

The GRATITUDE Vaccine

Building Up Immunity to Life's Threats

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it not only physical threat but also widespread adverse mental and emotional effects. Social scientists and mental health experts tell us that GRATITUDE is a key contributor to personal happiness, emotional resiliency, and mental wellbeing. But being and staying grateful is not easy or automatic, especially when life is hard. Choosing to be grateful is a discipline of the mind and spirit. We will look at some core truths for which to be grateful.

The owner of a restaurant chain said this on the news recently: “*No one was prepared for this*”. He was lamenting the fact that the dramatic changes to business and social life came upon us all like an unexpected tsunami. In truth, we were all unprepared in so many ways. However, if you were to look at it in another light, you could observe that many people were prepared in other ways. One could argue that Christians had advanced preparation, a kind of immunity, for so many of the mental and emotional side effects of this global crisis. It certainly is not because we are better, but because we are blessed—given favour by God’s mercy and grace—and are benefactors of the tremendous advantages of being part of God’s family.

Two Purposes: This group Bible study and discussion is designed for us to first consider these profound blessings and then express our gratitude to the Blesser, our great God and Saviour. It is also hoped that this personal and group exercise, this discipline of choosing gratitude, will help each of us to look at our current personal situations (health, home, work, relationships, finances, future) through the lens of our Christian worldview and live each day in a posture of gratitude.

From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. John 1:16

GROUP DISCUSSION

Consider the following core blessings, their related Scriptures [see handout], and some amazing implications (*since this is true, it follows that...*) Discuss each briefly, then have one person thank God for that blessing and move to the next one.

SIX BLESSINGS UNIQUE TO CHRISTIANS that immunize us against (within) hardship and uncertainty

1. We have a personal relationship with our Creator-Redeemer. (*It follows then that...*)
 - We are loved by our heavenly Father who guards our steps and numbers our days
 - We are safe and live in the security of knowing our sovereign Creator and sustainer is in control of all things
 - John 1:12-13; Romans 5:8; Galatians 4:6-7; Colossians 1:15-17
2. We have God’s special revelation, the Bible, that tells us the story of reality, the Truth.
 - We have answers for many of life’s big questions regarding deity, origin, purpose, evil, history, death, future
 - We have wisdom for how to live under the authority and direction of the Good Shepherd
 - John 1:14; 14:6, 26; 16:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17
3. We have a wellspring of comfort, peace and joy that is incomprehensible and inexhaustible.
 - We have assurance knowing that we have an unlimited supply of divine grace, sympathy and understanding
 - We have contentment and joy that supersedes any trial or tribulation
 - John 14:27; 15:11; Philippians 4:6-7; 12-13
4. We have an ever-present help in time of trouble.
 - We are never alone, but are accompanied by God Himself in the midst of danger and trouble
 - We need not fear anything in all of creation because we cannot be separated from the love of God
 - Psalm 46:1; Romans 8:35, 37-39; Hebrews 4:16
5. We have hope—a certainty about the future (the promises and plans of God).
 - We have absolute confidence about whatever lies ahead, in this life and in the one to come
 - We have certain promises of things to come from the One who knows the future
 - John 14:1-3; Romans 8:28; Colossians 3:4; 1 John 3:2
6. We have a family, the loving support of trusted spiritual friends.
 - We have friends—loving relationships in the body of Christ that comfort, encourage and challenge us
 - We have this small group of loyal traveling companions to journey with us on the Way
 - John 13:34-35; Romans 12:4-5,10; Hebrews 10:24-25

Cautionary Note: In no way do we want to suggest that this crisis is “no big deal” and that millions worldwide, including us Christians, are not being profoundly affected by it. So while we consider the many reasons we have to be thankful for God’s salvation, presence and protection, we will also be 1) realistic about the gravity of the situation, and 2) sensitive and compassionate to those who are experiencing grief, loss, anxiety, hardship and uncertainty.