How to Regain a Grateful Spirit

Gratefulness vs. Unthankfulness

A Four-Part Teaching Series

TEACHING PURPOSE

The goal is not simply to teach people to say, "Thank You."

The goal is to help us understand that **thanksgiving is an expression of what is happening within us**.

The teaching repeatedly develops this progression:

Receiving → Gratefulness → Thankfulness

The teaching begins with the observation that when expectations are fulfilled, gratefulness can arise and be expressed through thanksgiving. Conversely, unfulfilled expectations can contribute to an ungrateful spirit and expressions of unthankfulness.

PART 1 — UNDERSTANDING THE GRATEFUL SPIRIT

Consider the following several statements:

- "Didn't you say you were taking me to the airport today?"
- "I thought we were going to the party. You promised!"
- "Didn't you say you would help with that project?"
- "Didn't you say you were going to make a change in your life with God's help?"

The purpose of these statements is to show what happens when **expectations are not fulfilled**. A person expected something, did not receive it, and consequently expressed unthankfulness.

The teaching material makes an important distinction:

The problem is not merely what happened externally. The issue is what happened internally.

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Key Statement

A grateful spirit is from within, and we express it through thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving is therefore not merely a holiday activity.

It is an **expression of the heart**.

THE FOUNDATION: HEBREWS 12:28

Your teaching centers on Hebrews 12:28:

"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe." — RSV

The order is significant:

We receive → we become grateful → we offer acceptable worship.

The teaching emphasizes that gratefulness comes first and then acceptable service or worship follows.

Teaching Point

Ask a congregation:

What have I received?

- What has God done for me?
- What has God provided?
- Who has God placed in my life?
- What promises has God given me?
- What has someone else done that has benefited my life?

Then ask:

Have I made it known?

The definition of gratefulness is:

"Making known to God and others in what ways they have benefited my life."

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PART 2 — EXPECTATIONS CAN AFFECT OUR SPIRIT

Proverbs 13:12

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.” — RSV

The teaching connects **expectation** with anticipation of something to be received. When an expectation is continually delayed, the heart can become wounded, tired, or discouraged. When an expectation is fulfilled, it can bring refreshing and renewed life.

Ask:

What am I expecting?

Then go deeper:

1. Do my expectations match God's expectations?
2. Are my expectations realistic?
3. Have I taken my expectations to God?
4. Am I spending time with the One who fulfills my expectations?
5. What is God expecting from me?
6. What am I expecting from others?

The teaching repeatedly brings us back to this principle:

Broken expectations can produce a sick heart.

GIVE YOUR EXPECTATIONS TO GOD

Psalm 62:5–8

“My soul, wait silently for God alone,
For my expectation is from Him…”

The teaching defines waiting as holding **peace, rest, and calm** while we wait.

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Teaching Question

Where does my expectation come from?

If my expectation comes primarily from **what I want people to do**, disappointment can dominate my spirit.

But when my expectation is brought before God, I can learn to wait, trust, and remain thankful.

PART 3 — ALIGNING OUR EXPECTATIONS WITH GOD

The teaching then moves from:

"What do I expect?"

to:

"What does God expect?"

Micah 6:8

God's requirements are presented as:

- Do justice.
- Love kindness.
- Walk humbly with God.

The teaching material instructs us that when our lives are brought into harmony with God's expectations, gratefulness can be manifested and thanksgiving expressed.

2 Corinthians 5:15

The believer is challenged to move away from living simply to please self and toward living to please Christ.

Key Question

Am I trying to get God to fit my expectations, or am I allowing God to shape my expectations?

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THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

The Potter illustration.

The teaching connects several passages:

- Isaiah 29:16
- Isaiah 45:9
- Isaiah 64:8
- Jeremiah 18:4–6

The central picture is simple:

The Potter has His hands on the clay.

The teaching emphasizes staying close to God so that He can form us according to His design.

Powerful Teaching Statement

Sometimes our unthankfulness is connected to wanting God to build our life according to our plan instead of allowing Him to shape us according to His plan.

PART 4 — EIGHT APPLICATIONS FOR REGAINING A GRATEFUL SPIRIT

This is where the teaching becomes practical.

The teaching gives **eight applications**.

1. GO BACK

Go back to your thinking.

Examine your life and identify promises, commitments, responsibilities, or actions that remain unfinished.

1 Samuel 2:3
2 Corinthians 13:5

Ask:

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“Is there something I said I would do that I need to do?”

Don't merely feel bad about it.

Take action.

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2. REPENT

Repent of ungrateful attitudes toward God and others.

The teaching describes repentance as a **bridge back to restoration** and connects it with confession and forsaking wrong attitudes.

Proverbs 28:13

Repentance is not simply saying, “I was wrong.”

It is turning around and moving in a different direction.

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3. ASK FOR PRAYER

Some people may have a wounded spirit.

The material connects this with:

- James 5:13–18
- Psalm 23:3
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24

The emphasis is restoration.

God desires our spirit, soul, and body to function according to His purposes.

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4. WRITE OUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Don't allow expectations to continually roll around in your mind.

Write them down.

Then pray over them.

Ask:

“Does this expectation agree with God's Word?”

The teaching connects this practice with Jeremiah 30:1–2 and the study of God's Word.

Remember:

Wrong thoughts can destroy good expectations.

Therefore:

Destroy the wrong thought and replace it with God's Word.

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5. MAKE FAITH STATEMENTS

The teaching material gives examples such as:

“My spirit has been restored back to a grateful spirit.”

“Because of my grateful spirit I express thankfulness toward God and others.”

“My expectations come from God.”

“By faith I daily will adjust my expectations.”

“I destroy bad thoughts and replace them with God's Word.”

The teaching connects these statements with Romans 10:9–10 and the relationship between believing in the heart and confessing with the mouth.

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Teaching Point

What we continually believe and speak matters.

Therefore, don't continually rehearse:

“Nobody appreciates me.”

Instead, bring your thinking back to what God's Word says.

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5. COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE BENEFITED YOUR LIFE

Don't assume people know you appreciate them.

Tell them.

The teaching material gives several ways:

- In person
- By phone
- Email
- Other forms of communication

It also connects grateful communication with **attentiveness**—giving someone undivided attention to their words and emotions.

Ask a congregation:

Who has benefited your life?

Now ask:

Have you told them?

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6. LEARN TO LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME

This section connects directly with **Matthew 6:25–34**.

Planning is necessary.

But constantly living in tomorrow can create a continual stream of unfulfilled expectations.

The teaching material makes this practical:

When we notice ourselves becoming unthankful, we should examine whether we have gone too far into the future with our expectations.

Key Statement

Be thankful for what God has done rather than becoming unthankful because of what has not yet happened.

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7. ENGRAFT GOD'S WORD INTO YOUR SOUL

This is the final application.

The teaching uses the illustration of **grafting**.

A graft joins one plant part with another so that the desired characteristics can become part of the growing plant. The teaching material uses this as an illustration of **engrafting God's Word into our lives**.

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Spiritual Application

The target is not simply hearing God's Word. The target is having God's Word become part of how we think, live, respond, and grow.

The teaching material recommends memorizing **Psalm 62:5–8** as part of this process.

THE THREEFOLD WEAPON AGAINST WORRY

Now the teaching comes to a powerful practical conclusion.

Philippians 4:6–8

The teaching material identifies three connected weapons:

1. PRAYER

Bring the matter to God.

2. SUPPLICATION

Make the specific request known.

3. THANKSGIVING

Approach God with a thankful heart.

The stated result is **peace**—God's peace guarding the heart and mind.

The Process

Prayer + Supplication + Thanksgiving → Peace

And the teaching makes this observation:

Thanksgiving is one part of the threefold weapon against worry.

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WHY IS THERE THANKSGIVING?

This is an excellent congregational question.

Ask:

“Why is there an expression of thanksgiving?”

The teaching answer:

Because of a grateful spirit.

And again:

Giving → Receiving → Gratefulness → Thanksgiving

The teaching Part Four material reinforces this through Psalm 69:30, Psalm 95:2, Psalm 107:22, Colossians 4:2, Revelation 7:9–12, and other passages expressing thanksgiving.

THE FINAL HEART CHECK

Now slow down.

Don't rush through this section.

Examine yourself.

Am I becoming more grateful or more ungrateful?

What expectations have I placed on other people?

What expectations have I placed on God?

What expectations have I placed on myself?

What has God already done that I have failed to acknowledge?

Who has benefited my life that I have failed to thank?

What unfulfilled expectation is affecting my attitude?

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What thought needs to be destroyed and replaced with God's Word?

What do I need to repent of?

Who do I need to communicate with?

What do I need to give back to God?

THE CENTRAL MESSAGE

This four-part teaching comes together with this progression:

EXPECTATION

↓

RECEIVING

↓

GRATEFULNESS

↓

THANKSGIVING

↓

WORSHIP

↓

PEACE

↓

LIFE CHANGE

But there is another possible progression:

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UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS

↓

DISAPPOINTMENT

↓

UNGRATEFUL SPIRIT

↓

UNTHANKFULNESS

↓

WORRY

↓

DISTURBED HEART

The answer presented throughout the teaching is not simply:

“Try harder to be thankful.”

It is:

Return to God. Examine yourself. Adjust your expectations. Repent where necessary. Take action. Replace wrong thinking with God's Word. Communicate appreciation. Live one day at a time. Engraft God's Word into your life.

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CONCLUSION — REGAINING A GRATEFUL SPIRIT

The final emphasis of this teaching is that **life change takes time**.

The teaching material specifically compares this process to eating a meal: God's Word needs time to be digested, applied, and developed into growth.

So, this is not simply a **Thanksgiving Day message**.

It is a **way of living**.

Final Declaration

I will examine my expectations.
I will bring my expectations to God.
I will repent of ungrateful attitudes.
I will take action where action is needed.
I will communicate appreciation.
I will live one day at a time.
I will replace wrong thoughts with God's Word.
I will engraft God's Word into my life.
I will allow God to shape me as the Potter shapes the clay.
I will maintain a grateful spirit and express it through thanksgiving.

Closing Scripture

Philippians 4:6–7

Pray.
Make your requests known.
Give thanks.
And allow God's peace to guard your heart and mind.

The goal is not merely to hear another sermon and go home unchanged.

The goal is life change.

That concluding emphasis comes directly from your Part Three/Part Four material: take time to digest God's Word, apply it, and grow so that we become more like Christ and glorify the Father.

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Teaching Title for the Complete Series

HOW TO REGAIN A GRATEFUL SPIRIT

Gratefulness vs. Unthankfulness

A Four-Part Teaching on Expectations, Thanksgiving, and Life Change

Click here. Main resource.

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A Four-Part Teaching Series
(Gratefulness vs. Unthankfulness)

PART 1 Understanding the Grateful Spirit

1. Didn't you say you were taking me to the airport today?
2. I thought we were going to the party? You promised!
3. Didn't you say you would help with that project?
4. Didn't you say you were going to make a change in your life with God's help? You said you would go to church for prayer and instruction but still no change.

These are things people speak when someone does not fulfill what they said they would do.

A grateful spirit is from within, and we express it through thanksgiving.

PART 2 Expectations Can Affect Our Spirit

Proverbs 13:12
"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life."
RSV



- Expectations give us hope.
- Unfulfilled expectations can lead to an ungrateful spirit and unthankfulness.
- When an expectation is fulfilled it brings life and refreshment.

Ask Yourself:
- What am I expecting?
- Do my expectations match God's expectations?
- Are my expectations realistic?
- Have I taken my expectations to God?
- What is God expecting from me?

PART 3 Aligning Our Expectations with God

Micah 6:8
"He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."
ESV

2 Corinthians 5:15
"And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."
ESV



The Potter and the Clay

Isaiah 64:8
"But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand."
ESV

PART 4 Eight Applications for Regaining a Grateful Spirit

1	**Go Back** — Examine your life and take action on what you said you would do.	1 Samuel 2:3 2 Corinthians 13:5
2	**Repent** — Turn from ungrateful attitudes.	Proverbs 28:13
3	**Ask for Prayer** — Receive restoration for a wounded spirit.	James 5:13–18
4	**Write Out Your Expectations** — Put them before God and check them with His Word.	Jeremiah 30:1–2
5	**Make Faith Statements** — Speak and believe what God's Word says.	Romans 10:9–10
6	**Communicate Appreciation** — Tell people who have benefited your life.	Colossians 4:2
7	**Live One Day at a Time** — Be thankful for today.	Matthew 6:25–34
8	**Engraft God's Word into Your Soul** — Let God's Word become part of your life.	Psalm 62:5–8

The Threefold Weapon Against Worry

Philippians 4:6–8

1. **Prayer** — Bring the matter to God.
2. **Supplication** — Make your specific request known.
3. **Thanksgiving** — Approach God with a thankful heart.

Result: Peace
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:7

Why Is There Thanksgiving?

Because of a Grateful Spirit.

Giving → Receiving → Gratefulness → Thanksgiving → Worship → Peace → Life Change

Final Heart Check

- ☐ Am I becoming more grateful or more ungrateful?
- ☐ What expectations have I placed on others?
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