**Breakthrough – Week 6 – Breakthrough in Thanksgiving**

**Message Big Idea**: When the Spirit brings breakthrough, we respond together with thanksgiving.

**Scripture:** Psalm 103:2-5a, James 1:16-17a, Psalm 8:3-4, Ephesians 5:19b-20, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Colossians 3:17

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**Why I Love Thanksgiving**

*(Series Graphic)* I don’t know about you, but I love Thanksgiving. Like… more than I probably should, to be honest. But think about it – what’s there *not* to like about an entire holiday focused on eating? It’s the perfect holiday! And I don’t know about you, but I love just about every item in a traditional Thanksgiving Day meal: cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, cream corn… Is anyone salivating yet?



But can I confess something to you? I know this might be heresy for some of you, but I actually don’t love pumpkin pie. I know, I know, judge me if you must. In my opinion, this is the only way to eat pumpkin pie: *(picture)*

Who’s with me? Raise your hand high if you’re team whipped cream! Ah, my people!

*(Turkey)* But who could forget the most important item of the Thanksgiving meal… the turkey. Yes, the turkey, so good we’re all getting sleepy already just thinking about it. Did you now that 91% of American households will have turkey on Thanksgiving? It’s true! And many of us turn to the Butterball hotline for help tips on cooking it. I took the liberty of checking their website and here are a few of my favorite stories they listed:

* One gentleman called to tell the operator he cut his turkey in half with a chain saw and wanted to know if the oil from the chain would adversely affect the turkey.
* A disappointed woman called wondering why her turkey had no breast meat. After a conversation with a Talk-Line operator, it became apparent that the woman’s turkey was lying upside down.
* Lastly, a proud gentleman called to tell the staff how he wrapped his turkey in a towel, laid it in the floor and stomped on it breaking the bones so it would fit in his pan.

Hopefully someone with a little more experience is in charge of your Thanksgiving meal!

I love Thanksgiving! But as good as that turkey dinner is, what I love most about Thanksgiving is how it creates space for gratitude. Thanksgiving feels like an opportunity to pause, to look around at the faces you love, to take stock of all the blessings that have come your way.

But it seems like that space flies by too quickly, doesn’t it? I mean think about it, we’ve barely digested the meal when at the crack of dawn on Black Friday *(Black Friday fighting)*we are fighting each other at the big box stores to get the best deals on the latest gadgets and toys. Have you ever thought about the irony that a day set aside for gratitude is immediately followed by the biggest consumer shopping day of the year? It’s so easy to jump right over Thanksgiving to the gift-giving and gift-getting of the Christmas season. And think about it… we set aside one day to be grateful. We dedicate a whole season to Christmas shopping.

Is it possible that how quickly we move past Thanksgiving is actually a microcosm of our inability to truly be grateful?

**Gratitude**

The truth is gratitude doesn’t come from acquiring more stuff or going on more vacations. Having a grateful heart is not the product of job promotions or award presentations. In fact, gratitude isn’t even necessarily tied to people and relationships.

No, gratitude is a product of a framework, a way of seeing things, and it *always* involves three factors.

Author and pastor John Ortberg calls these three factors **The 3 *Benes*.** *Bene* is actually a Latin word that means “good.” Gratitude comes from recognizing three good things.

The first is a ***Bene*fit**. In order to be grateful, you have to recognize that you’ve received something that you find positive. In Psalm 103, David declares: *(add)*

**“Praise the Lord, my soul,**

 **and forget not all his benefits—**

**who forgives all your sins**

 **and heals all your diseases,**

**who redeems your life from the pit**

 **and crowns you with love and compassion,**

**who satisfies your desires with good things…” –Psalm 103:2-5a**

People with grateful hearts regularly recognize all the good things in their lives. It doesn’t mean that they don’t have unmet longings or desires; they just choose to focus on the benefits, all the blessings they *have* received.

And, they recognize that these benefits come from a ***Bene*factor**. Benefactor is related to the word *factory*. A benefactor is someone who *produces* good. To be grateful, a person must recognize that there is someone behind every benefit who is intentionally producing good. You didn’t stumble upon something good randomly or receive it by accident. No, a truly grateful person recognizes that someone or something is *behind* every blessing.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, said it this way: *(add)*

**“Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights…” –James 1:16-17a**

As Christ-followers, we learn to recognize that a loving God is the source of everything good in this world.

And not only do grateful people recognize the benefits and the benefactor, they also see themselves as a ***Bene*ficiary** of that goodness.

Astounded by the goodness of God, the Psalmist says: *(add)*

**“When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—**

 **the moon and the stars you set in place—**

**what are mere mortals that you should think about them,**

 **human beings that you should care for them?” –Psalm 8:3-4 NLT**

In order to be grateful, you have to recognize that the benefits that come your way aren’t earned or merited. They aren’t just the product of your hard work and ingenuity. If we believe we deserve the good things that come our way, then we are no longer grateful. You can’t be grateful for something you believe you are entitled to.

*(3 Benes on the screen)* Gratitude is a product of a worldview, of a way of seeing things where we recognize that we are the Beneficiaries of a multitude of Benefits from a loving Benefactor.

**Thanksgiving**

However, just *feeling* gratitude isn’t all that matters, is it? Pastor Tim Keller reminds us:

**“It’s one thing to be grateful.**

**It’s another thing to give thanks.**

**Gratitude is what you feel.**

**Thanksgiving is what you do.” –Tim Keller**

Simply put: gratitude is *incomplete* if it goes unexpressed.

We know this by experience, don’t we? Let me ask… How many of you are going to be responsible for cooking Thanksgiving dinner this week? Raise those hands high. Oh, God bless you. You are going to spend hours chopping and mixing and seasoning. You’re going to get up before the crack of dawn to get that bird in oven. You’re going to sweat in front of a hot stove and likely collapse at the end of the evening. And chances are the people who will sit around your table will likely feel grateful as they stuff their mouths full of turkey and potatoes. But it’s true, isn’t it, that if they are truly grateful, sometime during the meal you should hear the words, “Thank you.” In fact, let’s express some preemptive thanks to all our Thanksgiving cooks out there! *(Clap)* On Thursday, when you are the one stuffing your face with turkey remember… Gratitude is incomplete if it goes unexpressed.

And here’s the thing… Our gratitude to God is also incomplete if it goes unexpressed. I think that’s why there are so many reminders in the New Testament to “give thanks.”

To the church in Ephesus, Paul says:

**“Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” –Ephesians 5:19b-20**

To the church in Thessalonica, he declares:

**“…give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” -1 Thessalonians 5:18**

And to the Colossians, Paul writes:

**“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” –Colossians 3:17**

So, here in this season of Breakthrough, what we are here to do today is to slow down, to pause, and to give voice to our gratitude. To respond to God with thanksgiving for…

* What he has done
* What he is doing
* And what he will do!

Over the next 45 minutes, we’re going to join together through prayer, singing, and stories to give thanks to God for he is good. So let me pray for us, and then we are going to take time to express our gratitude to God.

*Pray.*

**Prayer Time #1: Thankful for what God has done.**

One way that we can express our gratitude to God and realize what and how he’s been working in our lives is by focusing on the things he’s done. When we look back at the way God has provided for us, grown us, and walked with us through both the joys and struggles in life, there is much to be thankful for. Over the next few moments, I want to encourage you to simply thank God for what he has done in your life, something that you’re thankful for. Maybe for you it’s a different job, or your health, or maybe it’s simply your next breath. In my life, God, I’m thankful for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Let’s take a moment to pray together.

*(the band will take the stage and end the prayer moment by starting the next song)*

**Prayer Time #2: Thankful for what God is doing.**

Another way we express our gratitude to God is by thanking him for what he is currently doing. Often times, I think about communion, the celebration of Christ’s death burial and resurrection, as something that happened in the past. And while that’s physically and chronologically true, communion also represents the ongoing redemption that is still reverberating throughout history. God is still saving, and redeeming, and helping, and loving us. He has never stopped pursuing us. We’re going to celebrate communion together.

Our ushers are going to pass out a piece of bread and a cup of juice. The bread represents the body of Christ broken for you, and the juice represents the blood of Christ. Ushers please come forward.

Often times we find ourselves in the middle of what God is doing. *(Romans 12:15)* Some of us are living in a season of breakthrough and it’s great. If that’s you, we want to celebrate with you and “rejoice with those who rejoice!” For others of us, God is doing something, and we don’t fully understand it yet…but we do know that God is always moving and working and even if we don’t fully realize how he is working, we can still be grateful. Let’s take a moment right now to be thankful for what God is doing in your life or in the lives of those around you.

*Give a few moments for quiet prayer.*

Let’s receive the elements together

*Pray to close and then the FYWBTG video starts.*

**Prayer Time #3: Thankful for what God is going to do**

*GBTG Prep will go here.*

We can also express gratitude to God by being thankful for what he is going to do. What we experience on earth is nothing compared with the Glory of God that we will one day see face to face. In Romans 8:18-21 in the Message version, the Apostle Paul writes:

**“That’s why I don’t think there’s any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what’s coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.” -Romans 8:18-21**

During this season of breakthrough, we are and have been asking God to do amazing things. We know that God can and we know that he wants to do more in and through us if we let him.

I want to invite you to stand, we’re going to sing and as we sing, please pray. You can pray the words we are singing to God. Or if you haven’t added a prayer to our Breakthrough prayer wall, you’re welcome to do so while we sing. But first, let’s pray this together:

**“Father, we want to be a praying people. Please transform us into a praying church. Draw us closer to you and to each other during this season of Breakthrough. Give us an openness to your Holy Spirit. We pray all of this in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”**