**FOCUS** in 2020

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**In Times Like These**

***Being Grateful***



**Today we begin a new series** about **who we need to be** in times like these.   
Not what do we need to do, but who do we need to be. Here is why that   
is important, simply because …

**Being** precedes **doing.**

Who you are and whose you are … changes everything. A.W. Tozer, who lived and pastored most of his life in Chicago, was a man of deep faith, prayer and commitment to being over doing, he wrote …

*We emphasize "doing" — getting things done and so making a difference in this world. But in God's order* ***"being" precedes "doing****." "Being" affects how and why we do as well as what we do.* A.W. Tozer

In a blog by social worker Zachary Alti, he wrote …

**We have been living in a bubble.** We have lost touch with neighbors, gotten image-obsessed, fallen into depression as consumerism has become our religion.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-mental-hygienist/202003/gratitude-in-time-pandemic>

In the past weeks, millions of us have realized just how much we have taken for granted: our health, travel, socializing and even trips to the park. Ironically, it is when these are **stripped back that we start to appreciate the things that we have**.

Slowing down, and becoming more grateful can be a powerful tool for navigating the current crisis. It is also an antidote to rampant consumerism and a transactional culture where everything can be bought and sold. It is a culture where everything has a price, but few things have value.

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/blogs/1/1380/do-we-have-anything-at-all-to-be-grateful-for-during-the-covid-19-pandemic->

**What if there was one way of being,** a trait that if you possessed it, it would lead to greater healthy outcomes in your life, physically, emotionally, relationally and more? Would you want to that in your life?   
I would … I have got great news …

Research shows what God says in scripture, what the Bible has been   
teaching all along is right on … that there are a series of positive emotions  
 like joy, interest, contentment, love, and the like that have a huge impact   
on life and **gratitude** is the main one. Maybe you have heard these before, sayings like … **Focus on the silver lining. Count your many blessings. Stop   
and smell the roses.**

**These are not just clichés**; they are ways of being that have an impact   
on our lives.

One article I read says …

“Research on gratitude has shown that it just might be **the single   
most powerful method for increasing our well-being**. Whether the research is about gratitude’s effects on our emotions, relationships, career success, or health, subjects experience dramatic improvements when they engage in some form of **gratitude practice**.”

<https://thriveglobal.com/stories/gifts-of-gratitude-in-the-midst-of-the-covid-19-crisis/>

People who experience gratefulness and gratitude as a way of life experience relationships differently too, according to …

The [National Alliance on Mental Illness](https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/September-2016/When-Looking-for-Happiness-Find-Gratitude) … people who practice   
gratitude are:

* More generous and helpful
* More likely to offer emotional support
* More likely to share their possessions
* More willing to forgive others

<https://www.adventhealth.com/blog/why-gratitude-important-during-coronavirus-pandemic>

**Gratitude** – the practice of noticing and being thankful for what is valuable and meaningful to you.

Father James Martin, the Jesuit writer and Editor-at-Large for America, explains that one of the hallmarks of the **spirituality of the Jesuits is gratitude**, even in painful times. The Coronavirus pandemic, he points out, is no different. … But are you allowing yourself to notice these actions of God? **Noticing is the beginning of gratitude.**”

What does the Bible say about gratitude and who was and is a great   
example for each of us when it comes to living with gratitude? The   
word for gratitude in the Bible is …

**eucharisteo** (pronounced yoo-khar-is-teh'-o) to be grateful, i.e. (actively) to express gratitude (towards); specially, to say grace at a meal, (give) be thankful; to be grateful, feel thankful; give thanks.

Paul is probably one of the best examples of gratitude in the scriptures.   
38 times this word is used in the New Testament; in the Gospels, Jesus gives thanks to the Father; in his writings, Paul uses this word 25 times.   
**You might say that Paul had an …**

Attitude of **Gratitude**

Paul, a Pharisee, with a religious pedigree … writes

*… though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:**circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.* Philippians 3:4–6

Paul had a lot to put his confidence in. Just like many of you, who are smart, resourceful, hardworking … but is that what really matters … as Jesus put it, “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” Mark 8:36

Paul knew that and went on to say …

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.**Indeed,* ***I count everything as loss*** *because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake* ***I have suffered the loss of all things*** *and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that* ***I may know him*** *and* ***the power of his resurrection****, and* ***may share his sufferings****,* ***becoming like him in his death****, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.* Philippians 3:7–11

Paul not only lost his past, but he suffered in the present …

*Five times I received at the hands of the Jews* ***the forty lashes less one****. Three times I was* ***beaten with rods****. Once I was* ***stoned****. Three times I was* ***shipwrecked****; a night and a day I was* ***adrift*** *at sea; on frequent journeys, in* ***danger*** *from* ***rivers****, danger from* ***robbers****, danger from my own* ***people****, danger from* ***Gentiles****, danger in the* ***city****, danger in the* ***wilderness****, danger at* ***sea****, danger from* ***false brothers****; in* ***toil*** *and* ***hardship****, through many a* ***sleepless night****, in* ***hunger and thirst****, often* ***without food****, in* ***cold*** *and* ***exposure****. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.* 2 Corinthians 11:24–28

Paul is someone who can identify with loss, suffering, plenty and blessing   
and then … more loss, suffering and pain. The circumstances were not as important as the Spirit that indwelled him, **filling him with gratitude.**

**It was the way he approached life** … of the 25 times that he used eucharisteo, there is a reoccurring sense of all that Paul was grateful for and **there are some things we can learn about gratitude and thankfulness from Paul** …

I can be grateful for **others**.

*First,* ***I thank my God*** *through Jesus Christ* ***for all of you****, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.* Romans 1:8

***I give thanks******to my God*** *always* ***for you*** *because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,* 1 Corinthians 1:4

***I do not cease to give thanks*** *for you,* ***remembering you*** *in my prayers,* Ephesians 1:16

***We give thanks to God*** *always* ***for all of you****, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Thessalonians 1:2–3

I can be grateful in my **circumstances**.

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing,* ***give thanks in all circumstances****; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

*And* ***whatever you do****, in* ***word*** *or* ***deed****, do* ***everything*** *in the name of the Lord Jesus,* ***giving thanks to God*** *the Father through him.* Colossians 3:17

Even James, the brother of Jesus, wrote …

***Count it all joy****, my brothers, when you meet* ***trials*** *of various kinds, for you know that the* ***testing*** *of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be* ***perfect*** *and* ***complete****,* ***lacking in nothing****.* James 1:2–4

I can be grateful for my **learning**.

What are you learning about you, about time, about priorities, about   
what is really important in life?

In the midst of it all that Paul has suffered, he writes in Philippians 4 …

*… for I have* ***learned*** *in* ***whatever situation I am to be content****. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing* ***plenty*** *and* ***hunger****,* ***abundance*** *and* ***need****. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* Philippians 4:11–13

The problem with gratitude is we focus only on **thanking God for the good things** and when you are in a crisis in times like these, **there is something in  
the bad that we can be thankful for.**

One article I read was titled …

**Whatever the hardships of COVID-19, let’s be thankful it wasn’t COVID-99**

<https://theconversation.com/whatever-the-hardships-of-covid-19-lets-be-thankful-it-wasnt-covid-99-136649>

No internet, no delivery, no shows on demand for binging, no online school, no remote work access, no apps for or no cell phones that could do contact tracing … the impact would have been devastating!

*do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication* ***with thanksgiving*** *let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* Philippians 4:6–7

I am grateful that the COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to …

**Question** - We have the opportunity to reset our priorities.

**Clarify** - We have the opportunity to reevaluate time, energy   
and resources.

**Create** and **Innovate** – We have the opportunity to find solutions   
to new problems and think about new ways of doing old tasks.

**Lean** – We have the opportunity to lean into relationships, getting connected in ways that we never have, to lean on each other for support … and it is also free.

<https://thriveglobal.com/stories/gifts-of-gratitude-in-the-midst-of-the-covid-19-crisis/>

**It is not what we do; it is who we are.**

Be a person filled with **gratitude** in times like these.

Here are some simple exercises to begin to become a person of gratitude   
in times like these …

Gratitude **Interventions**

**Gratitude Interventions** – ways we induce or increase level of gratitude in order to reduce ill-being and promote well-being.

Create a Gratitude Journal

Write a Gratitude Letter

Practice the Three Good Things Exercise

Gratitude reminds us that even in what seems to be the darkest of times, there is still room for joy.