



Gratitude

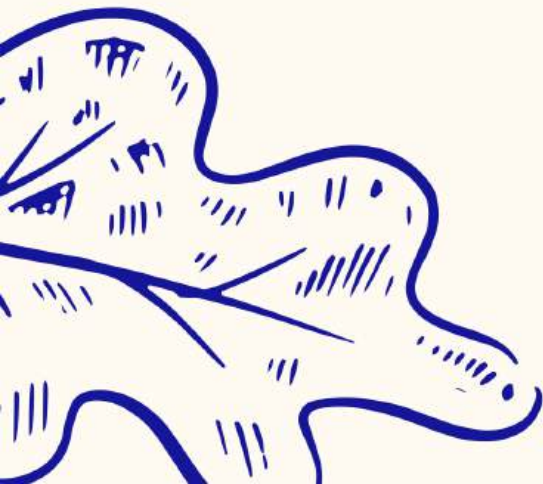
BUT FIRST GIVE THANKS

WEEK 1



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The enemy doesn't need
a **DRAMATIC ATTACK** to
destroy our gratitude.
He simply needs us to
FORGET the source.



GRATITUDE: WEEK 1

GRATITUDE IN CHAINS

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7, NLT | PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9, NLT

There's something profoundly counterintuitive about learning gratitude from a man in chains. Yet that's exactly where we find ourselves when we read Paul's letter to the Philippians. He's not writing from a vacation resort or during a season of blessing. He's chained to a Roman guard, uncertain whether tomorrow brings freedom or execution. And from that place, he teaches us to rejoice always.

Most of us have mastered what we might call "conditional gratitude." We're thankful when the paycheck arrives, when the doctor's report comes back clean, when relationships are smooth. But what happens when those conditions change? When the job disappears, when health fails, when relationships fracture? Our gratitude evaporates because it was built on shifting sand.

Paul offers us something radically different. His gratitude isn't rooted in circumstances but in the unchanging character of God. When he commands us to rejoice, he's not asking us to fake happiness or pretend everything is fine. He's inviting us to anchor our joy in something deeper than our current situation—in the Lord Himself.

This kind of gratitude requires a shift in perspective. Instead of fixating on what's wrong, Paul challenges us to bring everything to God in prayer, coupled with thanksgiving. It's a beautiful exchange: we hand Him our anxieties, and He gives us peace that defies all logic. Not the peace that comes when problems disappear, but the peace that exists even while problems remain.

But Paul doesn't stop there. He knows that gratitude is a battle won or lost in the mind.

We naturally focus toward negativity, comparison, and complaint. We notice what's missing, what's broken, what others have that we don't. So Paul teaches us how to filter our thoughts: focus on what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. This isn't toxic positivity, it's intentional praise-seeking.

The enemy doesn't need a dramatic attack to destroy our gratitude. He simply needs us to forget the source. When we start believing that our accomplishments, blessings, and opportunities came from our own effort, gratitude dies. Pride convinces us we're self-made, and suddenly we're taking credit for gifts we never could have earned.

Every good thing—every single one—comes from God. The breath in our lungs, the people we love, the opportunities before us, even this very day. When we truly grasp this, gratitude stops being an occasional response to blessings and becomes a constant posture of the heart.

Paul learned to be grateful in chains because he understood something we often forget: our circumstances are temporary, but God's character is eternal. His faithfulness doesn't fluctuate with our situation. And that truth, more than anything else, is worth being grateful for.

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Gratitude is a
BATTLE won or
lost in the **MIND**.”

Philippians 4:6-7, NLT

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

Historical Context

Paul wrote these words while imprisoned in Rome, awaiting trial that could result in his execution. Despite facing death, he instructs the Philippian church, a congregation he deeply loved, on how to experience peace in the midst of anxiety. In the Roman world, "peace" was often associated with the peace established through military might. But Paul offers a different kind of peace, one that comes not from controlling circumstances, but from surrendering them to God through prayer and gratitude.

- Prayer is the antidote to anxiety; when worry creeps in, bring it to God.
- God invites us to tell Him what we need, not because He's unaware, but because honest prayer builds intimacy and dependence on Him.
- Gratitude shifts our focus from what we lack to what God has already done.
- God's peace "exceeds anything we understand" — it's not based on circumstances improving, but on trusting God's character regardless of outcomes.

Reflection

What is your typical reaction when confronted with anxiety? (complaining, withdrawal/isolation, lash out, etc.)

What is keeping you anxious right now? What is the gap between where you are (worried & carrying it alone) to where God wants you to be? (praying, trusting Him)

"Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing."

Historical Context

Paul concludes his teaching on gratitude and peace by addressing the battlefield of the mind. In the Greco-Roman world, philosophy emphasized virtue and right thinking, but Paul takes it further—connecting our thought life directly to experiencing God's peace. The words Paul uses here (true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable) would have resonated with his audience familiar with virtue ethics, but Paul isn't promoting mere positive thinking. He's calling believers to actively guard their minds against the enemy's attacks, which often come through thoughts rather than circumstances. This isn't passive—"fix your thoughts" and "think about" are active, intentional commands that require discipline and practice.

- Gratitude is a battle won or lost in the mind—if we don't control our thoughts, they will control us.
- The enemy attacks through our thoughts—negativity, comparison, and fear are his primary weapons.
- Peace is the reward—when we obey God's command to guard our minds, His peace becomes our experience.
- Knowledge without practice is useless—hearing truth and living truth are two different things; Paul calls us to both.

Reflection

Take a moment and honestly evaluate your thought patterns this week. Run them through Paul's filter – are they True, Honorable, Right, Pure, Lovely, and Admirable?

If some of your thoughts don't make it through, what specific truth from Scripture or characteristic of God can you replace them with? (It's okay to use Google!)





GUIDED PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for being near to us and for inviting us to
bring every worry and every need directly to You.
Help us to replace anxiety with prayer. When worry
begins to creep in, remind us to turn to You first.
Teach us to be honest about what we need and to
trust that You care about every detail of our lives.

Give us hearts full of gratitude that remember Your
faithfulness. Open our eyes to see the many ways
You've provided and proven Yourself faithful. Let
thankfulness shift our focus from what we lack to
Who You are.

We ask for Your peace—the kind of peace
that guards our hearts and minds even when
circumstances remain the same. Protect our
thoughts from the enemy's attacks of negativity,
comparison, and fear.

Father, help us to fight for gratitude by fixing our
minds on what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely,
and admirable. Give us the discipline to look for the
good and the courage to live out our faith daily—not
just to know truth, but to practice it.

Thank You that every good and perfect gift comes
from You. Keep us humble, keep us grateful, and
keep us close to Your heart.

In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.