

Releasing God's Goodness Into Your Heart Like Never Before

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it" (NIV).

The Bible has a lot to say about your heart; not your physical heart, but what's going on inside of you—your thoughts, motives and desires. These "hidden" things are important because they eventually come out through your words, attitudes and the things you do. If you have a healthy *heart*, then it leads to a healthy *life*.

So, I want to ask you today: What is in your heart? Is it full of murmuring and complaining? Or is it filled with praise and thanksgiving to God?

Just like it's possible to have a physical heart murmur, I believe we can also suffer from a *spiritual* heart murmur. We can get into a habit of complaining or "murmuring" about the things we aren't happy with in life. These murmurs are often the result of jealousy, resentment or a lack of gratitude.

For instance, I can remember a time years ago when my next-door neighbor was given a brand-new coat—the very coat I had been praying for! I thought, "Surely, they delivered it to the wrong house by accident." Instead of being happy for her, I seethed with jealousy and grumbled about how I deserved it more than she did.

The truth is, God can never bless us to the degree He wants to until we learn how to truly be happy for other people. If all we can do is complain about what others have and what we *don't* have, it just keeps us stuck.

The Israelites are the perfect example. Because of their unbelief and bad attitudes, they literally wandered around in

the wilderness for 40 years. The Bible says “All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, ‘If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness!’”(Num. 14:2 NIV).

They complained when they were hungry, and so God supernaturally provided them with manna every morning. Although they were satisfied for a little while, they began to grumble because they wanted meat instead (Ex. 16:11-16; 17:1-7).

It’s easy to read about the Israelites and think, “How could they be so ungrateful?” However, we often do the very same thing! We can pray to have children, then later complain about all the hard work that comes with it. Or we can desire a bigger house and then get upset because we have to spend more time cleaning it.

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I used to be a chronic complainer. I would make my list and ask God for all the things I wanted, while complaining about the things I already had. One day, the Lord spoke to my heart and said, “Joyce, if you’re not thankful for what you have *now*, why should I give you more to complain about?” That got my attention!

Maintaining a grateful heart is the cure for a spiritual heart murmur. Psalm 50:23 says, “He who offers a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving honors Me; and to him... I shall show the salvation of God” (AMP). When we are thankful, it opens the door for God to answer our prayers and bring blessings into our lives.

What we focus on has the ability to make us either happy or miserable. We can either dwell on the negative things or choose to magnify the good. When we choose to be thankful, we

become happier, and we bring more joy to those around us.

The old saying "Count your blessings" is terrific advice. I think it's easy to get used to all of the wonderful things God does for us and take them for granted. That's why it's so powerful to take even just a few minutes each day to thank Him for the blessings in our lives.

It felt a little awkward at first, but I've made a habit of being thankful. As I go about my day, I'll thank God for His help with my work, the beautiful day He has provided, and even the coffee I get to drink. I praise Him for the people He has placed in my life and for the strength He gives me to keep on going when I feel too busy or overwhelmed.

It's not only important to thank God for who He is and all that He does for us, but we also need to regularly thank the people who make our lives better. I think you would be amazed how much your relationships would improve if you simply began saying, "I appreciate you" from time to time.

Are you dealing with a heart murmur of your own? Have you been tempted to complain about the things you *don't* like instead of focusing on the blessings in your life? If so, I encourage you to practice being a person of gratitude. Voice your thankfulness to God for the wonderful things He does for you each and every day.

As you do, you will fill your heart with joy and gratitude...and release the power of God's goodness into your life like never before.

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