

Attitude of Gratitude

How long have you worked at the university?" asked Provost Greer.

"Fifteen years," smiled Breona. She was at lunch with the new provost, who had requested the meeting. The older woman was taking time to get to know the "long stayed and overlooked" staff, and Breona was there.

Breona shared her work experiences, her work desires, and a new work proposal with the provost.

"I like what I do," said Breona. "I appreciate my job."

"It seems that you've been left on the vine a little too long," said Provost Greer. "You do have some remarkable talents and ideas. I'll look more closely at your proposal."

"I'm most impressed with your attitude," continued the provost. "Your gratitude and disposition seem genuine."

The two women finished their lunch, and Breona thanked the provost again for seeking her out and listening to her suggestions. The truth was that Breona had grown discouraged on more than one occasion in trying to advance. Still, it was a good job with good benefits, and Breona was thankful.

"Don't let me become bitter. Let me always rejoice and be thankful, even in the difficult times," Breona had prayed on multiple occasions.

Two months later, when Breona got a call to the provost's office, she was startled.

"So, Breona," Provost Greer said, as Breona took a seat opposite her desk. "Are you ready to talk promotion?"

1. *For what are you thankful as a citizen of your country?*

2. *In what ways do you express gratitude to others?*

3. *How do you feel when people show gratitude to you?*

Banishing Those with Skin Diseases from the Israelite Camp

Leviticus 13:45-46, KJV

45 And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.

46 All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.

Leviticus 13:45-46, NIV

⁴⁵“Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ ⁴⁶As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp.

God gave the Israelites a detailed set of rules and regulations to establish an orderly community and a righteous nation. Leviticus details those regulations, including how to worship and honor God, what people had to do when they sinned against Him, and instructions for observing holy days and remaining ritually clean.

Chapter 13 describes how the Israelite priests were to inspect swellings, rashes, and sores on people to see whether the anomalies were signs of a serious affliction. If the hair covering the affected body parts turned white, or if raw flesh appeared, the person was branded as unclean and sent outside the community to live.

Those suffering from some kind of chronic skin disease had to put on “torn clothes” (vs. 45), leave their hair disheveled (rather than bound in a turban), and cover the upper portion of their mouth. These actions were associated with death and funeral rites, along with signaling the presence of anguish, mourning, and shame.

Infected persons shouldered the indignity of declaring their ceremonially “unclean” status to all who passed by. The sound of a warning cry would prevent travelers from defiling themselves through unintended contact with the

afflicted individuals. As long as their serious skin “disease” lasted, they were considered to be impure. For this reason, they had to remain “outside” the Israelite “camp” (vs. 46).

4. What did the Mosaic Law require people with skin diseases to do?

Jesus Healing Ten Men with Leprosy

Luke 17:11-14, KJV

11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 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.

Luke 17:11-14, NIV

¹¹Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

¹⁴When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.

According to Luke 17:11, Jesus was passing through the area between Samaria and Galilee. Good Jews would make a wide berth around Samaria to reach Judea from Galilee. It is important to recognize that Jesus was not making a haphazard decision by staying along the border of the two regions. Instead, He was intentional to arrive at the border and minister there, even for a brief time.

On this occasion, Jesus and His disciples were on the outskirts of a small town when 10 men having “leprosy” (vs. 12) spotted the visitors. In keeping with Leviticus 13:45-46, those with incurable skin diseases lived an isolated existence as social outcasts.

The 10 men maintained their distance from the Savior; yet, they were still close enough to be heard shouting their

plea for “mercy” (vs. 13, KJV) on them. This was a request to be healed, not a demand for alms. By calling Jesus “Master,” the lepers affirmed that He not only was a distinguished Jewish teacher, but a person of high rank and status.

In contrast to the community, Jesus displayed no concern for becoming ritually impure by associating with these social outcasts. Rather, and in accordance with the Law, He directed the 10 to present themselves to the local priests, who would then inspect and verify they had been healed. The lepers’ willingness to do so was a demonstration of their faith, and “as they went” to the priests, they were “healed” (vs. 14).

5. What event took place as Jesus traveled to Jerusalem?

6. How did Jesus respond to the 10 lepers?

Jesus Affirming the Faith of the Samaritan Leper

Luke 17:15-19, KJV

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Luke 17:15-19, NIV

¹⁵One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

Out of a sense of intense gratitude, one of the 10 cured lepers turned back to find Jesus. As the appreciative individual walked along, he could hardly contain his excitement. Rather than crying out “Unclean! Unclean!” the former leper enthusiastically shouted out praises to God.

Since lepers lived outside cities and were not allowed contact with others, any contact with a leper made a person unclean—that is, ceremonially impure. That possibility, though, did not prevent Jesus from letting the former leper prostrate himself and thank Jesus for what He had done.

The Savior then rhetorically asked whether 10 men had been healed of their disease. The answer, of course, is that the entire group had been “cleansed” (vs. 17). That being the case, Jesus asked concerning the whereabouts of the other nine who benefited from God’s grace.

Jesus observed that aside from the Samaritan, whom He referred to as a pagan “foreigner” (vs. 18), none of the other men made any effort to come back and offer “praise to God.” Presumably, at least some of the remaining nine were Jews. Based on Jesus’ remarks, it appears the other nine took the healing for granted. Yet, their lack of appreciation did not prevent Jesus from telling the cured Samaritan to stand up and be on his way.

Verse 19 literally says that the Samaritan’s “faith” had “saved” him. As noted in Lesson 3, the underlying Greek verb is used elsewhere in the New Testament to refer to someone being delivered from turmoil. Also, the tense of the verb here indicates that the man had been permanently rescued from his predicament. The implication is that as a result of his trust in the Son, the former leper’s physical healing accompanied his spiritual deliverance from sin.

7. *What did one of the 10 lepers do when he discovered he had been healed?*

8. *What was Jesus’ response to the healed leper?*

9. *What impact did the healed man’s “faith” (Luke 17:19) have on him?*

Praising God Is a Blessing

There's always a reason for us to show our gratitude to the Lord, whether we perceive how He is blessing us or not. Even in the darkest gloom and sorrow, God is reaching out to us to draw us back into the light, and for that we can be truly thankful. We should always thank the Lord for the blessings we experience, but it is important that they should not be what sustain our faith in Christ.

Whatever situation we're in and whatever are our circumstances, our gratitude to God should always be present in our spirit because our redemption in Christ defines who we are every moment of our lives from the time we are reborn in Him. Therefore, thanksgiving is not just a single day in November, but it is each day in the year.

Because our gratitude is based on what Christ has and is doing for us, we should not think that we deserve the blessings we receive from God because we work hard for what we get. Nor should we believe that we are somehow better than other people because we serve God far more than others. We should never echo the words and sentiment of the Pharisee, who said, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people." Indeed, Jesus praised the humble and repentant tax collector and not the vain Pharisee (see Luke 18:9-14).

Praising God is itself a blessing when it is done sincerely and humbly. Such gratitude is a recognition that our Lord God, indeed, loves and cares for us. Truly, His redemptive love is the only blessing that really counts in the end.

10. *Are you more thankful for the blessings you receive from God during times when life seems bleak or when life seems good? Explain your answer.*

11. *When you express your gratitude to God, are you tempted to regard yourself as more special than others to God? Why or why not?*

12. *How does a grateful attitude enrich your life?*

Gratitude That Never Fades

Despite the harsh regulations that were imposed on lepers in the Jewish communities, Jesus broke with tradition and physically cared for these victims of horrible skin afflictions. In one specific incident, a Samaritan thanked Jesus and praised God for his healing. In response, Jesus blessed him and affirmed his faith. All of us need to be cleansed of our sins, and we can also praise God because Jesus has also healed us.

► *Write a letter to God. Begin by thanking Him for specific blessings that He is currently pouring into your life. Next, thank Him for the ways Jesus has blessed you as your Savior. Finally, ask God to continually remind you to be grateful no matter how your life is going, for there is always a reason to express thankfulness to the Lord.*

KEY VERSE

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. —Luke 17:15, KJV

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. —Luke 17:15, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 5 through July 11

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** 1 Corinthians 3:1-11—Apollos and Paul, Builders.
- Tues.** Galatians 2:1-10—Entrusted to Take Gospel to Gentiles.
- Wed.** Romans 1:1-7—Grace and Peace to All.
- Thurs.** Romans 1:18-23—God's Righteous Wrath.
- Fri.** Romans 1:24-32—God's Actions Are Fair and Just.
- Sat.** 2 Peter 2:4-9—God's Righteous Actions for Saints, Sinners.
- Sun.** Romans 1:8-17—The Gospel Changes Jews and Gentiles.