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# A GRATEFUL HEART

7 HABITS OF THANKFULNESS



## DAVID CRAIG

Between pastoring and hosting *Counter Culture*, David helps people connect with God's Word by using his life experiences to illustrate truths from the Bible.

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# A GRATEFUL HEART

## 7 HABITS OF THANKFULNESS

### INTRODUCTION

Gratitude is one of the most powerful forces in life. It lifts our spirits, deepens our faith, and opens our eyes to the blessings all around us—even in the middle of challenges. But let's be honest: thankfulness doesn't always come naturally. It's something we have to cultivate and intentionally practice.

This eBook will help you do just that. In each chapter, you'll discover how building habits of gratitude can transform your perspective, mature your faith, and bring you closer to God. Whether you're standing on a mountaintop or walking through a valley, this eBook will help you develop a heart of gratitude that thrives in every season. Let's dive in and take your thankfulness to the next level!



SINCE GRATITUDE DOESN'T COME  
NATURALLY, WE MUST CONSISTENTLY  
PRACTICE IT SO IT BECOMES  
SECOND NATURE.

## CHAPTER 1

# TRAIN YOURSELF TO BE THANKFUL

Growing up, my dad practiced a family tradition at every meal. It didn't matter who was over, whether it was my friends, hockey teammates, or our entire family, he would make us stand in a circle, hold hands and give thanks for the food. As a teenager, sometimes I felt awkward having to hold my teammates' hands. But looking back, I can see the bigger picture. My dad was training us to **practice gratefulness, which is a foundational habit for believers.**

Think about it—is gratitude a natural trait? Anyone who says yes has not raised children! When my wife, Danielle, was nursing our son, Gabriel, sometimes he would get too much milk at once and begin choking and sputtering. But the minute she would sit him upright, he would instantly start screaming for more milk!

**Since gratitude doesn't come naturally, we must consistently practice it so it becomes second nature.** As the Israelites prepared to enter the Promised Land, Moses delivered a speech to them with this very thing in mind (Deuteronomy 8:2–20).

***And you shall remember [always] all the ways which the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness...***

- Deuteronomy 8:2 (AMP)

Moses understood that ungratefulness is a thief. It robs you of joy, peace, and confidence in what God has done (and will do) for you. There's a reason Moses repeatedly warned the Israelites not to forget God's past goodness and faithfulness to them. Why? Because it would help them stay grateful and expect God's provision for their future. The same goes for us.

**Practicing thankfulness daily is the best way to make it a habit, and grateful habits produce grateful hearts.** What's one thing you're thankful for today?

**GO DEEPER:**

1. Reflect on your daily habits—how often do you intentionally practice gratitude?
2. What steps can you take to make thankfulness a consistent part of your routine?
3. What has God done in the past that helps you trust Him for your future? How does focusing on that change your perspective?

INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON NEGATIVE  
CIRCUMSTANCES, FOCUS ON WHO  
GOD IS.

## CHAPTER 2

# BUILD NEXT-LEVEL APPRECIATION

Have you ever met someone who has less than you but seems happier? While on a mission trip years ago, I met people who lived in abject poverty yet had incredible joy and community.

It's interesting because material wealth is abundant in many first-world nations, yet despair and anxiety seem widespread. It made me realize something important: **joy doesn't come from next-level accumulation but next-level appreciation.** People with little can be joyful because it all hinges on gratitude.

***Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.***

- Acts 16:25 (NLT)

Paul and Silas' experience in Acts chapter 16 illustrates this beautifully. After Paul cast a demon out of a fortune-telling slave girl, her angry masters caused an uproar. As a result, the city officials had Paul and Silas stripped, severely beaten, and thrown into jail as punishment.

Paul and Silas had every reason to grumble, be angry at God, or feel bitter and resentful about their situation. They were held against their will in the inner dungeon of a Roman jail, bruised and bloody, their feet clamped in stocks, surrounded by dangerous criminals. Yet instead of griping, what did they do? They chose to praise, glorify, and exalt God. **Instead of focusing on their negative circumstances, they focused on who God is**—and it didn't go unnoticed. In fact, their response led to the jailer asking how he could be saved too!

Incredible miracles occurred in that Roman prison, and the Gospel continued to spread throughout Europe—all because two men stayed thankful despite their circumstances. **Are there any areas in your life that could use a focal adjustment onto all you can be grateful for instead?**

### **GO DEEPER:**

1. When you face challenges, do you find it difficult to focus on God's goodness? What could help you shift your focus toward gratitude?
2. Have you ever witnessed joy in someone who seemed to have very little? How did their perspective influence you?
3. Think about a current situation where you feel stuck or discouraged. What aspect of God's character can you focus on to cultivate gratitude?

THE MORE WE *TALK* ABOUT THE THINGS  
WE'RE THANKFUL FOR, THE MORE IT  
AFFECTS OUR HEARTS AND MINDS.

### CHAPTER 3

# SPEAK GRATEFUL WORDS

Every night at bedtime, my brother-in-law, Jeremy, asks his kids to name some things they're thankful for. My nephew, Ellis, might say he's grateful for his friends, and my niece, Sloane, might say, "I'm thankful for my favourite uncle, David!" What is Jeremy doing?

He's training his kids to practice expressing thanks out *loud*. He follows King David's advice from Psalm 107:2: "*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.*" Why is that important? Because **giving thanks is crucial to a believer's life and faith.**

***Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,  
whom he has redeemed from trouble.***

- Psalm 107:2 (ESV)



If Christians don't work to develop grateful habits, we can quickly become known for acting like the world—being angry, holding onto a victim mentality, and living full of division and hate. **But the more we *talk* about the things we're thankful for, the more it affects our hearts and minds.** Talking about God's past goodness to us strengthens our faith and trust in Him for our futures too.

This is why we read submitted praise reports aloud every Sunday at our church. Sharing how God is actively at work in people's lives helps encourage and build up the faith of others. You can do the same for yourself. **Even if you're walking through a dark valley right now, make it a habit to talk about what you're thankful for.**

Take a few minutes every day to reflect on what God has done in your life. Then don't just think it—give Him glory and praise by telling Him all you appreciate. As King David advised, **if you're grateful for something, say so!**

### **GO DEEPER:**

1. Why do you think speaking gratitude out loud is important?
2. What are some practical ways you can make gratitude a daily conversation in your home or with your loved ones?
3. Take a moment to reflect on God's faithfulness in your life. What specific things can you thank Him for today, and how will you "say so"?

GRATITUDE MOVES YOUR EYES  
ONTO WHAT IS GOOD AND  
PLENTIFUL IN YOUR LIFE.

## CHAPTER 4

# FOCUS ON THE “FOR THE’S”

**When it comes to gratefulness, we need to get a serious case of the “for the’s.”**

Let me explain what I mean. In Deuteronomy 8, Moses gave a final speech to the Israelites as they were about to enter the Promised Land. He warned them that once they settled in, they needed to remain thankful “for the” good land God had given them. Moses wanted the Israelites to get a case of the “for the’s.”

***“When you have eaten your fill, be sure to  
praise the LORD your God for the good land  
he has given you.”***

- Deuteronomy 8:10 (NLT)

Today, you might be thankful *for the* parents God gave you. Maybe you're grateful *for the* job you have or *for the* business you operate. It's challenging, but you thank God *for the* wisdom He gives you to run it.

We can teach our kids how to get the "for the's" by asking them what they're thankful for and demonstrating gratitude ourselves. For example, at mealtimes, it can be as simple as saying, "Thank You, God, for the food we have to eat." **Gratitude is a habit we build into our lives so that no matter what comes our way, we've positioned our hearts to focus on what God has done for us.**

And there's so much we can be thankful for: a trustworthy friend, our country, our church, the breath in our lungs, our ability to sing or read. Just talking about what I'm thankful for gets me pumped up!

Why is gratitude such a powerful force? **Because it moves your eyes off of whatever you don't have and onto what is good and plentiful in your life.** How many things can you think of that you're grateful for today?

### **GO DEEPER:**

1. List three "for the's" in your life today—specific things or people you're thankful for. How does focusing on these blessings change your outlook?
2. How can you encourage others around you to develop an attitude of gratitude?
3. When you're tempted to dwell on what you lack, what practical steps can you take to redirect your thoughts to what is good and plentiful in your life?

AS YOU PRACTICE GRATITUDE, IT  
MATURES YOUR FAITH.

## CHAPTER 5

# LET YOUR THANKFULNESS MATURE

We discussed how a basic level of gratitude begins with what we're thankful *for*. It's being grateful for what God has already given us, such as good friends, a steady job, or a healthy baby.

But King David upped the stakes of gratitude and gave thanks "even though." **This is gratitude that has graduated from what God has done to what He *will* do.**

You see, the more you get to a place full of gratitude for what God has done, the more it matures your heart to move on to where you remain thankful "even though" you're walking through storms. Can you see the progression?

***Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.***

- Psalm 23:4 (ESV)

Thankfulness “even though” you’re walking through the shadow of a difficult diagnosis, broken relationship, or financial hardship means standing in faith and thanking God for the answer on its way. **It’s an expectation of His provision for the future.**

For example, you might say, “Even though my spouse broke my heart, God, I thank You for all I have and that You can mend anything.” If you receive a challenging medical report, you could declare, “Even though I’m facing this health issue, I thank You, God, that Your Word says You are my healer and because of Jesus, I am already healed. I put my faith and trust in You.”

As you practice gratitude, it matures your faith. It conditions your heart to hold a confidence that goes beyond what you can see in the flesh, to what you can see through God’s Word in your heart. **Even though you may be walking through a valley, what can you thank Him for today?**

### **GO DEEPER:**

1. Can you think of a time when you chose to be grateful “even though” you were facing a difficult situation? How did it impact your faith?
2. What would it look like to trust God for His provision in an area of your life where you’re currently struggling?
3. How can practicing “even though” gratitude help you grow spiritually and mature in your relationship with God?



EVEN IF YOU'RE IN THE BIGGEST  
FIGHT OR STORM OF YOUR LIFE, YOU  
CAN STILL THANK GOD.

## CHAPTER 6

# KEEP THANKING GOD

When you consistently practice gratitude, it's like an oak tree. It grows and matures until its roots run so deep that storms can't touch it.

**Paul operated at this level of thankfulness. He challenged fellow believers to do the same and be thankful "in all circumstances."** Now, Paul didn't say to give thanks *for* all situations. He meant that our circumstances don't have to dictate our thankfulness; we can choose to live constantly grateful no matter what. That takes daily practice, but Paul showed it could be done!

For example, in Philippians 1, Paul found himself in a grim situation. He was jailed, shackled, and under constant guard while political enemies conspired to speed up his execution. Anyone in his position would have the right to be angry or bitter, yet what did he do?

***Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.***

- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT)

He looked beyond his immediate circumstances to his greater purpose. In Philippians 1:12 (NLT), Paul wrote, "Everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News." He didn't view his imprisonment through the negative lens of losing his freedom or life, but through grateful eyes for the continued advancement of God's Kingdom. Talk about incredible, untouchable gratitude!

As Paul showed, **even if you're in the biggest fight or storm of your life, you can still thank God** for His presence, faithfulness, and provision, knowing that all things will work together for your good (2 Timothy 3:11, Romans 8:28).

Maintaining gratefulness in all circumstances puts you in a powerful position. **It will allow you to see beautiful miracles and God's power at work through you in any and every situation!**

### **GO DEEPER:**

1. How do you typically respond to tough situations? What would it take to practice gratitude "in all circumstances" like Paul?
2. Reflect on a time when you saw God's power at work in your life despite challenges. How did it grow your faith?
3. What are some ways you can remind yourself to focus on God's faithfulness, even when life feels overwhelming?

WHEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH  
GOD IS NUMBER ONE, EVERYTHING  
ELSE WILL BE ADDED TO YOU.

## CHAPTER 7

# LIVE IN STRIDE WITH GOD

We often fall back to the world's definition of success and think it hinges on our income or social status. But God defines success very differently. He says **your purpose is relationship—to grow and fellowship with God, seeking His Kingdom above everything else.**

When you realize that, you can relax and let go of the stress and anxiety that comes from comparing yourself to others. **Instead of striving on your own for success, choose to stride with God.** Get back to the basics of building a relationship and walking with Him every day. Talk to Him, share your frustrations, and tell Him what you're thankful for. Read His Word and allow Him to speak to you.

***“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all these things will be given to you too.”***

- Matthew 6:33 (VOICE)

If you're pursuing your desires *before* your God-given purpose, you're going to be doing it in your own strength. But when your relationship with God and your gratitude for all He's done is your foundation, guess what? You'll be a better parent, friend, businessperson, artist—better everything. **You'll be operating in God's strength, in line with the purpose He has given you.**

You don't have to forget about your dreams. If God has given you a dream or gifting in an area, there's no question He wants to use it. But you've got to be willing to trust Him and put Him first. To our human perspective, it might seem backwards to prioritize Him above that promotion at work or that dream of owning a new house. But trust God. Take hold of your purpose, walk with Him every day, and keep an attitude of gratitude for what you already have.

**When your relationship with God is number one, everything else will be added to you. That's a promise!**

### **GO DEEPER:**

1. How does your current definition of success compare to God's definition of success as outlined in this chapter?
2. What steps can you take this week to prioritize your relationship with God above your personal ambitions?
3. Think about an area in your life where you've been striving on your own. How can you "stride with God" instead, trusting Him to guide you?

# CONCLUSION

Gratitude is more than a feeling—it's a choice, a habit, and a way to align your heart with God's goodness. As you've gone through these chapters, you've seen how thankfulness can shape your faith, shift your focus, and deepen your relationship with God.

Let's recap:

- **Chapter 1:** *Train Yourself to Be Thankful.* Gratitude needs to be practiced daily to become second nature in your life.
- **Chapter 2:** *Build Next-Level Appreciation.* There is tremendous power of in focusing on who God is and His goodness instead of the negative circumstances surrounding you.
- **Chapter 3:** *Speak Grateful Words.* Express your thankfulness out loud every chance you get!
- **Chapter 4:** *Focus on the "For The's."* Get a case of the "for the's" by naming the specific blessings in our lives.
- **Chapter 5:** *Let Your Thankfulness Mature.* Mature your faith by giving thanks "even though" you may be facing trials and storms.
- **Chapter 6:** *Keep Thanking God.* Walking in gratitude in all circumstances leads to unstoppable joy and peace.
- **Chapter 7:** *Live in Stride With God.* Live in stride with God, making your relationship with Him the foundation of your life.

As you move forward, remember: a thankful heart doesn't just change your day—it changes your life. Keep practicing gratitude and watch as God continues to work in incredible ways!