

Overflowing with thankfulness

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<https://christianworkingwoman.org/broadcast/overflowing-with-thankfulness/>

Paul wrote to the Colossians:

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness (Col. 2:6-7).

Overflowing with thankfulness—that's our goal if we have received Christ Jesus as our Lord and are continuing to grow in our faith. In other words, thankfulness is supposed to be a trademark of a Christian.

Now, ask yourself this question: Would people who know you well—who are around you often and see you in real-life environments regularly—would they describe you as a thankful person? Do you overflow with thankfulness? If something is overflowing, people would notice, don't you think?

This is a characteristic I've been trying to cultivate more and more in my life because I want to be thankful for all my many, many blessings. But also because being thankful is a major stress buster! I'm not kidding; one of the best things you can do to reduce your stress, lower your blood pressure, and lengthen your life is to practice thankfulness.

Notice I said "practice thankfulness." You see, it's really easy to get caught up in complaining because that's what we hear around us quite often. Don't you hear a good bit of griping and complaining where you work? Well, you might have caught that disease without realizing it. So, you need to practice thankfulness.

Ephesians 5:19-20 says, "*Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" And in First Thessalonians we're told to "*give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*"

Seems to me we have to find ways to remind ourselves to overflow with thankfulness. If you want to play the piano, you have to practice. If you want to dunk a basketball, you have to practice. Well, if you want to overflow with thankfulness, I think you have to practice that, too.

Here are some suggestions to help you do that.

1. Put a sign on your desk or refrigerator or your screen saver that says "Overflow with thankfulness today." I think we just sometimes need simple reminders. It sure won't hurt.

2. Put on thankfulness each morning before you leave home. Colossians 3 gives us a list of garments that we should put on each day as God's chosen people, and at the end of this list we read: "And be thankful." So, while you're buttoning your shirt or putting on your shoes, just make a little ritual each day of saying, "And I'm also putting on thankfulness to wear all day today."

3. Do the thankful alphabet. Start with A and go through Z, naming something starting with each letter for which you are thankful. You can have some fun with this; it's a great game to play in the car with your kids and you'll be teaching them to practice thankfulness. Just start and see how far you can get:

A: I'm thankful for Apples.

B: I'm thankful for Beds.

C: I'm thankful for Cousins.

D: I'm thankful for my Dad.

E: I'm thankful for Elizabeth, my friend.

F: I'm thankful for Football!

And on you go. It's fun, it's uplifting, and it fills your heart with thanks.

4. Make every Tuesday a Thankful Tuesday or each Thursday a Thankful Thursday. You can share this with your family or your co-workers and have some fun with it, but it will teach the joy of practicing thankfulness. On that day be very intentional about expressing what you have to be thankful for, perhaps as the family gathers for a meal, or in a casual conversation with co-workers. Remind others that it's Thankful Tuesday or Thursday, and encourage them to recite what they have to be thankful for. You'll be surprised how others will be willing to join in with you if you'll just get it started.

5. Sing songs of thanksgiving. You could sing "Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart" for example. The Bible says to sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. Go for it.

6. Think about where you'd be without Jesus. That will make you thankful. There's a song I like by Stephen Curtis Chapman entitled "Remember Your Chains." The chorus says:

Remember your chains. Remember the prison that once held you before the love of God broke through.

Remember the place you were without grace.

And when you see where you are now,

Remember your chains, and remember your chains are gone.

For me, nothing makes me overflow with thankfulness like remembering what Jesus has done in my life and hearing what he has done in the lives of others. When you're together with other believers, just start telling your stories of what God has done in your life. We always overflow with thankfulness when we remember where we were before we met Jesus.

7. Begin every prayer time with thanksgiving. Probably the most famous Psalm—Psalm 100—tells us to enter the gates of the Lord with thanksgiving and enter his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. Whenever you enter into the presence of God, always enter with thanksgiving. Make the first words out of your mouth words of thankfulness.

I have found that this changes my prayer time. If I begin with all my needs and requests, I am self-focused. If I begin with thanksgiving—reciting some of the many things I have to be thankful for—I am God-focused. What a difference that makes in my time spent with God and that in turn makes a difference in my day. I begin to truly overflow with thankfulness.

When Jesus taught the disciples how to pray, in what we call the Lord's Prayer, you'll find it begins with "Our Father Who is in heaven, hallowed be your name." It begins with praise and thanksgiving. Our prayers should begin with thankfulness.

Knowing God's Word and reading it regularly are essential if we are to overflow with thankfulness. But you know, I've seen people who knew God's Word rather well and could pray real well in church, but I could not say that they overflowed with thankfulness. Thankfulness is an attitude you choose; it is a decision you make.

I do believe this, with all my heart: If you learn to practice thankfulness, people will notice. They'll notice your joyful spirit; they'll notice your words of thanks; they'll notice the smile on your face and the bounce in your step. You look different when you overflow with thankfulness. It softens the lines in your face; makes you look younger and gives a gentleness to your words.

If you look at the sacrifices that are a part of the Mosaic law given by God, you'll discover that there were many sacrifices of thanksgiving. This was a ritual God put in place to remind his people that they were to be thankful people. We're no longer under the law, but we still need to be reminded to be thankful.

Did you ever think about the power that is released when you become a thankful person? Let me tell you some of the great things that will happen:

- People will like you much better. Thankful people are nice to be around. Your relationships will improve. You'll have more friends.
- Your energy level will go up. It's true, because when you're thankful, you unleash a lot of good energy that is often wasted on complaining and negativism. You will do more work in less time. And that's going to make you a better employee, which will make your boss happy! I won't go so far as to say you'll get a raise, but then again, who knows?
- Your stress will go down. I'm not making this up, folks. When you are being thankful, you are thinking about the good things in your life, and that keeps you from focusing on the negative things. It's like a release valve on a pressure cooker—you will see your stress go down.
- Your face will be prettier—or more handsome, whichever you prefer! Think about it—when you are thankful, you're not worried or fretting, and those things cause lines in our faces and age us! You'll look younger!
- Your posture will improve. When you're thankful, you stand up straighter. When you're negative, your shoulders tend to stoop and your back curves.

There's power in thankfulness. You have much to gain. But way above and beyond all of these, here's the most important reason to be thankful:

- You will honour and glorify Jesus Christ as he deserves. When you overflow with thankfulness, you tell the world what Jesus has done for you and you are a good ambassador for him. Not to mention, it pleases him to see your thankful heart.

Let's start a campaign to overflow with thankfulness. What a way to live.