

The Grave Consequences of Being Unthankful

Recently, I read about how 25 percent of all U.S. women suffer from some form of depression, and that more than 12 million women will suffer some form of clinical depression in their lifetime.

There is an epidemic of pessimism, anxiety and hopelessness that has erupted in the United States and beyond. This is par for the course for any sociological system that is not built upon being thankful to our Creator. Romans 1:21 teaches that being unthankful is the cornerstone sin of all other sins, with a trajectory that leads to covetousness; worshipping creatures more than God; all sexual sins including homosexuality; and pride, gossip and all kinds of malice that eventually lead to full-scale rebellion against God (Rom.1:21-32).

In essence, praising God is good (Ps. 92:1) not just because it makes us feel closer to God but because it is perhaps the most countercultural thing we can do to show our resistance against Satan's kingdom, which is steeped in insurrection against the lordship of Christ and the mandate of the kingdom of God. By living lives that are worshipful, we show that we do not depend on circumstances, people, materialism or the pleasures of this world in order to be satisfied. This is the antithesis of the kingdom of darkness that is built upon pride, lust and greed (1 John 2:15-17).

In regard to kingdom culture, my greatest difficulty is adapting my mind to continually practice praise and thanksgiving towards God. This involves intentionally engaging my mind, not only my spirit, in ordering my thoughts in a manner that pleases God (Phil. 4:8). Seventy percent of all that we think and do is unconscious. Thus we are all acting

out our lives based on mostly negative thoughts that are embedded in our souls. It is important for us to break out of this mental bondage if we are going to enter the promised land of our soul and destiny, or else we will wind up like the children of Israel who didn't praise and honor God, which resulted in unbelief and wandering in the desert for 40 years (Num. 13).

The following are some negative consequences of living unthankful lives:

We will not be able to see the divine opportunities in front of us.

God has already provided for all of our needs (Eph. 1:3; 2 Pet.1:3-4). Praise takes the veil off our eyes and turns on the switch of faith and insight that enables us to see all the hidden opportunities that are masked by problems and challenging circumstances.

We will focus on the actions of people instead of the processes of God.

When we are unthankful, we magnify the actions, activities and circumstances produced by other people for or against us and weigh our lives based on their responses, which inadvertently saps our faith in God.

When we are God-focused, we see the providential activity of God behind every circumstance, even as Joseph did when the word of the Lord tested him when his brothers sold him as a slave in Egypt. He told his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good" (Gen. 50:20).

We will worship pleasant circumstances rather than be satisfied with God alone.

When we are constantly complaining, then we as believers are in essence saying that God is not enough to satisfy us. This

is unlike David who said that the Lord was His portion, cup and inheritance (Ps. 16).

Because Paul the apostle lived a life of rejoicing and praise, he was not a victim of outside circumstances, and he did not allow the actions of others to control his attitude. This enabled him to worship God even while bound in chains and stocks in a Philippian jail (Acts 16).

We will give place to the devil who operates in lust, greed and pride.

Satan's original sin was pride, which led to him not being thankful for his place as a covering cherub (Isa. 14:12-14). This led him to covet the throne of God, which ended in him being thrown out of heaven.

Since the beginning of the world, Satan has been the father of all greed, covetousness and complaining. We give place to him in our hearts when we are not grateful for the things God has already given us.

We will repel key people around us.

When we are not living lives of praise to God, we are not thankful to Him for His goodness. When we are not thankful to Him, we will not be grateful for the key people God has put in our lives, leading to accentuating negative aspects about these people in our minds. This results in us repelling them by our negative speaking and communication towards them.

When we live lives of constant complaining, grumbling and lack of thankfulness, we will exude the wrong spirit in our homes and nurture families who are ungrateful toward one another and even toward God. We will be teaching our children that it is only time to "turn on the switch" of thanksgiving during a two-hour worship service on Sunday. Unfortunately, this compartmentalization will produce hypocrisy in their lives and result in them not fully serving the Lord.

We will repel the presence of God within us.

The psalms teach us that God dwells in the praises of His people (Ps. 22:3). This also can be reversed: When we don't have an attitude of thanksgiving toward God, we can repel His personal presence within us, which grieves His Spirit and hurts our ability to fellowship intimately with Him.

God cannot trust us with more blessings.

I learned a long time ago that God will multiply the things in my life that I am most grateful for. He will not trust me with whatever I am not thankful for because I don't appreciate it.

Sometimes we are even thankful for or appreciate bad things that come in our lives that can also multiply and destroy us. For example, we could appreciate the kindness and flattery of a strange woman, which could then lead to adultery if we are not grateful to God for our spouses. But if we show gratitude to our spouses, it will greatly aid our marriages. (If we are continually complaining about and to our spouses, it will repel them and distance them from us.)

David blessed the Lord with all that was within him, which led him to recounting continually all the blessings of the Lord that continued to multiply in his life (read Ps. 103).

We will suffer continual discouragement and even depression.

If we are not continually and intentionally ordering our minds to think on the good things of God, we will not enjoy the peace of God in these troubled times (Phil. 4:8-9). This can lead to discouragement and severe depression. The greatest tool in fighting depression is not medication but worshipping the Creator and being thankful to Him for every good thing He has given us from above (James 1:17).

We will miss our greatest purpose in life: to love and worship God.

The Westminster Catechism begins by stating that our highest purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Revelation teaches us that in heaven, the elders and angelic beings are continually worshipping our Creator. One of the things they say is, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You have created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created'" (Rev. 4:10-11).

This Thanksgiving should not be an event or a one-day holiday but should become a catalyst for churches and believers everywhere to have "holy days": to live lives of praise and thanksgiving. This is the most countercultural thing we can do to strip the devil of his power over us and our families and will reveal the vast opportunities God has already given us so we can walk in His kingdom purposes.