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UPPER ROOM DELIVERANCE MINISTRIES

FAITH | FAMILY | FREEDOM | PURPOSE

KINGDOM LIVING Digest

REAL ENCOURAGEMENT FOR EVERY SEASON



MORE THAN A SEASON

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More Than a Season



Every November, gratitude gets its moment. Tables are set, blessings are counted, and for a few days the culture around us pauses long enough to acknowledge that there is something worth being thankful for. It is a beautiful tradition. But it is also a limited one, because the gratitude Scripture calls believers into was never designed to be seasonal. It was never meant to be reserved for the days when circumstances cooperate, when the harvest is full, and when life feels worth celebrating.

The gratitude God calls His people into is something altogether different from the gratitude the world practices once a year. It is not dependent on favorable conditions. It is not silenced by difficulty or delayed until things improve. It is a posture of the heart that has been so thoroughly shaped by the knowledge of who God is and what He has done that it cannot be contained by any single season or suppressed by any single hardship.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 does not say give thanks when things are good. It says give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. In all circumstances. The language is deliberately comprehensive. It includes the circumstances that make thanksgiving feel natural and the ones that make it feel impossible. It covers the seasons of abundance and the seasons of loss, the answered prayers and the ones still waiting, the breakthroughs and the long, quiet stretches of faithfulness that no one celebrates but God notices.

This month we examine what it means to carry gratitude not as a seasonal practice but as a Kingdom lifestyle. One that is rooted deeply enough to hold in every season and genuine enough to mean something when it costs us something to offer it.

365 -Day Bible Ready Plan

NOVEMBER

1	DAY 305	☐	ACTS 16:1-15
2	DAY 306	☐	ACTS 16:16-40
3	DAY 307	☐	ACTS 17:1-15
4	DAY 308	☐	ACTS 17:16-34
5	DAY 309	☐	ACTS 19:1-20
6	DAY 310	☐	ACTS 19:21-41
7	DAY 311	☐	ACTS 20:1-12
8	DAY 312	☐	ACTS 20:13-38
9	DAY 313	☐	ACTS 21:1-17
10	DAY 314	☐	ACTS 21:18-36
11	DAY 315	☐	ACTS 21:37–22:29
12	DAY 316	☐	ACTS 22:30–23:22
13	DAY 317	☐	ACTS 23:23–24:27
14	DAY 318	☐	ACTS 25:1-27
15	DAY 319	☐	ACTS 26:1-32
16	DAY 320	☐	ACTS 27:1-26
17	DAY 321	☐	ACTS 27:27-44
18	DAY 322	☐	ACTS 28:1-14
19	DAY 323	☐	ACTS 28:15-31
20	DAY 324	☐	ROMANS 5:1-11
21	DAY 325	☐	ROMANS 8:1-18
22	DAY 326	☐	ROMANS 8:19-39
23	DAY 327	☐	ROMANS 12:1-21
24	DAY 328	☐	1 COR. 13:1-13
25	DAY 329	☐	1 COR. 15:1-20
26	DAY 330	☐	1 COR. 15:42-58
27	DAY 331	☐	2 COR. 4:1-18
28	DAY 332	☐	GAL. 5:13-26
29	DAY 333	☐	EPHESIANS 1:3-23
30	DAY 334	☐	EPHESIANS 2:1-22

PTR. LILLIE POWELL

The Anatomy of a Grateful Heart

Gratitude at its deepest level is not a feeling. Feelings are real and they matter, but they are too dependent on circumstances to be the foundation of a biblical lifestyle of thanksgiving. A feeling of gratitude rises naturally when life is good, and falls just as naturally when it is not. What Scripture calls believers into goes deeper than feeling. It is a settled orientation of the heart toward God, which produces thanksgiving as a consistent response to life rather than an occasional emotional reaction to it.

Psalm 100 gives us one of the clearest pictures of this in all of Scripture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations. The thanksgiving called for here is not generated by current circumstances. It is grounded in the unchanging character of God. He is good. His love endures forever. His faithfulness spans every generation. These truths do not change when our situations do, which means the gratitude rooted in them does not have to change either.

This is the anatomy of a genuinely grateful heart. It is not built primarily on what God has done recently, though recent acts of God are absolutely worth celebrating. It is built on who God is **permanently**. When the foundation of gratitude is the character of God rather than the conditions of life, it becomes something that can survive difficulty, drought, disappointment, and delay **without** collapsing.

Colossians 3:15-17 weaves gratitude into the fabric of the entire Christian life. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Gratitude here is not a separate spiritual exercise. It is the atmosphere in which the entire Christian life is meant to be lived. It runs through the peace we receive, the Word we carry, and every word and action we put into the world.

A grateful heart is also a protected heart. Philippians 4:6-7 instructs believers to bring every anxiety to God with prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, and promises that the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Thanksgiving is part of the mechanism by which peace is received, and anxiety is displaced. It is not a feeling we wait for before we pray. It is something we bring into prayer as an act of faith, and it opens the door to a peace that our circumstances cannot explain or take away.

The anatomy of a grateful heart, then, is this: a foundation in God's unchanging character, a posture that is maintained by choice rather than feeling, a practice woven into every dimension of daily life, and a protection against the anxiety and fear that an ungrateful heart is left exposed to. It is not complex. But it is deeply countercultural and requires deliberate and daily cultivation.











When Gratitude Is Hard: Giving Thanks in the Difficult Seasons

PTR. JONNIE MAE KING

There is a kind of thanksgiving that costs nothing. It flows easily in the good seasons. When prayers have been answered. When health is strong. When relationships are intact. And when the future looks promising. This kind of thanksgiving is real and is right. God deserves to be thanked when things are good. Acknowledging His goodness in seasons of blessing is not something to minimize.

But there is another kind of thanksgiving. The kind that has to be chosen rather than felt. The kind that rises in the middle of grief, uncertainty, financial pressure, relational fracture, or prolonged waiting. The kind that looks at circumstances that offer no natural reason for celebration, yet still finds something to anchor to. This is the thanksgiving that reveals the **true** depth of a believer's faith, and it is this kind of thanksgiving that Scripture seems most interested in cultivating.

Habakkuk stands as one of the most striking examples of this in all of Scripture. In chapter 3, he surveys a landscape of total agricultural devastation. No blossoms, no fruit, no flock, no herd. By any reasonable measure, there is nothing left to celebrate. And yet his response is not despair or bitterness. “Yet I will rejoice in the Lord”, he declares. I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength. Habakkuk does not thank God for the devastation. He thanks God in the middle of it. Anchoring his gratitude not in what he has, but in who God is.

Job demonstrates the same posture from a place of even more acute loss. Having lost his children, his health, and his wealth in rapid succession, Job's response in chapter 1 is remarkable. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Job is not performing gratitude. He is not pretending the pain is not real. He is making a theological declaration from the middle of his worst nightmare: God remains worthy of praise regardless of what I am currently experiencing.

This kind of gratitude does not come naturally to any of us. It is cultivated through years of choosing to return to God in thankfulness even when the circumstances do not seem to warrant it. It is built through the accumulated experience of watching God come through in previous hard seasons, so that when a new one arrives there is a history to draw from. It is strengthened by community with other believers who have given thanks through their own difficult seasons and can testify to what that gratitude produced in them over time.

Hebrews 13:15 ESV

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

Hebrews 13:15 calls this a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. The word sacrifice is not accidental. A sacrifice costs something. It requires giving something up. The sacrifice of praise in a difficult season requires giving up the right to let our circumstances determine our posture before God. It requires releasing bitterness, releasing the demand for immediate explanation, and releasing the expectation that God must make things comfortable before we acknowledge His goodness.

Romans 5:3-5 ESV

3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

And what does this sacrifice produce? Romans 5:3-5 traces the progression. Tribulation produces patience. Patience produces character. Character produces hope. And hope does not disappoint. The gratitude offered in hard seasons is not without return. It produces something in us that the easy seasons simply cannot build. And in time, it becomes the testimony that reaches someone else in their hard season and reminds them that God is still worthy, still faithful, and still enough.

SPIRITUAL STABILITY: REMAINING ANCHORED IN UNSTABLE TIMES — PART 6

Finishing Well: Stability as a Lifelong Commitment

Over the course of this series, we have explored stability from many angles. We established its foundation in the character and faithfulness of God. We examined the disciplines that cultivate it, the renewal of the mind that protects it, the community that sustains it, and the suffering that ultimately deepens it. Now, in this final installment, we arrive at what may be the most important dimension of all: the commitment to finish well.

Beginning well is something many believers do with genuine enthusiasm. The early seasons of faith are often marked by passion, hunger, and a willingness to give God everything. But the Christian life is not a sprint. It is a marathon, and marathons are not won at the start line. They are won by the runner who is still moving with purpose when the finish line finally comes into view. Spiritual stability, at its fullest expression, is not simply the ability to survive a single difficult season. It is the commitment to remain rooted, faithful, and growing across an entire lifetime.

The Danger of Late-Season Drift

Scripture is remarkably honest about the reality that not every believer who begins well finishes well. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, began his reign with breathtaking devotion to God and ended it in compromise and idolatry. Saul started with humility and ended with rebellion. Demas, who traveled with Paul, eventually forsook the ministry because he loved the present world. These are not cautionary tales about moral failure alone. They are warnings about the subtle, gradual drift that can happen when stability is treated as something achieved rather than something maintained.

Kingdom Tips

Cultivating a Lifestyle of Gratitude

- Begin and end each day by naming three specific things you are grateful for. Over time this practice rewires how you see your circumstances.
- Keep a gratitude journal and return to it in difficult seasons. A written record of God's faithfulness is one of the most powerful tools available against despair.
- Practice thanking God before the answer arrives. Gratitude offered in faith before the breakthrough strengthens trust and honors God's faithfulness in advance.
- When gratitude feels impossible, start with the basics. Breath. Salvation. The Word of God. Build from there.
- Use meals, commutes, and quiet moments as intentional opportunities to give thanks rather than allowing them to be consumed by worry or distraction.

Reflection & Application

This month, take an honest inventory of the areas of your life where gratitude has been absent or difficult. Rather than feeling condemned by what you find, treat it as information. Where gratitude is hardest is often where trust in God needs to grow deepest.

Choose one of those areas this month and make a deliberate daily practice of thanking God in it, not for the difficulty itself, but for His presence in it, His purpose through it, and His faithfulness that does not change because of it.

Let gratitude be your act of defiance against every force that wants to convince you that God is not worthy of your praise in this season. He is. He always has been. And He always will be.



Late-season drift rarely announces itself. It creeps in quietly through small compromises, through the gradual cooling of prayer, through the slow withdrawal from community, and through the accumulation of comforts that make dependence on God feel less urgent. The believer who has walked with God for decades is not immune to drift. In some ways, they are more vulnerable to it because familiarity can breed a false sense of security. The disciplines that once felt essential can begin to feel optional when life has been stable for a long time.

Hebrews 3:13 addresses this directly with an instruction that carries a sense of urgency. Exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. The hardening described here is not sudden. It is the result of daily neglect, of days accumulating without accountability, without Scripture, without the honest fellowship that keeps a heart soft and responsive to God. Finishing well requires that we treat the daily disciplines of faith as seriously in the fortieth year of our walk with God as we did in the first.



What Finishing Well Looks Like



Paul gives us the clearest portrait of finishing well in all of Scripture. In 2 Timothy 4:7, written from prison near the end of his life, he declares, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith". Three statements. Three dimensions of a life that finished as it began, rooted, purposeful, and faithful to what God entrusted to it.

Fighting a good fight does not mean a life without struggle. Paul's life was defined by struggle. It means engaging with the challenges of the Christian life with integrity, perseverance, and the refusal to take spiritual shortcuts. Finishing the course means staying in the lane God marked out, not abandoning the purpose He gave, and not being pulled off the path by distractions that felt urgent but were never essential. Keeping the faith means holding on to the truth of the Gospel with both hands, refusing to let persecution, disappointment, or the passage of time loosen the grip.

Every believer has a course. It is uniquely shaped and specifically purposed by God. Finishing well means running that course with the same intentionality at the end as at the beginning, trusting that the One who called us into it is faithful to carry us through to its completion.

The Grace to Finish

Perhaps the most important thing to understand about finishing well is that it is not achieved by our own determination alone. Philippians 1:6 anchors us with one of the most encouraging promises in Scripture: He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. The God who started something in every believer has committed Himself to seeing it through. Our responsibility is to remain yielded, obedient, and engaged. His responsibility is to complete what He began.

This means that finishing well is not ultimately about our strength, our discipline, or our consistency, though all of these matter. It is about our continued surrender to a God who is more committed to our completion than we are. Every time we return to Him after a season of drift, every time we choose obedience when compromise would have been easier, every time we gather with community when isolation felt more comfortable, we are cooperating with the work He is doing to bring us to the finish line.



Spiritual stability across a lifetime is not perfection. It is perseverance. It is choosing, day after day and season after season, to remain anchored in the One who does not change, sustained by the One who does not fail, and confident in the One who has already prepared what lies on the other side of every finish line He calls His people to cross.

This concludes our six-part series on Spiritual Stability: Remaining Anchored in Unstable Times.

Next Month: The Spiritual Thread begins a new series — The Gift That Keeps Giving: Understanding the Grace of God.

FROM THE PASTORS' DESK

GRATITUDE IS A DISCIPLINE

PASTOR LILLIE P. POWELL



I have learned over the years that gratitude does not always arrive on its own. There are seasons when it must be chosen, when it must be sought, and when it must be offered as an act of will before it becomes an act of feeling. That does not make it less genuine. It makes it more so.

The believer who only gives thanks when they feel thankful will find their gratitude limited to the seasons when life cooperates. But the believer who has made gratitude a discipline, who returns to it morning after morning regardless of what the previous day held, gradually discovers something remarkable. The discipline produces the feeling. The practice produces the posture. The choice made in faith produces a heart that is genuinely and increasingly grateful, not because life has gotten easier but because God has gotten bigger.

This month I want to encourage you to treat gratitude as a spiritual discipline in the same way you treat prayer and Scripture reading. Give it a time. Give it a place. Give it your intentional attention. And watch what it does to how you see your life, your God, and the season you are in.

WHAT THANKFULNESS PROTECTS

PASTOR JONNIE M. KING

There is something that gratitude does that we do not talk about enough. It protects. A heart that is genuinely and consistently grateful is a heart that is far more resistant to bitterness, to envy, to fear, and to the kind of spiritual erosion that happens slowly and quietly when we stop acknowledging what God has done and start focusing only on what He has not yet done.



Ungratefulness is not simply an absence of thankfulness. It is an open door. It leaves the heart exposed to the very things that destabilize faith, poison relationships, and darken the believer's perspective on everything God is doing. Paul's instruction in Philippians 4 to bring everything to God with thanksgiving is not simply a posture of piety. It is a strategic act of spiritual protection.

As we move into this season of Thanksgiving, I want to challenge every reader to examine not just what you are grateful for but what your gratitude is protecting you from. A thankful heart is a guarded heart. And in a world that is working very hard to fill believers with fear, anxiety, and discontent, gratitude is one of the most powerful weapons we have been given. Use it.



Heavenly Father,

We come before You this month with hearts that want to be more grateful than they are.

Teach us to give thanks not only in the seasons when it comes easily but in the ones when it costs us something to offer it.

Remind us daily of Your faithfulness, Your goodness, and the ways You have shown up in our lives; even when we have failed to notice.

Let gratitude become the atmosphere of our hearts rather than a seasonal practice.

And in every circumstance, whether joyful or difficult, may our first response be to turn our faces toward You and declare that You are worthy.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHURCH UPDATES





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