

## On thanksgiving.

*D E Wasake Esq.*

*June 2019*

### Basics

This article covers:

- Basics: Why thanksgiving really matters ;
- Next generation: Examples from the bible (and science) on why its good to give thanks; and
- Your turn: Next steps to help you start getting your praise on.

Not too long after I got saved in April 2017, I was under watch. Joel used to observe me at my church ([lighthouse church Jersey](#)). He was in my Life Group but he asked himself “Why doesn’t this chap ever praise and worship?” I would go to church and then just stand silent throughout the praise and worship. I didn’t clap or dance or raise my voice to sing. I could have passed for a column in the church!

A few months later things changed, I was clapping like those weird happy clappy Christian people I had wondered about all the years. I become one of them!

#### ***So What changed?***

God gave me a crash course on praise, worship and thanksgiving. It unfolded like this.

So, I realised I didn’t really know how to pray so I prayed to God to teach me how to pray. I remember hearing his voice as clear as I could hear you.

I heard one word: “Psalms!”

The Great King himself has since taught me how to pray and in the process, as a bonus how to give thanks!

I now often start my daily devotional by singing a song (or listening to a song) and then reading a psalm or two. These help my heart get prepared to encounter My Lord and My God.

You see the psalms are the prayer book of the bible but they are full of thanksgiving - whether there is heaven or hell, whether there is summer or winter. In fact, you will find a seasoned Christian praising and giving thanks to God in all circumstances. Why?

Walls – physical and spiritual come down when we praise. The enemy is defeated when we give thanks to God.

- The walls of Jericho came tumbling down when the priests led people around them 7 times, and gave a shout to God. *Joshua 6: 1 – 27*



- The choir of Judah defeated three impossibly large armies that had assembled to destroy them. What was their strategic battle cry? A psalm which says: Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever. *2 Chronicles 20:21 NIV*
- Gideon and 300 men defeated a Midianite army with trumpets, torches and jars after they shouted: "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" *Judges 7: 15 - 23*

When you praise - the One, the High and Mighty God - he is present where there is praise and thanksgiving - He comes down from Heaven to hear the prayers of his people when they are thankful and when he is present – the enemy must bow down. The enemy must fall. Where he is – there is joy, there is peace, there is love, and there is all sorts of good things! So wouldn't you like to have God present all the time? Wouldn't you like to dwell in his courts all your life? If so, get your praise on - and this starts with learning what it means to give thanks.

## Lessons for our generation: How did people in the bible praise (worship) and give thanks?

It is easy to praise and give thanks when things are going good – but when things are going bad, how do you praise? Here are just a few examples to inspire you.

**Job.** Job was a wealthy man. The bible says: "*He had seven sons and three daughters. He owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 teams of oxen, and 500 female donkeys. He also had many servants. He was, in fact, the richest person in that entire area.*"<sup>i</sup>

Now as an accountant, let me help you put that wealth into perspective. As an example, here in Chicago where I am at present, a sheep on average weighs 200 pounds and in a supermarket lamb costs about \$10/lb. Which means each sheep is worth about \$2,000. The 7,000 sheep Job owned were therefore worth \$14,000,000 (7,000 \* \$2,000). So he was quite wealthy!

Then disaster happened to him. He lost all his property and his children in a single day! So as an example, from just the sheep alone, he lost \$14m!

You know what he did shortly after? The bible says:

*"Job stood up and tore his robe in grief. Then he shaved his head and fell to the ground to worship. He said, "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The Lord gave me what I had, and the Lord has taken it away. Praise the name of the Lord!"*"<sup>ii</sup>

Job praised God the day he lost everything. Not counting the loss of children. He gave thanks.

**David.** David was at a spiritual high. He had been anointed to be the next King by the Prophet Samuel (1 Sam 16). And then disaster struck, the present King, Saul got jealous and eventually David had to run for his life. During this period of running and hiding, he however wrote a number of psalms.

1. **He run to town of Nob - to Ahimelech the priest**, there Saul's Chief Herdsman Doeg betrayed him 1 (Sam 21:1-7). God rescued him and in thanks he wrote **Psalms 52**. Parts of it go thus:

*Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin:  
He will snatch you up and pluck you from your tent;  
he will uproot you from the land of the living.*

*But I am like an olive tree  
flourishing in the house of God;*

*I trust in God's unfailing love  
for ever and ever.  
For what you have done I will always praise you  
in the presence of your faithful people.  
And I will hope in your name,  
for your name is good.*

2. **Then he run to King Achish of Gath.** When he realised he was in danger, he pretended to be mad (1 Sam 21: 10-15). He survived to write **Psalm 34** about the incidence. This psalm starts thus:

*I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth (KJV).*

3. **Next he runs to the cave of Adullam** (1 Sam 22. 1-4). This experience likely inspired him to write **Psalm 57**, likely also **Psalm 142. 3**. Psalm 57: 7- 8 say this:

*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.  
Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.  
I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.*

4. **Eventually he run to the Ziphite country** - in the wilderness and even there he is betrayed (1 Sam 23. 19-21). God rescued him again and he wrote **Psalm 54**.

Save me, O God, by your name;  
vindicate me by your might.  
Hear my prayer, O God;  
listen to the words of my mouth.

**I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you;  
I will praise your name, Lord, for it is good.  
You have delivered me from all my troubles,  
and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.**

**Paul.** Paul in his short letter to the Colossians (only 4 chapters) is equally quite positive in his letter even if he is in jail. In the letter, he speaks of giving thanks over and over, I count at least 7 times he speaks of giving thanks!

### **1. Give thanks to God for your salvation.**

“May you be made strong with all the strength which comes from his glorious power, so that you may be able to endure everything with patience. **And with joy give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to have your share of what God has reserved for his people in the kingdom of light.**”  
*Colossians 1:11-12 GNT*

### **2. Be happy in suffering**

“And now **I am happy about my sufferings** for you, for by means of my physical sufferings I am helping to complete what still remains of Christ's sufferings on behalf of his body, the church.” *Colossians 1:24 GNT*

### 3. Be filled with thanksgiving

“Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, live in union with him. **Keep your roots deep in him, build your lives on him, and become stronger in your faith, as you were taught. And be filled with thanksgiving.**” *Colossians 2:6-7 GNT*

### 4. Thankfulness is a quality you are learning from Christ.

“You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. **So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.** Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. **And to all these qualities add love,** which binds all things together in perfect unity. The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one body. **And be thankful.**” *Colossians 3:12-15 GNT*

### 5. Show thankfulness by learning to sing to God

“Christ's message in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct one another with all wisdom. **Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving** in your hearts.” *Colossians 3:16 GNT*

### 6. Do or say everything - with thanksgiving

“**Everything you do or say,** then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, **as you give thanks** through him to God the Father.” *Colossians 3:17 GNT*

### 7. In prayer, be persistent – but give thanks

“Be persistent in prayer, and keep alert as you pray, **giving thanks to God.**” *Colossians 4:2 GNT*

Can you imagine, it is after all the thanksgiving that at end of this letter Paul finally says: “Do not forget my chains!<sup>iiii</sup>”

I wonder if our generation can learn this!

## The science of giving thanks (our generation)

Reputable news sources say there are countless benefits to having an attitude of giving thanks.

#### Some of these benefits include<sup>iv</sup>:

- **You can make yourself new friends.** Thanking a new acquaintance makes them more likely to seek an ongoing relationship.
- **It improves your health.** Grateful people experience less aches and pains.
- **It improves your mental health.** Gratitude reduces a multitude of toxic emotions, ranging from envy and resentment to frustration and regret.
- Gratitude reduces aggression.
- Grateful people sleep better.

#### Some of the more surprising benefits include<sup>v</sup>:

- It could help stop you from overeating;

- It can ease depression.

### **How about preventing narcissism the New N word of our generation?**

Kids these days! They say this generation is increasingly self-absorbed – or rather narcissistic.<sup>vi</sup>

Well, If the science doesn't scare you or motivate you to change. The bible gives you a motivation/warning based on the story of a narcissist leader called Herod. This is what the bible says about him:

*“The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, “It’s the voice of a god, not of a man!” Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness, because he accepted the people’s worship instead of giving the glory to God. So he was consumed with worms and died.” Acts of the Apostles 12:22-23 NLT*

So, praising God can help you recognise that it's not about me me me (the hallmark of our narcissistic generation) and so avoid Herod's sin! For the glory belongs to God – not yourself or other men.

And speaking of receiving praise, here is a revelation **God showed me as I was writing the article:**

Receiving thanks is a test!

*“Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but a person is tested by being praised.” Proverbs 27:21 NLT*

So you see, rather than being self-absorbed, like Herod and seeking to praise yourself or receiving praise from others, don't fail the test but rather train yourself to instead give glory to God. This gratitude has a benefit in this life time (science proves it) and in the next.

### **Reasons to praise (and give thanks)**

A reputable source says this about reasons to give thanks:

*“Without gratefulness, we become arrogant and self-centered. We begin to believe that we have achieved everything on our own. Thankfulness keeps our hearts in right relationship to the Giver of all good gifts. Giving thanks also reminds us of how much we do have. Human beings are prone to covetousness. We tend to focus on what we don't have. By giving thanks continually we are reminded of how much we do have. When we focus on blessings rather than wants, we are happier. When we start thanking God for the things we usually take for granted, our perspective changes. We realize that we could not even exist without the merciful blessings of God.*

*Giving thanks to God keeps our hearts in right relationship with Him and saves us from a host of harmful emotions and attitudes that will rob us of the peace God wants us to experience (Philippians 4:6–7).<sup>vii</sup>”*

How do you be thankful at all times? The trick the Lord shows speaking through Paul is to be content with your lot in life - in good times and bad times. In palaces or in poverty.

You recognise that you have not been given equal talents and so success is not surpassing your brother but faithfully dealing with what you have been given.

Evil people do not remember to give thanks.

**Here are some reasons to give thanks. Things I have learnt.**

#### **1. it's a command:**

Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Philippians 4: 4(KJV)

## **2. God is great and worthy of praise:**

“The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength. Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O LORD, The floods have lifted up their voice; The floods lift up their waves. The LORD on high is mightier Than the noise of many waters, Than the mighty waves of the sea. Your testimonies are very sure; Holiness adorns Your house, O LORD, forever.” Psalms 93:1-5 NKJV

## **3. God is really good, so Praise our God of plenty**

“What a rich harvest your goodness provides! Wherever you go there is plenty. The pastures are filled with flocks; the hillsides are full of joy. The fields are covered with sheep; the valleys are full of wheat. Everything shouts and sings for joy.” Psalm 65:11-13 GNT

## **4. God takes care of the vulnerable, so give thanks!**

“Sing to God, sing praises to his name; prepare a way for him who rides on the clouds. His name is the Lord —be glad in his presence! God, who lives in his sacred Temple, cares for orphans and protects widows. He gives the lonely a home to live in and leads prisoners out into happy freedom, but rebels will have to live in a desolate land.” Psalm 68:4-6 GNT

## **5. Praise God who lifts burdens**

“Praise the Lord, who carries our burdens day after day; he is the God who saves us. Our God is a God who saves; he is the Lord, our Lord, who rescues us from death.” Psalm 68:19-20 GNT

## **6. Thank him for being a God of mercy**

“O God, I will offer you what I have promised; I will give you my offering of thanksgiving, because you have rescued me from death and kept me from defeat. And so I walk in the presence of God, in the light that shines on the living.” Psalm 56:12-13 GNT

## **7. Praise (giving thanks) is a sacrifice or offering to God.**

Some people give money, some give gifts or offering - giving thanks as a form of praise is a sacrifice that pleases God

“One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD. Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, “Seek My face,” My heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will seek.”” Psalms 27:4-8 NKJV

## **Here is a good list of other reasons to be thankful to God<sup>viii</sup>**

- For the material blessings he gives you.
- For the people in your life.
- In the midst of trials and persecution – for he is faithful.
- For (especially) his gift of salvation in Christ.

- For his continued presence in your life.

**And here are even many more reasons to be grateful to God<sup>ix</sup>**

- For his precious word – the bible. *Jeremiah 15: 16*
- Because someday we will see him face to face. *1 John 3: 2*
- Because he is making us to become like Christ daily. *2 Corinthians 3: 18*
- Because of his constant protection. *Psalms 34: 7-8*
- For his constant guidance. *Psalms 32: 8*
- That he hears our prayers. *Matthew 7: 7*
- For health and strength. *3 John 1: 2*
- That he causes all things to work for our Good. *Romans 8: 28*

**Your turn.**

1. Write down a list of 52 things to be grateful for. Each week meditate on just one and thank God for it. That is enough gratefulness to last you a whole year.
2. What songs of praise and thanksgiving will you now download to help you learn to praise the Lord. Download the lyrics too. They help you see this clearly. Check out some of the ancient hymns, they are equally good.
3. Get a list of helpful verses to help you remember to be grateful. Here are some:  
<https://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/thankful-bible-verses/>

**Notes**

---

<sup>i</sup> Job 1:2-3 NLT

<sup>ii</sup> Job 1:20-21 NLT

<sup>iii</sup> Colossians 4: 18 (GNT)

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/amymorin/2014/11/23/7-scientifically-proven-benefits-of-gratitude-that-will-motivate-you-to-give-thanks-year-round/#36dfc2bb183c>

<sup>v</sup> <https://time.com/5026174/health-benefits-of-gratitude/>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/15/science/narcissism-teenagers.html>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/giving-thanks-to-God.html>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://billygraham.org/story/how-to-be-thankful-in-all-things/>

<sup>ix</sup> <https://theblazingcenter.com/2018/11/give-thanks-to-the-lord.html>