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The Power of Gratitude

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“in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

God does not ask us to be thankful for everything, but He calls us to be

thankful *in* everything. In his book, *The Happiness Advantage*, Shawn Achor sites a one-week study in which participants were asked to take five minutes to write down three things they were thankful for each day. What they were thankful for could be significant or minor; the only rule was they had to be concrete and specific. After one week the researchers were amazed by the results. This simple and succinct act of putting pen to paper to express thankfulness revealed participants were happier and had reduced levels of depression. What was even more remarkable was the lasting impact experienced well after the experiment was over. Researchers found participants were still happier, less anxious, and less depressed six months later. Who would've ever thought that the habit of expressing gratitude could impact your life six months from now?

It seems that when we are grateful our minds find it easier to search for the good things in our lives. Juxtapose the research with the apostle Paul's command to give thanks, and what we find is Paul encouraging believers to make tangible expressions of God's blessing; much like putting pen to paper. Some have incorrectly interpreted this verse to mean that God is asking us to thank Him *for* everything, including the things that have been harmful to us. But as we pay close attention to the verse, Paul does not say be thankful *for* everything but be thankful *in* everything. That means we may not be thankful *for* the trial, but we can be thankful *in* the trial.

As we practice gratitude, we can experience the joy that it brings to our lives, friends, family, campus, and wider community. Ellen White picks up on the power of practicing gratitude when she writes, “Gratitude deepens as we give it expression, and the joy it brings is life to soul and body.”^[1] In other words, the more we express gratitude the easier it gets and the more joy we will experience.

Reflect

How is it possible to give thanks to God *in* everything? What specific and tangible things are you most grateful as you look forward to Thanksgiving holidays? What you write down does not have to be a big thing, although it certainly can be. However, there is also a benefit found in sharing small things such as, “I'm thankful for the delicious Thai take-out dinner I had last night.” Or, “I'm thankful that my daughter gave me a hug.” Or, “I'm thankful that my friend complimented me.”

News and Resources

- Follow **@ministryandmissions** on Instagram for updates on events and programs as well as encouraging messages and [check out our website](#) for many new resources.
- If you are feeling anxious or have recently experienced loss or grief call 423.236.2782 to talk to a counselor on campus! (This is a free service for Southern students.)
- **Talk** with Chaplain [Anna Bennett](#) or [Joseph Khabbaz](#) if you need someone to pray with or have a desire to grow spiritually.
- Due to Thanksgiving break, there will be no Vespers this Friday night. See you at our next Vespers on **December 4th**.