

1 **Two Little Words**

- The difference two little words can do for not only others, but for ourselves as well.

2 **Scripture Text**

3 **"Now, what do you say?"**

- As it turns out our mothers were right.
- Remembering to say, "Thank-you," is not only polite but the right thing to do.
- I remember as a child that when anyone would give me a compliment, a gift, or extend some act of kindness towards me, my mother would say to me . . . "now, what do you say?"
- Thinking long and hard, I would finally say, "thank-you."
- I don't know about you, it is interesting to me that saying thank-you for children, doesn't come naturally.
- It is something that has to be taught.

4 **Recent Survey**

- A recently released 10-year study of 200,000 managers and employees revealed that saying "thank you" in the business world results in bigger profits.
- When people are thanked for what they do, they are more motivated, and often, their productivity improves.
- This, of course, translates into more dollars.
- What's more, those leaders who do the thanking often gain competitive advantage in the workplace because others like them and tend to support their projects.

5 **Thanksgivingly Challenged?**

- Not surprisingly, then, CEOs and managers are encouraged to find opportunities to thank everyone from interns and mailroom employees to those farther up the corporate ladder.
- There is even a recent article in which the author provides a list of 28 expressions of gratitude for those leaders who are too "thanksgivingly" challenged to come up with their own -- including such simple phrases as
 - "I'm truly grateful,"
 - "Your contribution is important," and
 - "You make my job so much easier."

6 **Effectiveness of Saying Thanks**

- Laying it all out like that makes it sound like nothing more than a business method, another practice to boost a company's bottom line
- But apparently not, there's something to all this thanksgiving, for it seems that the expressions of thanks do make the recipients feel good, even if the one extending them is doing it solely for strategic reasons.
- As long as it sounds sincere, it's effective.

7 **Just Do It!**

- We probably shouldn't be too judgmental about that, for some of us just don't naturally think to say thank you as often as we should (maybe our mothers didn't tweak our ears often enough!).
- So if a dutiful but somewhat mechanical practice can get us expressing thanks more often, that's a good thing.
- And perhaps it can also make us start being aware of when thanks should be given.
- Sometimes "Fake it till you make it" ain't all that bad.

8 **Apostle Paul**

- Consider Paul's letters as we have them in the New Testament.
- In the letter-writing conventions of Paul's day, it was common to include an expression of thanksgiving in the opening section of letters, and Paul did it in all of his epistles to churches, with the exception of one.
- The epistle to the Galatians.

9 **Apostle Paul**

- In that single case, it's likely that he was so distressed about problems in the Galatian church that he couldn't think of any basis for thanksgiving.
- But that single exception also suggests that when Paul did include a thanksgiving in a letter, he didn't do it as a matter of courtesy or routine, but only when he believed it was warranted.

10 **The Church at Thessalonica**

- Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians is an example the other way.
- In this letter, he not only includes a thanksgiving for the Thessalonian church members at the beginning (1:2-5), he also thanks God again for them halfway through the second chapter (2:13-16) and again in the third chapter (3:9-10), which is a lot, considering that there are only five chapters in the whole letter!
- As one commentator put it, "There is more thanksgiving here than interpreters know how to handle."

11 **Church Plant by Paul & Silas**

- Of course, Paul had a founder's interest in the church at Thessalonica, for he and Silas had planted it there on Paul's second missionary journey.
- In fact, in the letter, Paul compared his feelings for the Thessalonians to the compassion parents have for their children (see 2:7, 11).
- And Paul had reason to be proud of the Thessalonians.
- Paul and Silas had barely gotten the church started before they'd been run out of town by a jealous mob (Acts 17:5-9).
- Yet in those hostile surroundings, the church they launched continued and grew, and so Paul had much to thank God for on their behalf.

12 Imitators of Paul's Faith

- Their growth amid that hostile environment may be what Paul had in mind when he wrote in his thanksgiving,
- "And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia" (1:6-7).

13 Thanksgiving to God

- We should note that Paul's expressions of thanks are addressed not directly to the Thessalonians themselves, but to God on their behalf.
- Writing not only for himself, but also for Silas and Timothy (1:1), Paul says,
- "We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:2-3).
- No doubt, the Thessalonians would have heard that as a thank you to them as well.

14 Authentic Church

- We should also note that Paul is not saying he's thankful that the Thessalonians are nice people; he's much more specific about his reasons for thanking God for this church:
- He's thankful for their "work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope."
- In other words, Paul is thankful to God that among the Thessalonians there are believers whose faith is sincere, genuine, and authentic.
- They're not people whose faith is merely abstract, but something that comes from a strong conviction that God watches over His word to perform it.

15 Encourages Good Behavior

- Of course, letting someone know you're thankful for something they have done or some attitude they exemplify has another effect as well:
 - It encourages the person to continue in that way.
 - That's certainly part of what's behind the move to say thank you in the workplace, and very likely Paul has that goal in mind as he lavishes praise on the Thessalonians; he wants them to keep on living their faith wholeheartedly.
- So then, when we show gratitude, it not only acknowledges our appreciation, but encourages others to continue their generosity.
- Another thing that showing gratitude does is that it effects our own attitudes and feelings of well-being.

16 Benefits of Gratitude

- According to Michael Craig Miller M.D., of the Harvard Medical School, being thankful and showing gratitude leads to stronger and greater happiness.
 - It helps people to have more positive emotions.
 - It helps people to relish good experiences.
 - It improves their health.
 - It helps people deal with adversity.
 - It helps people build strong relationships.
- Again, according to Dr. Miller, most studies published on this topic support an association between gratitude and an individual's well-being.

17 **The How of Happiness**

- In her book, *The How of Happiness*, Sonja Lyubomirsky, lists 8 benefits of gratitude and why saying “thanks” is about more than politeness.
 - Increases positive emotion
 - Protects from negative emotion
 - Helps with coping with stress
 - Better Relationships
 - Deeper Spiritual life
 - Better Physical health
 - Increases social good
 - Maximizes enjoyment of the good.

18 **How To Cultivate Gratitude**

- Gratitude helps people refocus on what they have instead of what they lack. And, although it may feel contrived at first, this mental state grows stronger with use and practice. See list below . . .
 - Tell people how much you appreciate them. Write them a note, give them a call, or take them out to lunch.
 - Focus on the good that people do not the bad.
 - Keep a journal on how others have blessed you.
 - Pray for those who are a blessing to you.
 - And make sure you always address God with praise and thanksgiving when you pray.

19 **Give Thanks to the LORD**

- Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. (Psa 106:1 NIV) [NOTE: 51 times in the book of Psalm, the writer says this.]

- Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. (Psa 107:8 NIV) [x5]
- But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:57 NIV)
- . . . always giving thanks to God the Father for everything . . . (Eph 5:20 NIV)
- And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col 3:17 NIV)

20 Give Thanks to the LORD

- I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength. (1 Tim 1:12 NIV)
- Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. (Eph 5:4 NIV)
- Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Phil 4:6 NIV)

21 The Cup of Thanksgiving

- When we partake of communion tonight, we are participating in the “cup of thanksgiving.”
- While it is a memorial of Jesus’ death, it is also a celebration of our salvation in His blood, and redemption through His broken body.
- When we participate in this memorial we are not only giving thanks to God for sending His Son, but exercising good spiritual help on ourselves as well.
- Everyone who is thankful to God and others, finds more to be thankful about.