



**Theme: B.L.E.S.S.- Loving Others to Change the World**  
**"What is the Secret to Finding Happiness, Fulfillment, and Peace?"**

**Weekly Memory Verse:**

***<sup>18</sup> Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*** – 1 Thessalonians 5:18

**Monday, November 21** – Read [Psalm 103:1-5](#). Sometimes we speak as though gratitude to God is just automatic—and sometimes it is. But not always. The first verses of Psalm 103 sound more like the psalmist giving himself a “pep talk,” a reminder of how spiritually important gratitude is. There are times in almost all our lives when we need that reminder, when God feels distant and our pain, disappointment or suffering may feel unending. At those times, this psalm seems to assume we sometimes need to argue with ourselves.

🔪 The psalmist had apparently been through a hard time, likely a moral crisis that needed pardon, a severe illness, or maybe both. The call (to himself) to “bless the LORD” (Yahweh) wasn’t a vague summons to act grateful even though he didn’t feel that way inwardly. It focused on God’s healing and forgiving as central reasons for gratitude. How can you, like this psalmist, learn at hard times to refocus your attention on the enduring reasons for gratitude to God?

🔪 By the end of this psalm, verse 22 called for “all God’s creatures” to bless the LORD. But then the psalmist returned the psalm to the personal note: “let my whole being bless the LORD!” Do you ever sense that your personal gratitude and praise to God are part of a song the whole creation sings? In what ways can realizing that you are not a lone voice saying thank you to God broaden your view beyond your immediate troubles?

**Prayer:** *God of all creation, you are the unchanging, dependable source of all the forgiveness and healing that I (and all of us) need. I thank and praise you for that. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 22** – Read [Mark 8:1-8](#), [Luke 22:14-19](#), [John 11:35-42](#). The creator of the world, the ruler of the universe, chose to “become flesh” and live on earth as a human being in [John 1:14](#). Would you think such a being might have the ultimate attitude of “entitlement,” taking anything good for granted as his right? Well, we know Jesus didn’t do that. As he modeled what it means to be fully, healthily human, the gospels showed that he gave thanks to God in many different settings.

☛ We sometimes call the communion service “the Eucharist,” from a Greek word that meant “to give thanks.” As you read Luke 22:14-19 today, picture Jesus eating with his disciples, with the cross just ahead. On what realities do you think he focused to be able to “give thanks” at that moment? In what ways can you include the strengthening power of gratitude in your prayers, even in hard times?

☛ Why do you believe Jesus prayed prayers of gratitude, and didn’t just say, “I’m the son of God—I can handle this on my own”? Do you think Jesus’ reasons for expressing thanks were different from your reasons, or not? If you had been one of the first disciples, what difference, if any, do you imagine you would have noticed in Jesus after he had been praying and thanking God?

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, as you prayed, you said at one point, “Thank you for hearing me. I know you always hear me.” Help me share that confidence and say “thank you” for it more often in my own prayers. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 23** – Read [Mark 14:22-26](#) and [Psalm 118:1-6, 28-29](#). Jesus and his disciples sang “songs of praise” at the end of their Passover supper just before Jesus’ arrest. We know Psalm 118 was the last *hallel*, known as a hymn of praise, which Hebrews usually sang at Passover. Jesus, just before his crucifixion, probably sang, “The LORD is for me—I won’t be afraid. What can anyone do to me?” and, “Give thanks to the LORD because he is good, because his faithful love lasts forever.” That line was both the first and last verse of Psalm 118 and [Psalm 136](#), which ended every verse with a call for thanks due to God’s never-ending love.

☛ The Psalmist asked simply and profoundly, “The LORD is for me...What can anyone do to me?” To what extent are you able to trust and be grateful that God is always “for” you? How much stronger is your level of gratitude on a beautiful, sunny morning when all is going well than on a cold, gray day when something left you sad or disappointed? How can you carry gratitude into the gray days?

☛ Researcher Robert Emmons learned in his study of gratitude that cultivating an attitude of gratitude is tough. It is, according to Emmons, a “chosen attitude.” We must be willing to give up a “victim mentality” and overcome a sense of entitlement. How much do your feelings assume the “you deserve it” idea we hear in so many commercials? How can you cultivate gratitude for even basic gifts like shelter, food, loving relationships, and life itself, and not take them for granted?

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, I offer you my gratitude because you are good, because your faithful love lasts forever. Well, honestly, I don’t always do that yet, but it’s my goal. Please keep teaching me. Amen.*

**Thursday, November 24** – Read [1 Thessalonians 5:12-22](#). The apostle Paul did not write these words from some abstract ivory tower, sheltered from all trouble or conflict. He’d won these Thessalonian Christians to faith during a short stay, after which they sent him to another city because of the threat of mob violence (see [Acts 17:1-10](#)). They had to stay in the city, facing the same type of hostility Paul had faced. When he urged those young Christians to “rejoice always” and “give thanks in every situation,” he wasn’t being naïvely pious.

☛ Artists and photographers know that often how we frame a picture alters what we focus on within it. Paul urged a kind of framing in verse 17. Cynthia Campbell wrote in the [CEB Women’s Bible](#), “When we bring the things that cause us stress into prayer, we put ourselves and our troubles inside a much bigger picture: the story of God’s love for us in

Jesus Christ...And that leads to thanksgiving.” What helps you remember to look at God’s big picture of life more than the unpleasant little details?

Memorizing key Bible texts takes the Bible’s message off the page and stores it in your mind and heart, where the Holy Spirit can remind you of it at any tough moment. If “memorizing” feels daunting, short texts like today’s are a great way to start. Which part(s) of today’s passage would you most like to store in your mind, where you won’t even need a printed card or Bible in order to recall their wisdom at a time of need?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, there are quite a few situations that are not what you want for me, for our world. I’m thankful Paul didn’t say to give thanks for those. But help me grow in my ability to give thanks in every situation, including those. Amen.*

**THANKSGIVING DAY PRAYER from Abigail van Buren for using at a meal:** *O, heavenly Father: We thank thee for food and remember the hungry. We thank thee for health and remember the sick. We thank thee for friends and remember the friendless. We thank thee for freedom and remember the enslaved. May these remembrances stir us to service, that thy gifts to us may be used for others. Amen.*

**Friday, November 25** – Read [Ephesians 5:15-21](#). In the Roman Empire, as today, too many people tried to numb themselves against life’s hurts with alcohol and other addictions. The letter to the Ephesians said psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and always giving thanks to God were a much better alternative, with better life results. The church is to live out God’s will, which is that people trapped in destructive behaviors will turn and join communities of goodness and justice. For support in dealing with life’s struggles, contact our Director of Caring Ministries, Julia Griffith, [julia@summitdurango.org](mailto:julia@summitdurango.org).

The Message version of the Bible paraphrased verses [18-19](#) this way: “Drink the Spirit of God, huge draughts of him. Sing hymns instead of drinking songs!” Can gratitude to God not just numb life’s hurts, but move you beyond them? Might gratitude even be habit-forming? Have you ever experienced gratitude’s life enriching power? What are some benefits of replacing destructive behaviors with a “gratitude habit”?

Gratitude researcher Robert Emmons wrote, “I asked people with debilitating physical illnesses to compose a narrative concerning a time when they felt a deep sense of gratitude...It was evident from reading these narrative accounts that (1) gratitude can be an overwhelmingly intense feeling.” What can help you look beyond whatever challenges you face today by tapping into the power of gratitude?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, I choose to live wisely, not foolishly. Help me set aside any hurtful behaviors, and gratefully imbibe “huge draughts” of your Spirit. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 26** – Read [Philippians 4:4-7](#). Philippians 1:13 tells that the apostle Paul wrote Philippians from prison. He didn’t have a Thanksgiving holiday for which to prepare, of course. But it seems likely he would have loved this holiday! “Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!...<sup>6</sup> Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done,” he wrote from a dank Roman cell. Philippians is known for its emphasis on joy. This joy or gladness isn’t just happiness of the moment. It’s a confident disposition rooted in hope. When we follow Jesus, we have this gladness because we know that having problems, or even enduring harassment, doesn’t mean God has deserted us. This gladness is a steady and hopeful way of framing life that can shape our lives as we rely on God’s love for our salvation.

(Meditation Moments for November 19-20, 2022 – For more, go to [www.summitdurango.org](http://www.summitdurango.org))

✠ Paul was either hopelessly naïve or filled with divine wisdom. He had learned his approach to life from Israel's psalms and prophets. See for example, [Psalm 32:11](#), [35:9](#), [64:10](#), [97:12](#), [Isaiah 41:16](#), and [61:10](#). Why not try out that approach to life, or build it more fully into your way of life? As you celebrate this Thanksgiving weekend, “be glad in the Lord,” and “bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks.” See how doing that consistently shapes your thoughts and feelings, and your interactions with others. See if you don't find greater gratitude and peace.

**Prayer:** *Loving God, build in my heart and mind that confident disposition rooted in hope. Help me to offer you deeply heartfelt thanks this holiday season, rooted not in this broken world but in your unfailing love and goodness. Amen.*