Where was I wrong? I was wrong in expecting a thank you from a human being.

Have you been wrong there? Any of you? Have you been wrong in expecting a thank you from a human being? I got light on it. I hope you get light on it today. The Lord gave me light on that and said whatever you do for any brother you must do it as unto me.

Not as unto him. And if you do it as unto me the Lord says I'll say thank you to you. You don't have to expect it from anybody.

I tell you that liberated me. It really liberated me not only concerning that brother but concerning every person. I don't look for a thank you from anybody now.

Because I've learned to do it all unto the Lord. See we look for the good of the other. So when I'm talking about being grateful I'm telling you that for your good.

Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. See what you've been doing throughout this conference and for many years in the ministry of the word is you've been receiving, receiving, receiving, receiving, receiving. Good.

There is a blessing in it. Jesus didn't say there's no blessing. Can you say that all the messages that you receive have not blessed you? Of course they've blessed you.

And Jesus said there is a blessing in receiving but there is a greater blessing in giving. Those nine, ten lepers all got the blessing of healing but one got a greater blessing because he gave. What did he give? He gave thanks to Jesus for healing him.

It was more blessed to give thanks than just to receive healing from leprosy. It's a principle. It's a divine principle like the law of gravity.

If you learn to give thanks to God, you'll be more blessed than if you keep on receiving. Some of you may say, I've received such tremendous blessing in the church. Praise God.

You would have got double that if you had learned to be thankful and grateful and unlike most Indian people, if you had learned to express, express your gratitude. See, that's one of the limitations we have in Indian culture. I've traveled in other countries and I know that it is completely different in other countries.

Particularly in western countries. Not because western people are superior to Indians. I don't believe that.

But because in western countries, particularly in the United States, they have had for 300 years a heritage of Christianity behind them. We have had a heritage for 3000 years of some other religion. They have had a heritage of Christianity going back to 300 years where they were taught to be thankful, grateful.

From the time their little children are small, they teach them to be thank you and gratitude that they have just developed that. I mean, spirituality may have gone in many cases, but they've still kept this good habit of being thankful and expressing appreciation for what they have received. And I believe that according to the law, like the law of gravity, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

They would have got a greater blessing. I have personally made it a point in my life always to be thankful, not only for cups of cold water, but all the different brothers who have come to Bangalore. Many stayed with me and ministered to us.

I have expressed my gratitude to them effusively. That means like an overflowing river because I say, you've taken the trouble to come here and I really want to express my gratitude to you. And I tell you, that's blessed me.

It's blessed me more than it blessed them. So that's a habit that all of us need to develop. I'm still thankful to my wife when she brings me a cup of tea in the morning.

Are you? What do you say when your wife brings you a cup of tea or coffee in the morning? Keep it there. Is that what you say? When are we going to become Christians? Born again Christians. Christ like Christians.

You believe a cup of tea is better than a cup of water? Jesus gives thanks for a cup of water. I'm not saying, I'm not talking about using the word thank you, thank you, thank you. It can become a ritual after some time.

I'm talking about an attitude. An attitude. That's more important.

You may not physically say thank you. Sometimes I do to my wife. Thank you, even now.

But the attitude of gratitude must always be there even if we don't say thank you. We take so much for granted, our children. Do they ever thank their mothers for all the hard work they do cooking the meals for

them? We must teach them.

Say thank you to your mother. In the United States, some about a hundred years ago or something, they instituted one Sunday as Mother's Day. It was last Sunday.

Mother's Day where all the people must recognize at least once a year. I think that's a pretty good idea. To learn to say thank you to your mother at least once a year, every year for all the work she's done.

And somebody there once calculated if you had to pay your mother for all the things that she did, all the meals she cooked, all the times she treated you and everything, it came to a massive figure. It's like some CEO's salary that he said it works out to that much. And he said, be thankful that you don't have to pay your mother for all that she did for you.

Can't we say a little thank you? When was the last time you said thank you to your mother or your father? I'm talking about an earthly father and mother. We're so, we take so much for granted. And that's why we are so spiritually poor.

This side of the balance is so light. We are terribly imbalanced. And it's affecting us.

It's affecting us spiritually far more than we think. We just don't know how to say thank you. I want to show you a few verses.

Like, let me show you 1 Thessalonians and chapter 5. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. We request of you, brethren, that you appreciate this is a command spoken by Jesus right? According to John 16 12. Who said these words? Jesus. Through Paul.

We request you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you. We appreciate all brothers, but we appreciate especially those who diligently labor among you. Those who have charge over you in the Lord.

Who, like a good doctor, will give you injections and surgery free of charge when you need it. Have you got surgery? From those who are over you in the Lord? Free of charge? What would you say to a doctor who gave you a surgery free of charge? It caused you pain, I know, but it healed you of some cancer. You don't think of the pain, you think of the healing from the cancer.

Those who diligently labor among you have charge over you in the Lord and took their charge seriously as a father and give you instruction. That means they fed you. Every person who has done that, if you have not obeyed 1 Thessalonians 5.12, you are living in disobedience to Jesus' commands.

I tell you, a lot of us have years of disobedience behind us. Now, you know why I don't speak about these things, but I have come to see such poverty among people that I say, Lord, I don't care if they misunderstand me, I've got to speak about it for their good. I know the good it's done me when I have appreciated those who have blessed me.

I don't want to deprive you of that blessing. I want to show you another verse. These are all in your Bible.

Some of you have read the Bible many times. Didn't you read these verses? Let me show you another verse. 1 Timothy 5 and verse 17.

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor. What are you supposed to do to the workers, to the elders who do rule well? Worthy of double honor. That means you think of somebody whom you have given honor to in the world and multiply that by two, and that's the honor you got to give to those who work, especially to those who work hard at preaching and at teaching.

I believe that. Like we got to sort of, like it says there in the earlier passage, overwhelm them with your appreciation and your love. Just pour a flood on them.

That's how it says in the message Bible. So will we do that? Do we do it? I've tried to do it and I want to say I have become a very rich man because I've discovered it is more blessed to give than to receive. You know, the Apostle Paul, he was a man who knew how to give thanks for anything good that he saw in anybody.

He was an Apostle. He had done so much for the Corinthians. They were not at all thankful to him.

You read that in 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. They said, ah, this guy, ah, he did his job. Sometimes we were not thankful for people who, certain jobs.

Have you ever thanked the servant who worked in your house? Ah, beneath your lower caste, right? We don't have a caste system in Christianity. It's good to learn to give thanks for anybody who has served you in any way. I have always done it.

I've done it and I don't have a caste system. I don't belong to any superior caste. I belong to the family that got kicked out of Eden 6,000 years ago.

That's all. That's the caste I belong to and you belong to that too and everybody else belongs to the same caste that got kicked out of Eden for their sin. This wretched caste system.

It's among Christians. We give thanks to those in the upper caste but not in the lower caste. Who said that? You think Christians don't have a caste system? I've seen it everywhere.

Let me ask you, have you ever thanked the maid servant who worked in your house? Oh, I pay her. That's right. But what's wrong in saying a thank you to her for what she did? It costs so little.

That's why the Corinthians were so poor. They never knew how to give thanks. But look at Paul.

1 Corinthians chapter 1. Listen to this. 1 Corinthians 1.4. The Corinthians may not have been thankful to Paul but Paul was thankful for the Corinthians. Can you beat that? Imagine.

This man was a father to them. Did everything for them. Established the church there and they were not at all grateful to him.

But he was grateful for them. Look at this. 1 Corinthians 1.4 I thank my God always concerning you.

What for? He doesn't tell any lies. He doesn't say, oh because you're all such spiritual people. They are not spiritual people.

He tells them later on you're carnal. But he says there's a grace that you fellows have got. And you got a lot of good speakers in your midst.

He speaks the truth. He doesn't say you're all spiritual people. But you're enriched in speech and in knowledge and the testimony of Christ was concerning you.

And you're not lacking in spiritual gifts. It's all true. They were lacking in the graces of God.

Sure he didn't say. So he's honest. He looked for something he could find to appreciate and he spoke the truth.

He didn't believe in flattery. If it was flattery, the Holy Spirit would not have put that in scripture. We're not to flatter people.

When people flatter you, it's just to get some advantage. No, this is the honest truth. I believe if you look, you'll be able to find something to thank God for even in Corinthian type of Christians.

That's what he found. And he says, the Lord is faithful. He's called you and so on.

And he says, now I want to tell you something. There are a lot of divisions among you. You fellows are fighting with one another.

You guys are carnal. He first appreciates what he can and then he tells them the truth. That's the way to do it.

That's the way to do it with our children. But very few parents do like that with their children. I mean, have any of you got a child in which there's nothing good? There can't be a child like that in the world.

But if you've seen something good in your children, have you appreciated it? Particularly an act of unselfishness. That's more important to appreciate a child for that than for coming first in the class. When he comes first in the class, it just means he's got good brains.

But when he gives something unselfishly to another child, he's got a good heart. And that's what you've got to appreciate in your children. We've got to learn to appreciate in our children.

We've got to look. We've got to develop the habit of seeing something. Now if I were to tell you, if I were to give you a piece of paper right now and say, please write down five things you can appreciate in your husband right now.

You've got to scratch your head. Then I tell you, write down five wrong things with your husband. Ah, here, give me, I'll write ten, not five.

See, that's our nature. Or vice versa for wife. Can you write down five things, good things that you can think about your wife right now? Or five bad things, which is easier? See, that shows our nature.

You discover yourself. You can write immediately five bad things that you know in your partner. But five good things, you've got to scratch your head and say, yeah, in 1985 I remember he did something ... It's sad.

It's because we have not developed the habit of appreciation. Can you tell me something good in your children? I don't mean they're coming first in the class, forget that. Something good in your children? Oh, there's nothing good in them? You know, we have to learn to be thankful.

Paul was thankful for the Corinthians. Jesus, you read the letters that Jesus wrote to the seven churches in Revelation. Five of them were bad.

And some of them, one or two of them were so bad he couldn't find anything good in there, but at least three of them, before he rebuked them for what was wrong, he told them, yeah, there are some good things in you. I appreciate your patience and your work and your labor and you put out the false apostles and all that, but you left your first love. And even to that Sardis fellow, you got a name that you're alive.

I can't find anything good in you. You are dead, but there are some people in your church who walk with me in white. He found something good even there.

It's amazing that that's how Jesus is. We are so afraid to express appreciation because, oh, his head will get all puffed up. But Jesus wasn't afraid like that.

When he looked at Nathanael, he could say, there's a man in whom there's no guile. I spoke about that last Sunday. And what had Nathanael said in the previous verse in Luke chapter 1 when somebody said, Jesus has come.

Somebody from Nazareth, that red light area, you think anything good can come from there? That's what Nathanael said about Jesus. What did Jesus say about Nathanael in return to that? Oh, there's an Israelite in whom there's no guile. I want to be like Jesus.

I don't want to be like Nathanael. What are you like? Are you like Nathanael or are you like Jesus? Can you say something good about some fellow who says, ah, that fellow there's nothing good in him. That's exactly what Nathanael said about Jesus.

Nothing good in him. But Jesus said, that's okay, I find something good in you. There's no guile in you.

Boy, I love that. I'm thrilled when I see Jesus. I say, Lord, I want to be like you.

Unfortunately, as a human being, I'm like Nathanael. I don't see good in anybody. But you see good even in the people who don't see any good in you.

Can you imagine someone not seeing good in Jesus? I tell you, we have a lot to learn. This balance is so tilted in the wrong direction. We need to level it off by learning to appreciate.

And not just keep it in our mind, but express it. But you say, Jesus, are you going to appreciate this unconverted fellow who doesn't even appreciate you? Yeah, but there's something good in him. And I tell you, that appreciation brought that man to become a disciple of Jesus.

Think of that Roman centurion in Matthew chapter 8. That guy was a godless, idol-worshipping fellow who knew nothing about the Bible, never went to a synagogue. He was a good man in many ways, but he was just a heathen. But he had a respect for Jesus.

And he knew that Jesus had tremendous power. And he said, Lord, you just speak a word, my servant 25 miles away will be healed immediately. And Jesus said, I tell you, I have never seen faith like this in all of Israel.

I tell you, if I heard words like that from Jesus, that would have made my day. It would have made my life. I'd have framed it up and put it up my house for the rest of my life.

And I believe that you will see that Roman centurion in heaven. I believe I'll see him there because Jesus appreciated him. You can draw many people into God's kingdom.

You can change your difficult son and daughter by appreciating them. Instead of always saying, you're good for nothing, you never do anything right, nothing good will come out of you. You've said that for so many years.

Now just stop that. Same song, next verse, same song, next verse. Let's change the song now.

Let's sing another song now. Why go on in the same song, next verse? Let's change the song. And go back to your children and say, hey, you know, I really see something good in you.

And tell them the truth. Don't flatter them to get some advantage from them. Tell them the truth.

And you see, mark my words, you'll see a change in them. A word of appreciation does wonders. I really believe we need to develop this habit because we haven't got it.

Think of that woman who came because his daughter had a demon. Jesus said to her, because of this saying, the demon has gone out of your daughter. She was a heathen too.

He was so quick to appreciate. Simon, you're a rock. Blessed are you.

You got revelation that nobody else got. All these fellows with their Bible knowledge, Anas and Caiaphas didn't get it. Simon, you got it that I am the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

He publicly appreciated. He did not have this fear that most of us have. Oh, he may get all puffed up if we say that his head will get bloated up.

I tell you, one mark of the carnality of many people I've seen is they are so miserly when it comes to appreciation. Most of us are tremendous misers when it comes to expressing appreciation. Can you think of somebody who said a word of appreciation about you? How you don't forget it even after many years? Why don't you do that to somebody else? How many of you seek to encourage these little children who go around here with a word of encouragement, a word of appreciation? It's something we need to develop a habit in our homes, in our churches.

And words of encouragement. I remember about 25 years ago. No, not 25.

35 years ago or a little over 30 years ago, I switched from the King James Version, which I had used for the previous 12, 13, 14 years to the New American Standard Bible, which came out in 1971. Before that, I was using the King James Version. And you know, something happened to me.

You can think all translations are the same, but I tell you I thank God for this translation. Because for 12, 13 years, I had read Hebrews chapter 3 verse 13 like this. What is Hebrews 3, 13? Exhort one another every day so that none of you get hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

I read that for 13 years. And I did my best to exhort people every day until they got sick and tired of me. Exhort one another so that they don't get hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

And then one day, I switched to the NASB. And I read in the same verse, encourage one another every day. Oh ho! That's what the Greek word means, is it? This terrible King James Version led me astray for

so many years.

It actually means encourage one another. I thank God I switched. I said, that's what I need to do.

But I didn't really see it immediately because many years after I got the NASB, I saw this and I said, that's what I've got to do. That's what will save people from being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. So, encourage one another while it is still called today.

Because one day, there'll be no more today. It's over. Christ has come.

So what should I do to you? Exhort you or encourage you? What do you want to do? Which version do you prefer? Are you a King James Version fan or are you an NASB fan? That'll reveal your nature. I'll tell you that. What do you do to your wife? King James Version or NASB? What do you do to your husband? King James Version or NASB? You may use the NASB.

When it comes to your husband, King James Version. Or your wife, King James Version. We like to exhort people.

We just love it. There's something in human nature that loves that verse. Oh boy! That's my favorite verse.

Exhort your wife every day. Exhort your husband every day. Change your version, my brother, sister.

This is what it really means. Encourage one another and they will not get hardened. With all your exhortation, the poor partner is still hardened, right? Try this version now and see if it doesn't work.

Jesus encouraged people. He appreciated. He was grateful.

We need to appreciate. We need to say thank you. We need to encourage.

Every day say something to encourage somebody and you'll find a difference. You know, I was looking at these verses in Acts of the Apostles where it says in Acts 13 and verse 15 when Paul was in one place in a synagogue after the reading the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue officials came and said, brethren, if you have any word of exhortation, I'm sorry to say the NASB slipped up here, word of exhortation, people say it. And I looked up the Good News Bible and what these elders were saying to this Paul was, if you have a word of encouragement for this church, get up and say it.

I like that verse. I want to say to all of you, brothers and sisters, if you have a word of encouragement for your church, get up and say it. Acts 13 verse 15 and in future, whenever you come across the word exhortation in any version, read it as encourage.

Encourage me. It will revolutionize your life. I tell you.

I read through Acts of the Apostles in different places where it says they gave a message to the churches, these people wrote a message to the churches and they went around in Acts 15 to give this congregation and Acts 15 31, they read it, they rejoiced because of the encouragement. It was an exhortation but became an encouragement. In Good News Bible, I found in every place it's translated as encouragement, encouragement, encouragement.

That's great. So I decided wherever I read exhortation, I'm going to get rid of this Adamic nature that wants to exhort everybody. I want the Christ nature that wants to encourage people.

You know this verse which says God is a God of exhortation or encouragement. Tell me, do you want a God of encouragement or a God of exhortation? I know what I want. Acts 15, it says sorry, not Acts 15 1, 2 Corinthians 1 2 Corinthians 1 it says the God of all encouragement 2 Corinthians 1, 3 who encourages us the word comfort is also encouraged by the way in all our affliction and just by the way it's the same word used for the Holy Spirit Parakletos, Paraklesis in the Greek, it means somebody who comes alongside you.

I like that. Somebody who comes alongside you and by the way, it's the same word used in 1 John 2, 1 we have an advocate with the father. Do you have an accuser, an exhorter there or an advocate? An advocate, it's the same word.

Be an advocate for one another. Exhort one another, encourage one another. Be an advocate for that brother to fight his cause.

But many people stand in the pulpit and they are prosecutors. You! You! Let's turn and become advocates. Jesus is not a prosecutor.

He's an advocate for people who sin. Thank God, I don't want Jesus as a prosecutor in heaven. I want an advocate.

What about you? Do you want to be like Jesus? Accuser, the devil or advocate Jesus? Have a choice. I know what I've chosen. Let's pray.

Let's pray, Lord, that which I do not know, teach me. That which I do not have, give me. Change my nature, Lord.

This Adamic nature that's stuck so close to me that makes life miserable for people around me, in my home, in the church. Make me an encourager from today. Make me like Barnabas, a son of encouragement.

Help me, Lord. Bring a balance in my life. I've exhorted enough for a lifetime.

Let me spend the rest of my life encouraging people. Thank you, Father. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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