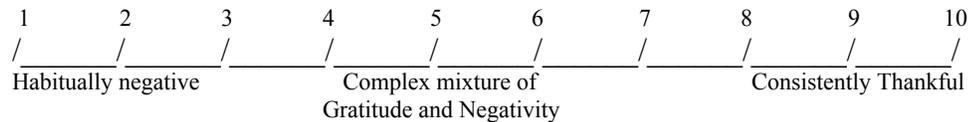


How To Boost Your Happiness Exponentially

1. Warm up: Jeff began Sunday's sermon by describing a comedy skit done by Louis CK about airport annoyances and disappointments. What's the worst air travel experience you've ever had? ☺
2. This week we continue our intensive study of the book of Colossians by focusing on three verses that drive home the importance of living with an attitude of gratitude. At least 355 different times the Bible emphasizes the importance of gratitude and thankfulness. So on Sunday we explore three key questions: Why should I be thankful? What are some practical ways to express my thankfulness? And what should I be thankful for? Tonight we'll dig deeper into each question, but first let's re-read Colossians 3:15-17, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Let's begin by exploring why we should be thankful. When we do something nice for someone, it always feels good to be appreciated. And God probably feels the same way. But Jeff suggested that the Biblical command to be give thanks to God is not primarily about God. Jeff said, "It's not like God is sitting up there in heaven, emotionally needy, hoping to receive positive reinforcement. It's not like God says, "Oh, thank you for telling me how great I am; I was starting to doubt myself." What do you think of what Jeff said? Is it on the mark or off the mark? Do you think God longs for our praise and thanks? Why or why not?
 - b. Jeff suggested that the Biblical command to be thankful isn't driven by what God needs, but by what we need. Many medical studies have demonstrated that gratitude dramatically improves both our physical health and emotional wellbeing. Take a look at the list on p. 3 of mental and physical functions positively impacted by gratitude. None of us are doctors, but given what you know about the human body, why would you guess thankfulness has a significant impact on our physical health? What would be your armchair explanation?
 - c. Do you believe thankfulness has a significant impact on our mental and emotional wellbeing? Why or why not?
 - d. Why is it so easy for us to get stuck focusing on the negative things?
 - e. Jeff shared a story about how a little girl's prayer of thanks for her meal in a diner completely changed the mood of people in the diner and was especially helpful to a guy who had just gone through a divorce and was stuck in a negative frame of mind. The little girl's example inspired him to "start thanking God for all I did have and stop majoring in all that I didn't have." Tell us about a time when you've been stuck in a negative frame of mind. How did that affect you?
 - f. Have you ever experienced or witnessed the power of thankfulness to dramatically shift your perspective or the perspective of someone you know? If so, tell us about it.

- g. Brennan Manning says, “We’re not joyful and then become grateful – we’re grateful and that makes us joyful.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Now let’s turn our attention to practical things we can do to build an attitude of gratitude. Take a look at the list of ways to express our gratitude on p. 3

- a. The scale below asks us to evaluate our typical level of gratitude. Where would you place yourself on the scale? Are you satisfied with where you are on the scale? Explain your answer.



- b. Six different gratitude practices are listed on p. 3 by way of example. Are there other ways to practice gratitude that you’d add to the list?
- c. In which one of the six examples of how to practice gratitude are you strongest?
- d. Which of the six gratitude practices do you most want to add to your pattern of gratitude? Why does that one call to you?
- e. Some would say that the sixth practice – doing something to show our gratitude to God instead of just saying how thankful we are – is the most meaningful. Tell us about a time recently when you’ve done something good and beautiful as an expression of your gratitude to God. (This is not bragging. By sharing, we can “cross pollinate” and inspire each other with ideas.)
4. Lastly, let’s talk about what we should be thankful for.
- a. What’s something wonderful in your life that you’re thankful for?
- b. The Bible says, “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” I Thessalonians 5:18. “All circumstances” includes our most difficult circumstances. Why do you think the Bible says to give thanks in difficult circumstances? Why is that so important?
- c. Tell us about a really difficult situation in your past or present. What are some possible reasons to be thankful for that difficult situation?
- d. Jeff told us about a teenage girl who lost half a leg. As she recovered, instead of being depressed by how much she lost, she celebrated “how much I have left.” Tell us about a situation of loss in your life, and what would it look like to turn the tables and express gratitude for how much you have left? Describe for us how much you have left.

Colossians 3:15-17

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Health Benefits of Thankfulness

Blood pressure	Fat intake
Immune function	Stress hormones
Sleep	Aging of brain
Inflammation	Emotional wellbeing
Hearth rhythms	Happiness

Ways To Express Our Gratitude

Prayer
Singing
Three thanksgivings at bedtime
Gratitude journal
Saying grace often, not just for meals
Giving back to God through our good deeds