

=PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING=

Lesson 12

Gratitude

(Chapter 15 of *Blue Denim and Lace* by Brother Hyles)

Luke 21:1-3, “And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.”

Luke 17:12-17, “And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?”

Real gratitude is real humility. One cannot be humble without gratitude, and one cannot be grateful without humility. Many years ago someone took a poll as to the greatest sin committed by mankind. To the surprise of many, the sin chosen as the greatest and most oft committed was the sin of ingratitude. Let us meditate for a while upon this grace which is so necessary to a successful and happy Christian life.

1. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SELF-MADE MAN. We often hear it said of someone that he is self-made. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Each of us is largely a product of the influences of others. One cannot divorce himself from the contributions that others have made to his life. Short-sighted and self-centered is the person who does not regularly recognize the contributions that others have made to his life, his success and his stature. Acts 4:20, “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”
2. THE FOUNDATION OF GRATITUDE IS THE EXPECTATION OF NOTHING. One should remember that though he is debtor to all men, he should feel that none are indebted to him. Not only is this one of the secrets to possessing gratitude, but also it is one of the secrets to happiness. If one expects nothing, then anything is a bonus. If one expects more than he receives, he is disappointed. If he expects less than he receives, he will be pleased even though what he receives is the same.
3. WEIGH A SMALL GIFT. We are so prone to judge the size of a gift by how much it costs. This is certainly a poor basis for measurement. Money is simply time wrapped in a paper sack. The man who makes a dollar an hour gives as much when he gives a dollar as does the man who makes \$50.00 an hour and gives \$50.00. Didn't Jesus say that the woman who gave two mites had given “more than they all”? On one particular birthday, I received many wonderful gifts. Which was the greatest? I am not sure, but it may have been the gift given me by a small lad. After I had baptized on a Sunday evening, I was met at the door by a junior boy who had made a birthday card and taped two quarters on the bottom of the card for me. This was probably a week's allowance for him, and no doubt he spent a half day drawing childlike pictures on a piece of paper to make his preacher a birthday card. Hence, he gave me seven and a half days of his life, as far as money is concerned. Some would have to give \$100.00 to equal his gift because this is what they would make in seven days. Others would have to give \$1,000.00 to equal this 50¢ gift. As I weighed the size of my birthday gifts, I thought perhaps this boy had given more than anyone else had.

Another gift I received was a birthday cake made by a lady who has a limited amount of money but unlimited love. Now if it took her three hours to make this cake, she gave me as much as anyone if they had given me the amount of money it took them three hours to earn. When one weighs a gift in this light, the gift becomes not small at all, and gratitude can fill the heart.

4. DO NOT MEASURE A LARGE GIFT. Bear in mind, we are trying to develop gratitude. A large gift is easier to appreciate, and the weighing of such a gift oftentimes decreases gratitude. Hence, we weigh the small gift in order to gain more gratitude, but we do not weigh the large, lest it take away from our gratitude.

5. NEVER LOSE APPRECIATION FOR A GIFT. Gratitude acquired should be gratitude kept. Continue to think of the gift. Continue to thank God for the giver. Just to say, "Thank you," one time is not sufficient. Just to reciprocate once is not enough.

When I was a boy, my sister (who is eight years older than I) made our living for a number of years. My dad was unemployed, and the only food we had was the food provided by my sister. The first new bicycle that I ever owned was bought by my sister. She bought me my first baseball glove, and she fed, clothed and housed me during some crucial years. I must not forget this. Just to say, "Thank you," one time or give an expression of thanks one time is not sufficient. I must continue to express my gratitude.

6. LET NOTHING EXTINGUISH GRATITUDE. There is a strange but true fact about the human race: We are so prone to complain because the roses have thorns rather than to rejoice because the thorns have roses. Someone has said that it hurts more to have your arm cut off than it feels good to have it on. How tragically true this is! This is the reason that someone may do a thousand kindnesses for another and yet lose his "friendship" because of one seeming injustice. A soul winner can lead another to Christ, point him to Heaven, save him from an eternity without God or hope, but later do something to disappoint that convert and strangely and tragically lose that "friendship." Let us keep our balance. Don't leave a church because the pastor, who has said thousands of things to help you, says one thing to hurt you. Do not lose gratitude because someone who has done something for you seemingly does something against you. Let nothing extinguish our appreciation and gratitude to those who have befriended us.
7. FEEL GRATITUDE IN THE HEART AND THINK THROUGH EVERY GIFT GIVEN TO YOU AND EVERY GESTURE DONE FOR YOU. Think of all of the possibilities concerning the plans and effort put forth in the doing of something on your behalf. Let gratitude swell in your heart as you do.
8. BE SURE TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE. Our Lord tells the story of the ten lepers who were cleansed. Only one returned to express thanks. Jesus asked, "Where are the nine?" Now it is entirely possible that some of the others felt gratitude, but failed to express it. There are so many of our feelings and expressions that go unexpressed, thereby robbing countless people of blessings. It was our policy around our house to encourage our children to express gratitude. A personal note of appreciation at the end of the school year to a teacher and a verbal or a written expression of gratitude to anyone doing a favor or kindness to them could always bring blessing. How important it is that we relay to people the feelings of our hearts in such matters!
9. BE GRATEFUL FOR THE USUAL. IT IS EASY TO BE GRATEFUL FOR A BONUS; IT IS CHARACTER TO BE GRATEFUL FOR A SALARY. Most of us do not appreciate the usual things of life until they are lost. One of the finest ways to develop gratitude for the usual is to have periods set aside to imagine what life would be like if the usual were lost. Sometime each day think of the sorrow of losing a husband, or wife, or a child, or a pastor, or a church. Such thinking will lead to gratitude in the heart and should lead to open expressions of that gratitude.
10. BE GRATEFUL FOR THE LEAST. The more you appreciate the little, the more you will enjoy the average. Most of us have much more than we deserve, or for that matter, than anyone in previous generations has ever had. May God give us gratitude to Himself, gratitude to our loved ones and gratitude to our friends. Then may He give us character to express the feelings of our heart to Him and to those who mean so much to us and do so much for us.