

What's Your Gratitude Score Today?

I know a family who recently had a beautiful baby, another who just moved into a gorgeous new house and one who just became debt-free. They are all brimming with gratitude!

But what about my friend who is lying in the ICU with cancer, and another whose wife just went on hospice and another couple who just lost a child? Is gratitude just a fading memory for them?

For most of us, gratitude is the result of having a higher score of positive things in our lives than negative. Imagine that we chalk up one point for every thing that goes well, and dock a point for those that don't go the way we want. Then (and only then) *if* the good outweighs the bad, we can muster up some gratitude.

This is a season to pause and express thanks, typically for all the blessings the Lord has showered upon us, none of which we deserve. But what if our scoring standard is based on a faulty premise? Or at best something that is only temporary?

When I lost my father to cancer, I didn't feel very grateful. But gradually, as the reality of God's promises and the solid hope of salvation started sinking in, my perspective changed. The pain was still there, but I was able to give thanks. Later I had the privilege of writing the book *Goodbye for Now* to offer practical help and hope for others who are losing or have lost a loved one, which can be especially tough this time of year.

Deep and lasting gratitude is not based on temporary situations, or anything we can touch or see in this world: bank account, body image, health, politics and so on. Our scoring system should reflect only what will last forever! And

whenever we pause (not just at Thanksgiving) to claim God's promises freely offered through His Son Jesus Christ, our gratitude score goes through the roof!

I love how the prophet Habakkuk finally arrived at the same conclusion. Braced for a massive invasion, he dreaded they would lose everything, including their lives. Gratitude was nowhere on his radar! But after much wrestling in prayer, this is what he wrote:

"Though the fig tree does not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the yield of the olive fails, and the fields produce no food;

though the flocks are cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation