

Joy.FULL – Feeling Empty on a Full Tank

Matthew Vander Els • 2016-11-15 • foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

[Luke 17:11-19](#) • [Colossians 3:15](#) • [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#) • [Psalm 23](#) • [Daniel 6](#) • [Luke 6:34](#) • [Luke 2:36](#) • [Proverbs 11:25](#)

This is an epic season in the United States. This is a season of Thanksgiving. Do you know why? Because we eat a turkey at the end of this month that is bigger than any other turkey we've ever eaten. And we eat mashed potatoes and we eat gravy and we watch football. It was awesome.

We had our friend Daniela Stain with us, and she just moved here from the Netherlands. She was asking about Thanksgiving because this is an anomaly. I mean, what is this thing that you people do, Americans? And she says, I heard you just sit around, you eat a bunch of food, and people drink beer and watch football and go to bed in the middle of the day.

And I started to defend it. I'm like, what? Hmm. It's about right. Yeah, we eat way too much food, and there's a football game on. I've never watched it, but you just sit in front of it, and you fall asleep after you eat too much food.

And I'm not going to talk about what this day is about. We did that last year. You guys remember the message about the 1 in 10, about the lepers and all that, and we talked about Thanksgiving and the whole holiday. You guys can go back and watch that.

An Epic Season

But I do want to kickstart a series for this month, and I named the series Joyful. Joyful. How many of you are joyful? A couple people, joyful. You have joy in your life? I'm not talking about happiness. Happiness and joy are two completely different things. I'm talking about joy—true joy. How many of you wish you had more joy in your lives? How many of you wished that when you got up every day and you looked at the things that you had, or you looked out your window as soon as you opened your eyes, you felt that constant feeling—a reminder almost of

something that isn't going to flee away, it's not going to fade away from you, it's going to remain—and it is this joyfulness? That's something that everybody wants to experience.

Happiness Versus Joy

It's interesting because a Methodist minister in Massachusetts by the name of Anna Robertson—she's written a lot of different books and she has some little cool tidbits and nuggets—she asserts that the Greek word for happiness was used to describe freedom from the rich, from normal cares and worries, and to describe a person who received some form of good fortune. In other words, someone who found some money on the ground or got a bill of good health. This is what happiness was in the ancient world.

Happiness was that feeling you get when you get that new car that you always wanted, right? Guys, you wanted that Corvette, you know, domestic speed. You wanted that GTR if you could ever find one. Shout out to Zach. You want that special car or truck. Ladies, that home that you always wanted, right? That garden that you always—you finally get this thing, whatever it is. And that feeling that you get in your stomach—happiness, right? Everyone understand what I'm talking about?

Does that feeling remain? What do you mean? I got dream car, dream house, dream family, dream meal, Thanksgiving, dream TV. I got the dream, fill in the blank, and you're happy. But why doesn't this feeling remain?

She goes on: In ancient Greece, joy was described as a culmination of being, when your soul is in a good mood. They say that if something happened to you and you received joy, it was only something that could come from God, only something that could come from your soul rejoicing. It's a virtue, and it only comes with wisdom—not a beginner's virtue, it's something that is culminated.

Joy and Gratitude

Joy is something that comes when you're content with the things that you have. In other words, I want to give you a formula: The things that make you happy cannot cause you joy unless you're grateful for them. In other words, the things that make you happy plus gratitude breeds joy.

If you're not content, then you're not grateful. And if you're not grateful, you're not going to wake up every single morning looking at the things that you have, looking at your life, looking

at your health, looking at your kids, looking at your spouse, looking at your car—you're not going to look at those things with a sense of, wow, I'm very happy. I have this joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, down in my heart, down in my heart.

You know this song. You guys know the verse? Or is it the chorus? "I've got the love of Jesus in my heart, and I'm so happy, so very happy." The word there for happy, in the song in its context, is actually joy. I'm so joyful. Why? Because I've got the love of Jesus in my heart. Why are you joyful? Because I'm thankful for it.

Joy is described as taking a great pleasure and satisfaction in something and rejoicing or expressing an intense feeling of satisfaction. The things that make you happy can bring you joy, as I said, if you are satisfied with them, if you are grateful, if you are thankful for them being in your life.

Do you have joy in your life, or do you just have fleeting happiness? Searching for the next thing to fill that void of happiness, which will fade away, searching for that next thing that will replace that. Goodness, it's like we're talking about drugs. I just want to get back to that high of feeling this way. But unless we can be content and satisfied with the things that we do have, we will never, ever, ever experience joy.

Levels of Gratitude

That's funny because joy is supposed to be an attribute of a believer. Okay, so we need to be grateful. We need to be thankful. Okay, Matt, that's fine.

Did you guys know that there are several levels to gratitude? You ever heard this? Fantastic. I was reading a blog by Dr. Kim Blackman, and she sets out that there are three basic levels, and she named the first level the level of magic words. Everybody say magic words. I'm going to get some emails talking about endorsing the magic words. You guys know what the magic words are. This is the first level. This is the level that we teach our children. Thank you. You're welcome. Okay, I give you something—what do you say? Thank you.

It's funny because gratitude is not something that comes naturally to anybody. Do you guys realize that? I have a 13-month-old. Anyone else ever had a 13-month-old, two-year-old, one-year-old? No gratitude. No concept of gratitude. I think a couple weeks ago we were speaking about how the brain develops. The id is the first thing to develop, and then the ego hasn't developed yet. The only thing that's developed in a young child's mind is the id—self-survival and satisfaction. That's all they know.

Teaching Gratitude

And so my son is eating food now. And my wife—I'm so grateful for my wife because she has priorities in her life. I think I have priorities, but they're a lot different than hers. You see, my wife, when she thinks of food, she thinks of health. She thinks of natural. She thinks of organic. No GMO. I'm over here like, they've got these little applesauce canisters, single-serve applesauce canisters, and I take a straw and shove it through the top and hand it to Ben. It's beautiful. It's wonderful.

My wife doesn't feel like this should be a healthy meal every single day. And so what she did is she made these breakfast muffins. She did not buy them; she made them from scratch, grinding all the ingredients together, putting all this ch-ch-ch-ch all day long. And she made these breakfast muffins. I'm not a muffins guy. She put apples in them, and she popped them out of the oven, and she's like, "Try one." I'm not a muffins guy, especially not an organic, GMO, crunchy person. They actually taste really good. I was pretty surprised. She said, "These are going to be Ben's breakfast muffins."

And so the next morning, I put one in the oven, get it out—it's nice and warm, it's gooey, it smells nice—and I take it over to Ben, as if to say, "Look how hard your mother worked on this muffin for you compared to what I would have done," and I hand it to him. And I don't know what I was expecting. I was expecting him to look at me with a gleam in his eye: "Thank you, Dad. Thank you, Mom." Takes a bite of it, throws it to the dog. Doesn't know what he's doing.

Gratitude is not something that comes naturally to people. It's fascinating. I didn't put the quote in here because I ended up changing the message near the end, but the quote was talking about how modern-day psychologists equate an ungrateful person to a narcissist. In other words, ungratefulness is a narcissistic attribute, and it totally makes sense.

The Magic Words

And so we talk about the magic words, and we know what the magic words are. It's a stage where you teach people how to say thank you and how to respond with thank you. And it's a way to reciprocate something that someone has done for you. Okay? Someone makes me a cake, brings it over to me—I say thank you. And then if I'm really good at the magic words level, then I will write them a thank you card, right? You guys know what I'm talking about? We're all pros at the magic words level.

Let's see here. What is our current definition of Thanksgiving? We know that thanksgiving is giving gratitude to someone who did something for us. Hence, the magic words.

The Ten Lepers

This narrative fits in the ten lepers story that I talked about last year in Luke chapter 17, verses 11 through 19. We know the story. Yeshua is walking through Samaria and Galilee, and he comes across ten lepers. They're not doing so hot. They're outside the cities, hadn't hugged their families in a long, long time. Oh, Master, heal us. Have mercy on us. And so he looks at them and he says, go and show yourself to the priest, and you'll be healed—which is something you do after you're healed.

So they got up and they began to walk. They're just following instructions. And as they're walking away, they're cleansed. They're healed. And it's fascinating because one of them, who's actually a Samaritan—something to study sometimes. This brings weight to the story. The Samaritan, he's been healed. And he turns around and he comes back and he worships and thanks God. He comes back to Yeshua. Thank you!

Magic Words Level

This is a magic words level. It's what you're supposed to do to give gratitude back to someone. Everybody conquered the magic words level? Most of us. Not all of us, trust me. I know sometimes we forget. Most of us have conquered this level.

Do you know what Paul says a lot? I bought a book on what Paul says a lot. Paul tells us to be thankful a lot. In [Colossians 3:15](#) it says, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body." Right there he could put a period. "And be thankful." This is a repetitive theme in all of the Pauline epistles.

Paul's Repeated Theme

That word, to be thankful—"ecristos," "E Christos"—it's used as an adjective, and in various forms as a noun, adjective, and verb. Along with the word "Kares," which acquires the same definition of thanksgiving, it makes its appearance in the New Testament 62 different times. In other words, the term for thanksgiving makes its appearance in the New Testament 62 different times. Three-quarters of the time it is within the Pauline corpus—within Paul's letters or the letters attributed to Paul.

Why is Paul hammering this theme so much? Do you think Paul is talking about the level one magic words when he talks about being thankful? Because obviously when Paul's speaking about being thankful so much, he's assuming that it should be an outstanding, shining characteristic of a believer. Let me rephrase that. Because Paul's emphasis on this word is so heavy, this is a shining, outpouring characteristic of a believer, a true believer in Yeshua. It's up there with generosity. The two actually connect, which we're going to talk about a little bit later. But this is a character of a true believer in Messiah. Because if you're content with what Messiah did, if you're thankful and grateful for what Messiah did, you're going to be thankful and grateful for everything else in your life, whether the world teaches you or whether it stands up to the world standard or not.

Paul seems to emphasize a lot of stuff here. Does this word look familiar, by the way? Take the "o-s" off. What's it say? Eucharist. This is the word where the Catholic Church gets the term "Eucharist" from. It's a big concept, in other words. It's kind of a big deal.

So I believe I have a quote here. Yeah, so this is a quote from a book that I bought called "An Investigation of a Pauline Theme." I'm not going to tell you how exciting this book was to read. But this is an interesting quote: "More significant is the fact that only in Paul does one find a call to be thankful, and none of the other New Testament authors can one find such a sustained emphasis on thanksgiving. The same can be said concerning extra-biblical authors. Thus, a modern scholar named Paul Schubert's claim, made more than 50 years ago, remains uncontested that Paul mentions the subject of thanksgiving more frequently per page than any other Hellenistic author of his time, pagan or Christian."

Hmm. What is Paul speaking about if not just saying thank you all the time?

The Next Level: More

This brings us to the second level. Now this is a level that I call simply more. Everybody say more. Everybody say I need to be more. I need to do more. I need to be grateful more. Yeah, see how it got real high in the volume? Three people in the front row and one in the back. More.

Some refer to this stage as the attitude of gratitude. You guys ever heard of that? It's a fun phrase. Lots of sermons. The attitude of gratitude series this week. I will not call it that. Because just because you think a certain way does not mean that you're going to behave a certain way.

Can somebody run and get a book out of the front of my book bag? It's the Brené Brown book. Just because you think a certain way, just because you have an attitude of a certain thing does

not mean that you're going to behave in that way. Just because you have an attitude of the Bible, just because you have an attitude of the Torah, just because you have an attitude of the scriptures, thank you sir, just because you have an attitude of keeping the commandments—ooh, I know all about the commandments and I know that Hebrew word and that pictograph means this meaning, even though the pictographic language was actually just supposed to be sounds and not meaning. That's regardless. I know all this stuff about the Bible. I walk in this attitude of Torah, the commandments or Yeshua. That doesn't mean that you behave that way. It just means you think that way. Did y'all get that? Attitude of gratitude doesn't mean a whole lot if the behavior does not back it up.

So I have a reference here. And this is from a book by Brené Brown. You ever heard of her? Anybody ever heard of her? Yeah. It's an awesome book. It's a fantastic book. I used her research. She is a researcher is what she calls herself. Dr. Brené Brown. And I used a lot of her information last year when I did the message on You Sunk My Battleship. It was a message about vulnerability. It has like 200 views on YouTube. It's like one of the lowest viewed videos on our YouTube channel. She is an incredible author, incredible researcher, and I wanted to read you something out of a section of this book. Oh Lord, I didn't bookmark it. Hold on. Here we go with all the highlights. Under her section of gratitude. Bear with me while I read this. Fantastic.

"When it comes to gratitude, the word that jumped out at me throughout this research process is practice. I don't necessarily think another researcher would have been so taken back, but as someone who thought that knowledge was more important than practice, I found these words to be a call to action. For years, I subscribed to the notion of an attitude of gratitude. I've since learned that an attitude, an orientation, or a way of thinking, and that having an attitude does not always translate to a behavior. For example, it would be reasonable to say that I have a yoga attitude. The ideals and beliefs that guide my life are very in line with the ideas and beliefs that I associate with yoga. I value mindfulness, breathing, and the body-mind-spirit connection. I even got some cool yoga pants. But let me assure you, my yoga attitude and my yoga pants don't mean jack if you put me on a yoga mat and ask me to stand on my head or strike a pose. As I'm sitting here writing this, I've never practiced yoga. I plan to change that between now and the time you're holding this book in your hand, but to date, I have never put the attitude into action. So where it really matters, on the mat, my yoga attitude doesn't count for much. It seems that gratitude without practice may be a little like faith without works. It's not alive."

Gratitude Requires Practice

Just because you think a lot about something—just because you argue a lot about something online, "Oh man, I should have done this message on politics, and what it means to go online and say something, and fight about one thing, and post memes about one thing, and share a video about one thing"—and then when you live it in your life, it's absent. But we're not going to go there. We're just going to simply say, just because you're passionate about something in your attitude does not mean that your behavior reflects such things. And there's a huge lesson to be learned in that arena, just that alone.

Paul says in [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#), "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. In all things be thankful." Guys, this is a contributing verse to this level of gratitude. This is a hard level of gratitude. We're going to look at some biblical examples. This is difficult. It can be achieved. Sometimes it's not always sustained depending on the circumstance, but in all circumstances, you are to be grateful. Huge maturing point for believers. When using magic words all the time, that gets easy. What about something more? It's incredible because we lose focus on this level, and we're about to go into this level, but I want to make this point.

The Cost of Ingratitude

We lose so much focus because of ingratitude. When we're not grateful for the things that we have in our life, we continue chasing more things. And whenever we get these more things, we trick ourselves into thinking that we're grateful for these more things because we say, thank you. We either say thank you to our credit card for having a remaining balance that I can try our stuff. We say thank you to our spouse if they give us a gift or something that we wanted them to give. Thank you to our kids if we told them to go get something for me. Thank you to ourselves because, ooh, I needed that massage today. I needed that pedicure. I need this thing. I want this new car. We say thank you all the time.

But as I said before, if we continue to trick ourselves into thinking that we're grateful for things in reality when we're not, and you can tell because you don't have joy in your life because you're not satisfied and content, then where will you stand in your life? What will be your goals? I've read a great quote in a book, and it's talking about joy. It's talking about this exact issue. It said, joy is not as much about accumulation as it is appreciation.

What would your life be like if you never graduated from magic words? David tells us a little bit about this. [Psalm 23](#), you're familiar with this, right?

The Valley and the Shadow

So this is the psalm that is assumed to be written by David when he's running from Absalom, right? Being chased. And he says, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil." You guys remember from Sukkot? What valley is this most likely? Kidron Valley. Possibly.

Anybody ever read that verse and ask themselves, what in the world is he talking about? God's going to come over there with all your enemies and he's gonna set a table before all of your enemies. Let me put it in perspective. This is honor-shame language, okay? Gotta talk a little bit about history.

Honor-shame language. God is God Almighty no matter what, right? Everybody's going to look up to God and praise God, right? What if God came to you right now in the face of all your enemies? Let's say all your enemies have surrounded you at your house and God walks in and he sets a table and who's God going to sit down and eat with?

And he says, you come here. Not everybody else. You come here and you sit down as the guest of honor at God's table and he hosts you at his table and all of your enemies are looking on.

I am going to modernize this example, and I am not going to relate ex-presidents, soon-to-be-ex-presidents, or president-elects to God. Everybody understand? Let's put it this way since everybody is still so sensitive to the election.

Honor in the Presence of Your Enemies

Let's say that eight years ago you were a fan of Obama, okay? And so you voted for Obama and you have a lot of conservative friends that were very angry at you and they were posting on your Facebook and they were reaming you out, right? And let's say they were all over at your house having a debate with you on why he shouldn't be president, yada, yada, yada. Let's say Obama walks in your house with the authority of being the commander-in-chief, sits down at your table and says, "Hey, I'd like to have dinner with you."

"Oh, look, conservative friends, I mean, I don't really like them, but it'd be cool to have dinner with them. Mr. President, can I have now?"

"No, you gotta stay on the couch. I'm having dinner with him."

Modern day, eight years later, President-elect Trump. Let's say you voted for Trump and you have a lot of liberal friends who don't really like you because you voted for Trump because they

don't like Trump, right? Would it make them jealous or you jealous if the president came and gave them favor? Whether they like him or not is irrelevant. Most powerful man in America is now giving you favor. You wouldn't be so timid at the table. You wouldn't be so scared.

President Obama, President-elect Trump right here, this is great.

Now, escalate that to the point where this is God coming to sit down with you. I make my table before—he prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

Matt, what's this have to do with gratitude? Because David was thankful in the circumstance that he was in by praising God.

Man, this could be anything. Your enemies could be anything. Your enemies could be people or the things that you struggle with in your life or maybe things you wish you could overcome. Maybe your addiction is your enemy. Maybe the conflict in your household is your enemy. Maybe the financial crisis in your home is your enemy. The confusion, the inability to stay focused on things. He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

David's scared, right? He's still a little afraid. He's running through the valley. What's the next thing he says? "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long."

David was growing more in his faith and his gratitude towards God. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, the valley of death, I fear not. Why? Because I know that God is planting my steps before me. I know even though I can't see what's in front of me, I know that he is leading me. He's going to lead me to green grass, going to lead me to still waters, going to lead me away from the wolves. Even though it's black, I can't see. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Stage Two: Daniel's Gratitude in the Lion's Den

Stage two: more. You guys want to see another example of stage two?

Can we read a little bit? Turn to the book of Daniel. This is Daniel chapter 6. Go ahead and turn there and get your sharpie out because I want you to highlight something. Mark something.

"It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps to be over the whole kingdom and over these three governors, of whom Daniel was one. So that they should all give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. So this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and the satraps because of excellent spirit that was within him. And the king gave thought to

setting him over the whole realm. So the governors and the satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could not."

Verse 6: "So these governors and satraps thronged before the king and thus said to him, 'King Darius, live forever. All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree that whoever petitions any god or man for 30 days except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.'"

So all of these high up officials became jealous of Daniel. You see that? And Daniel was just an outstanding man because he was loyal to the king. And they said, "How are we going to get Daniel in trouble?" They went to the king and said, "Listen, king, how about for the next 30 days, if anybody prays to a god or a man, then they'll be tossed into the lion's den." And so the king said, "Ah, that seems like a good idea." So he wrote it down. The king signed off on the decree.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. So Daniel was there. Daniel doesn't serve the king above his God. Daniel doesn't serve the other gods of Babylon above his God, the God of Israel. Daniel serves his God, the God of Israel, as number one.

And he's sitting there. Everybody pretend they're Daniel. Sit up straight like you're Daniel. I don't know how Daniel sits up straight, but you guys did a great job.

So Daniel's in the midst of everybody else. And everybody else is like, "Hey king, anybody serves anyone else, puts you under their god, they need to be tossed into the lion's den."

I want you guys to imagine a lion's den. Lions have big teeth. They bite you. They got big claws. They will cut you open. Throw them into the lion's den.

Now I want you to imagine being there, and you're sitting here and you know you're praying a little bit. "Please God, don't make him sign that. I don't want this test. Please don't do this to me. I don't want to be tossed into the lion's den." And the king, he says, "All right, we're going to do it."

What's going through your mind right now? Darn. Darn. This makes my life a little stressful. Anxiety went through Daniel's mind, no doubt. Stress went through Daniel's mind, no doubt. Doubt went through Daniel's mind, no doubt.

So Daniel went back to his room after this meeting and he shut the door and he prayed to God. He knelt down on his knees towards Jerusalem three times a day and prayed. What do you

think he was praying for? What would you be praying for? "God, I'm a little nervous about what just took place because I'm not a cat person, number one. I don't want to go to the lion's den. I'm scared because the lions will kill me."

Scripture doesn't necessarily indicate that. Scripture says that he prayed and what's the very next thing he did? Here, I'll highlight it. He gave thanks before his God. He gave thanks before his God.

Give Thanks in All Circumstances

This reminds me of what Paul said: "Give thanks in all circumstances." It's incredible because we talk about that verse and it's a very misunderstood verse because it makes us believe because of the world we live in, oh, so you gotta give thanks for all of your circumstances.

You gotta give thanks that you're about to be thrown into a bunch of lions, get eaten alive. You gotta give thanks that you got the cancer. You gotta give thanks that your loved one died. You gotta give thanks that you lost that job. You gotta give thanks that you can't pay your bills. You gotta give thanks that your kids are acting amuck. You gotta give thanks that you're having problems with your spouse.

That's not what the scripture says. It does not say give thanks for all circumstances. It says give thanks in all circumstances. In all circumstances you give thanks because you know that God is going to do more in your life.

Anybody ever lost their kid in the Walmart? I've been there, don't worry. Haven't yet. Where you turn around and the kid has run off. I was walking up to Harris Teeter the other day on the phone with my wife and I saw a woman putting some bags in her car and she had her toddler in the seat and she turned her back and the basket began to roll away. It was about 35 feet away from the car in the lane—the main intersection in front of Walmart, like where the cars come. And I ran over there and I grabbed the front of it.

And she looks up just dumbfounded. Where's my baby? Who's that kid with that? Oh, that's a cute baby. That's my baby. She runs over there. I'm like, here you go. And I try to act like, because I knew she felt like, oh man, I'm the worst mom. It is what it is. I give back. Don't worry about it. Act like it was no big deal. Because it can happen to everybody and it does. Sometimes you lose your kid in Walmart, trying to get that sliced cheese to figure out what brand doesn't have enzymes in it or whatever, and you turn around, your kid's gone. That doesn't happen to God. God knows where you are. Even if you don't, Dark Valley, God has placed you somewhere to do something more. Hence, we give thanks. Even if we don't

understand our circumstances, we give thanks in the circumstance because we understand that God is going to do something, what? More. Right?

God Has Placed You Somewhere to Do Something More

And so Daniel's stressing out and he's giving thanks to God just as his custom was since early days. And so the governors basically report Daniel to the king, right? Take him down there, toss him in front of the king. They got witnesses. King, he is not worshipping you. He's declaring Yahweh his God over you and he's not serving you. And the law that we just passed says he has to be punished, right? And so what's the king do? He tosses them into the lion's den. It's interesting because he tosses them into the lion's den and then he rolls a stone over the top, right? And so the king goes back and the king's stressing out. You know, he kind of liked Daniel, you know? And he fasts all night long and the king doesn't sleep. He doesn't want any attainment. No, don't dance for me. Don't sing to me. Just no. And it says, early in the morning, he runs to the tomb, I mean to the lion's den where the stone was, and he rolls the stone away. It's very interesting. What's it called? I forget what the word is. Thematic. Thank you. Thematic study there between Daniel and Yeshua in the crucifixion, regardless. So the king runs up to the lion's den, right, and looks down, and then the king, here we go.

And then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the lion's den. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke saying, Daniel, Daniel, "Servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" And Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, so they did not hurt me, because I was found innocent before him. And also, O king, I have done no wrong to you either." Now the king was exceedingly glad for him and commanded that they should take Daniel out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatsoever was found on him because he believed in his God. Then King Darius wrote, what's God going to do? Help me. What's God going to do? Then King Darius wrote to all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom, men must tremble in fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God and steadfast forever. His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth. Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Table prepared before him before his enemies. This is beautiful. Daniel was thankful. He gave thanks. Daniel gave thanks because he knew God was going to place him somewhere where God's plan was going to be carried out. He prayed and gave thanks.

He Delivers and Rescues

What is the situation? You may not be facing a lion's den right now. You may not. Or it may feel like a lion's den. We know you're praying because that's what you should be doing, crying out to your king. Are you giving thanks? It's amazing because in some of Paul's examples, the way he starts out Romans, I believe, and also Corinth, if I'm not mistaken. I had a whole other message that I changed and I had these slides in there, but it was very interesting because the author of that book, the Pauline theme of Thanksgiving, he makes the assertion that if you just say thank you to God without any petitions, then you're acknowledging that God has given you something, but you're not encouraging that He's the sustainer of all things. Which is why when you see Paul giving thanks, it says, "Hey, I've been praying for you and I've given thanks." Or, "Hey, I've given thanks and I've also had this in prayer." The petition validates who God is and His role as the sustainer and provider. The thanks sets him up as the patron, if you will, as the one who is the giver of all.

Are you giving thanks for the lion's dens that you're about to face? You might get eaten. That's irrelevant. One thing that you should know is that God is going to do something more if you allow him to do so. We remind ourselves of the things that we're thankful for throughout this month, Thanksgiving and all. Every church is doing a series on Thanksgiving. We need to be thankful. Don't forget to say thank you, magic words and so on and so forth. We remind ourselves of the things that we're thankful for: our wives. Men, are you thankful for your wives? You got three men thankful, they're fantastic. Men, are you thankful for your wives? The one who is your helpmate, the one who is the sustainer, the one who is there to fix all the things that you don't know how to fix. The one who is your encourager in life. Man, how many of you, how many of your wives are the one person that can encourage you through any situation? True story.

More Things to Be Grateful For

Wife has a huge role to play in a man's success or failures because women, I'll tell you a secret, your husband loves you and he keeps you close and he's vulnerable around you. You have the power to encourage him with everything or you have the power to discourage him into all failure. It's true, very powerful role. Women, how many of you are thankful for your husbands?

Everybody just raise their hands. Husbands, strength of your home, hopefully the leaders of your home. We're thankful for our kids. The ones who are going to carry on our names in the life of the living long when we're dead and gone. The greatest blessings in our lives. We're thankful for our cars. Yeah, because no one likes to walk, right? Thankful for our homes because it's getting cold outside. What about the high utility bill? No, we're not thankful for that. But Paul said, and Daniel acted on it, and David reminded me of it, that I should think about more things. Because there is more to be grateful for in my life than I want to think about. Let me rephrase that. There is more to be grateful for than what the world tries to tell me.

That high utility bill, man, I'm not thankful for that. Why? Because you know what it means, right? It means that you got heat in your home and your family in your house and your dog and your cat and your turtle or whatever you got in your house stayed warm. You were able to keep your family warm this month. Thank God for that utility bill not being zero. Nothing working. How about that car repair bill? Oh, we hate those. When that timing belt needs to be replaced, water pump, it's like a \$1,000 bill. Good gracious, I'm not thankful for that. I'm not grateful. You're not grateful for the 90,000 miles you put in that minivan, carrying your family to fellowship every single week, going to Disney World, going to that trip to the mountains, going to the grocery store so you could provide food, using your vehicle? That bill reminded me of all the things that I was able to do in my life that I am so grateful for. Hmm.

How about those stupid children's shows that come on your TV? Boy, you want to watch that football game. Boy, you want to watch that TV show. Boy, you want to see 24. I don't know what shows are out now. Whatever. Is 24 coming back? I heard it was. Boy, I want to. But no, I got to watch Chuggington. When you didn't have kids, your living room was nice. Not everything was perfect, but you could walk from point A of the living room to point B without tripping over a walker or some big light-up thing you don't even know what it is—it just lights up and makes music—or you'd trip over something else, kick something, stub your toe. Are you thankful for all the junk, children's toys all over the place in your living room? You should be. Because it means that you have one of the greatest blessings that man can ever behold.

Practice Being a Grateful Person

There's something more about having an attitude of gratitude. There is a behavior. Behaviors take training. Behaviors take practice, as Brenna Brown said. Practice. How do you practice for something? You put into action, intentional actions, on how you're going to change how you do things. Whether it's waking up every single morning and for the first two minutes recounting in your mind or verbally saying, I'm thankful. I'm grateful for my spouse. Tell them that. Look

them in their eyes and say, I'm grateful for you. Your kids, they don't know what you're talking about. It doesn't matter. You're practicing yourself. I am grateful for you. Look at your house. I am grateful for you. Look at God. I'm grateful for these things in my life. Some people talk about keeping a Thanksgiving journal. Now I'm starting to sound like some big self-help book. I'm just saying what results have shown. You need to practice being a grateful person.

Gratitude Doesn't Come Naturally

It does not come naturally. It does not come naturally. I want to be like my 13-month-old. I want this. I want that. Oh, thank you. I have this. I'm done with that. I want this. I want that. That's easy. And we try to buffer that with the magic words, but that's not going to change our behavior.

Remember what the end goal is, guys. The end goal is to be an outstanding model of Yeshua and to have that behavior of more gratitude, but it's also to experience what? Joy. You will never experience legitimate joy if you do not put into practice the behavior of gratitude.

The Three Levels of Gratitude

That was Daniel. This brings us to our third level. This is a hard level. More, I mean we can do more. Like we've all done more at some point in our lives. It's just sustaining, enduring the more level. Sometimes it's hard. Sometimes it's hard when you're looking at that lion's den in your life. I don't want to be thankful for this. I don't want to be thankful in this. I don't want to be thankful at all. Real easy to retract in, become bitter. No one blames you in those situations, so you don't really have encouragement to be more. That's a hard level.

This is the hardest. And the third level is infectious gratitude. It's the level of gratitude that you've carried out not only in your attitude but in your behavior to the point where you're able to give other people the opportunity to be grateful.

Generosity Flows From Contentment

In other words, if gratitude equals joy, if gratitude springs forth joy, a result of joy is going to be absolute contentment and satisfaction. When you are satisfied, the next thing to sprout naturally is generosity. You can't be generous unless you're content with what you have, unless you're grateful for what you have. There's no possible way for you to be genuinely generous with anything in your life.

This is illustrated in Luke chapter 6:34. Yeshua is talking about giving away money. He says, "If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount." So who lends? Even sinners lend to sinners. But love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return. Be generous. If you get something, if you get paid back, awesome. If not, be generous. Okay? Expecting nothing in return. And your reward will be great.

I wonder what reward he's talking about. If you're the kind of person that's so content that you're not even worried about getting paid back, which means that you can be generous and you're going to be so grateful with what you have and content with what you have that you're going to be generous and be able to give it to someone else. Okay? So you're now giving something to someone else. What should their response be? They should be level one—magic words. Thank you, sir. And hopefully you're also encouraging them to be level two, to be more, to be very grateful with what they have just received out of your generosity, contentment, satisfaction. Okay.

Used by God to Breed Joy

The reward that you're going to get is more joy and you will be sons of the most high for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. So God is kind to whom? There's a whole other lesson there.

Even sinners lend to sinners to get something in return. If you're not lending out to be generous, then you're ungrateful, which indirectly you're equated with sinners. Yeshua is trying to encourage his followers to get to level three. Get to the point where when people look at you, they see someone that's being used by God to breed joy and satisfaction to others. To be generous—a benefactor, if you will—to others.

This is Paul's theme to all the believers, that they should be generous, that they should be those that the city looks to and says, wow, those are outstanding people. They have joy deep down in their heart, and they're generous. They're patrons, if you will.

Anna: A Model of Generosity

I want to tell you about someone real quick, and this is Anna, or Hannah, if you will, but Anna, the prophetess. In Luke chapter 2, verse 36, you see Mary and Joseph, and they're bringing Yeshua to the temple to present him before God. You know, this is Yeshua. Here he is. And then Simon, or Simeon, has a prophecy that he prays over Yeshua, right? And then Anna stands up.

Anna was well favored, extremely well respected. An obvious anointing of God was upon her. She was at the temple all day and all night long, praising, prophesying. She was probably teaching other women, probably teaching kids. Who knows? Probably men too. People probably thought, "Let me hear something. I might hear from an anointed prophet." She was well known for her wisdom, but even more well known for her servitude. Because she was entirely giving herself to God and others, Anna had a generous spirit. That's who she was. She was a generous person. Why was she so esteemed? It was because of that reason.

She's mentioned in scripture and she's been in this book for the past 2,000 years because she gave all of herself generously to God and to people. She loved God and loved mankind, if you will. She worked at the temple, teaching, serving all day and night, worshiping, prophesying. It's interesting because she's called the prophetess, even though Simon was the one who just prophesied. That's generosity in action. That's an example of what generosity is.

Okay, she was generous. You know, that's a good example. Her life wasn't trouble-free. Did you follow what I just said? Her life wasn't trouble-free.

A Life Despite Hardship

She got married probably around the age of 14 or 15. She was married for about seven years and her husband died. Her husband died. She spent the rest of her life serving God and the priesthood, and the people coming to Jerusalem in the temple day and night. She had every excuse to harden her heart. Every excuse to harden her heart. All of her dreams about living long with her husband, all of her dreams about having kids, all of her dreams about raising that family, gone.

She could have hardened her heart. No one would have blamed her. But benevolence prevailed. She wanted to serve others. She was still thankful. Even though her husband died, she was still thankful in that circumstance. That gratitude instilled joy, which evolved into generosity. She could have become a bitter old widow, and no one would have blamed her. She had an excuse. No one would have blamed her. But she understood that there was anointing on her life, and that she needed to do more. Why? Because God was going to do more through her. As a result, her selflessness led to exaltation, and she's been written in the Bible for the past 2,000 years. Her name is remembered.

The Liberal Soul Shall Be Made Fat

So it comes true, [Proverbs 11:25](#): "The liberal soul shall be made fat. He who waters shall be watered also himself."

And so we talk about magic words and we talk about not just having an attitude of gratitude but having a behavior that reflects the gratitude in your life. How accumulation doesn't have as much to do with joy as appreciation does. How you need to be thankful in all circumstances because you know that God is still there despite you not being happy in that moment. And then there's the climactic level of generosity. Being able to give from yourself, from your means. Give. Period.

What We're Grateful For

What level are you at today? Ultimately our goal is to become thankful in everything. Naturally.

What we're grateful for reflects our generosity. When you're grateful for the skills God has given to you, guess what? You're generous with them. So I see the worship group up here. When you're grateful for what God has given to you, you're generous with it. Are you grateful for your spouse? It's only a trick question if you say no or don't do anything at all. Are you grateful for your spouse? Do you show it?

Are you generous with your time and energy towards them? Are you grateful for your children? Are you willing to set aside three minutes when your child comes up and says, "Will you read this book to me?" Nah! You know children's books aren't very long, right? Like they're really thick, right? And the reason they're so thick is because they're made out of cardboard because the kids chew on them, right? There's only like five pages. All done!

Are you willing to be generous with your time and your energy towards your children because you're grateful for them? Are you grateful for your fellowship? Are you? I'm grateful for my fellowship. Some weeks we need to dip into savings because we don't have enough money to pay all the bills for that week. Will your gratitude towards your family and your fellowship grow to the point where you're willing to give something of yourself?

Show Your Gratitude

Will you be willing to put five dollars in a donation box to show your gratitude for your fellowship towards each other? When you're willing to volunteer to come a little bit early? When you're willing to volunteer for the children's class or the teen class? Amazing, we're filling up. I was talking to Jason a little bit earlier today and we have about five or six families out

today and we've got a lot of people missing. Look around you. We're filling up. We're about to outgrow this place.

We've only been here for about a year and a quarter. Just a little over a year. We're already about to outgrow this fellowship hall, which is awesome. I mean, it's my family. My family is growing. Shouldn't we be able to afford to rent our own place next?

If you've never given to the fellowship that you're grateful for, I challenge you. Challenge you. Five dollars. A dollar. Something. Something. As a practice to show your gratitude. As a practice in your behavior. Do something.

When your children walk up to you and say, "Hey, can you please do this most annoying thing that you think you don't have time to do because you're doing something way more productive for the next five minutes?" Practice sucks.

Practice, Gratitude, and Growing Up

Nobody likes to practice. But what does practice do? What is that investment worth? It induces gratitude. It breeds gratitude, which breeds generosity. Practice. Teaching your kids to say the magic words. Keep doing that. That's elementary school. But when you get past elementary school, it's time to go to middle school. And that's a whole new world. You guys remember middle school? Oh, Lord. And then when you're in eighth grade or whatnot, you're in that transitional moment—"Oh, I don't know if I want to go to high school, but I don't want to stay in middle school." And then you go into high school and there needs to be a maturity change before you go into high school. And then when you get to college, you're relieved because it's like high school but cooler.

Guys, maturity needs to take place in all of our lives when it comes to gratitude. What level are you on? And more importantly, what level are you going to? What level are you practicing for? And what are you going to do on your daily basis to train yourself, to practice yourself, to get out of this attitude of gratitude and to get into this behavior of thanksgiving?

Remember This Month

Remember that this month. This is a series. This is how we're starting off the series. When you sit around that kitchen table with your family or friends, or if you're going to be sitting here eating a bunch of turkey with your family and friends, think about where you're at and where you need to be.

Gratitude is not optional for a believer. Just like generosity is not optional for a believer. Just like love is not optional for a believer. "I believe in Yeshua! I don't want to do that." They go together. We need to practice. We need to stay focused. And we need to learn to be thankful.

Hey guys, I'm Matthew Vanderels, pastor at Founded in Truth Fellowship and I really hope you enjoy this message. If you would like to see more messages and teachings like this one, please subscribe to our YouTube channel by clicking [here](#). You can also visit our website to find out more information about our ministry and what we do right here. And if this message has been edifying to you, please consider supporting us and the ministry through our secure online giving portal [here](#). This will ensure this message along with many others will continue to reach those who find themselves far from God. If you'd like to write us, you can do so at Founded in Truth, P.O. Box 38042 Rock Hill, South Carolina, zip code 29732. You can also check out our Facebook page at [facebook.com slash foundedintruth](#). I pray that you stay blessed. I pray that you guys stay encouraged. And I pray that you stay fit. Founded in Truth. We'll see you guys next time. [pond5.com](#) For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [Foundedintruth.com](#) EMAIL: [Info@foundedintruth.com](#) FACEBOOK: [facebook.com/foundedintruth](#) WEBSITE: [https://www.foundedintruth.com](#) Google: [https://g.co/kgs/az3iPeM](#)

Watch or listen: [foundedintruth.com/bible-teachings/joy-full-feeling-empty-on-a-full-tank/](#)

This automated transcript has been lightly edited for readability; scripture quotations appear as spoken. For the authoritative teaching, watch the video. • Founded in Truth Fellowship, Rock Hill SC • Saturdays 11:00 AM • Your giving keeps every teaching free: [foundedintruth.com/give](#)