

Colossians 3:15-17  
Be Thankful  
WRCOB 11.24.19

Two grandparents took their grandson, age 3  
To Chuck E. Cheese's for a birthday party.

When the evening ended  
His grandmother buckled him into his car seat and said  
"Now be sure you say thank you to Grandpa."

Silence. No reaction.

She said again, "Did you hear me?  
Be sure you say thank you to Grandpa."

Again, silence.

The grandfather tried to ignore the backseat conversation.

But couldn't help himself and said,  
"You know, Grandpa enjoys doing nice things  
For grandchildren  
Especially when they say thank you."

Nothing.

"Did you hear Grandpa?" the grandfather asked  
Now a tad irritated.

"Yes." But no thank you.

"Are you ignoring me?" The volume of his voice amped up.

Finally this: "I'm thankful, Grandpa;  
I just don't want to say it."

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Having someone say "thank you"  
For something you've done, feels good.

But did you know that it also benefits the one who says it?

Studies show that the habit of saying "thank you"  
Increases one's awareness of the blessings around them.

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Be thankful.

This is the Apostle Paul's advice to the church at Colosse

It's a bit curious to me that Paul felt a need to do that.

In each of the three verses in our Scripture Lesson today  
Paul tells the Colossians to be thankful.

### **Colossians 3:15-17 (NRSV)**

**<sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. **And be thankful.** <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; **and with gratitude** in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** to God the Father through him.**

Interesting.

Could it be that the Apostle Paul  
Was gently admonishing them  
Saying remember to give thanks?

Because they were in fact not thankful?

Consider the implications.

These Colossians were first generation Christian  
Just years from the events surrounding Jesus Christ.

They were new Christians filled with the Spirit  
Converted by first century Christians  
Who might have been eyewitnesses  
To Christ's death and resurrection

And yet, Paul is reminding them to be thankful!

I guess, sometimes we all need reminding to be thankful.

Hence, Thanksgiving Day!

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Well, think about this.

It is harder to teach a child to say "thank you"  
Than it is to say "please."

It makes sense.

There is a reward in saying "please."

Most likely, you are asking for something.

But saying, “thank you” after getting something  
Is often an overlooked afterthought.

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In Luke 17, Jesus heals ten lepers  
And sent them on their way.

How many returned to give thanks?

One!

Sometimes we need reminding to be thankful.

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Saying “thank you” benefits both  
The one receiving the thank you  
And the one saying it.

Everyone appreciates a thank you.

But just saying the words “thank you”  
Can teach you gratitude.

The more we say thank you  
The more we become aware of things  
Deserving of a grateful comment.

Things we might have previously taken for granted.

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There are 4 steps in learning to be thankful  
Notice, Think, Feel, Do

This from the website, [greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu)

It is an essay for parents teaching children  
But fits our subject matter today.



**NOTICE:** What have you been given or what do you already have in your life for which you are grateful? Are there gifts behind the material gifts for which you are grateful, like someone thinking about you or caring about you enough to give you the gift?



**THINK:** Why do you think you received this gift? Do you think you owe the giver something in return? Do you think you earned the gift because of something you did yourself? Do you think the gift was something the giver had to give you? If you answered no to these questions, then you may be more likely to be grateful.



**FEEL:** Does it make you feel joy to get this gift? What does that feel like inside? What about the gift makes you feel happy? These questions help the child connect their positive feeling to the gifts that they receive in their lives.



**DO:** Is there a way you want to show how you feel about this gift? Does the feeling you have about this gift make you want to share that feeling by giving something to someone else? Prompting children after experiences of gratitude in order to motivate acts of gratitude, whether they be acts of appreciation or paying it forward, may help children connect their experiences and actions in the world.

Good stuff, not only for children but us older folk too!

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Being thankful to God is the heart of faith.

It is what brings us joy

And motivates us to extend thanksgiving to others.

Vance Havner, a country preacher from the hills of NC

Had this to say about being thankful:

*Our biggest problem in the church today is the vast majority of Sunday morning Christians who claim to have known the Master's cure but who do not thank Him by presence, prayer, testimony and support of His church.*

Like the Apostle Paul to the Colossians

We need reminding to be thankful.

From Brennan Manning

*I believe that the real difference in the American church is not between conservatives and liberals, fundamentalists and charismatics, nor between Republicans and Democrats. The real difference is between the aware and the unaware.*

*When somebody is aware of that love—the same love that the Father has for Jesus—that person is just spontaneously grateful . . . Thankfulness becomes the dominant characteristic of the interior life, and the byproduct of gratitude is joy. We're not joyful and then become grateful—we're grateful, and that makes us joyful.*

Gratitude gives birth to love of God  
And the love of God gives birth to love of neighbor.

With grateful hearts, we do for others  
As God has done for us!

The fruits of the spirit grow on the vine of thanksgiving.

Love, joy, peace, patience  
Kindness, goodness, faithfulness  
Gentleness and self-control  
Fruits of thanksgiving.

As we teach our kids to be thankful  
Through noticing, thinking, feeling, and doing.

We need to exemplify this teaching  
By our own attitude of gratitude.

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The simple blessings of family, food and shelter  
Work, health and strength . . .  
We often take for granted.

But daily, we should give thanks for them.

Because what happens when they're taken away?

We realize then what a blessing they were.

And what about those times in our lives  
When we're knee deep in trials and tribulations?

What about then? Are we still to be thankful?

It's easy to count our blessings when life is good  
But what do we do when things becomes tough?

The Apostle Paul reminds us.

***1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NRSV) give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.***

It is hard to thank you in the midst of strife.

This from the late Henri J. M. Nouwen, Catholic priest.

*To be grateful for the good things that happen in our lives is easy, but to be grateful for all of our lives—the good as well as the bad, the moments of joy as well as the moments of sorrow, the successes as well as the failures, the rewards as well as the rejections—that requires hard spiritual work. Still, we are only truly grateful people when we can say "thank you" to all that has brought us to the present moment.*

*As long as we keep dividing our lives between events and people we would like to remember and those we would rather forget, we cannot claim the fullness of our beings as a gift of God to be grateful for. Let's not be afraid to look at everything that has brought us to where we are now and trust that we will soon see in it the guiding hand of a loving God.*

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In many ways, we are like the grandson  
In our opening illustration.

We are thankful . . . we don't want to say it.

Brothers and sisters, say it!

Say it to your spouse, your parents, and even your children!

Say thank you, to the salesperson at Walmart.  
To the person holding the door open  
To your doctor or nurse

Say thank you to your boss  
To your subordinates

Say thank you to your church musicians  
To your church board chair  
Moderator and church board.

Say thank you for all their hard work.

They would appreciate hearing your gratitude.

And it would do you good too!

And say thank you, thank you Jesus, you,  
The pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Who for the sake of the joy set before him  
Endured the cross for our sake.

The early church leader Meister Eckhart once said:

*If the only prayer you said in life is “thank you” that would suffice—Meister Eckhart*