

My name and intro. Tonight we are talking about **gratitude**.

> **Gratitude**

Two weeks ago I shared on the topic of RELAPSE and I shared a tragic story of my son's recent relapse. Can anyone remember our **"take away"** thought from that **night? "Trust me, you don't want to relapse."**

Tonight I have the privilege and challenge of talking about **Gratitude**. God is always working to **teach me** and grow each of us, right? I believe gratitude is a choice, **an attitude** of being thankful, a **focus** on the good, even during tragic and seemingly hopeless times. That takes, **Faith**. Here is a favorite verse of mine.

> **Philippians 4:6**; Do **not** be anxious about **anything**, but in **every** situation, by prayer and petition, **with thanksgiving**, let your requests be made known to God.

Our **request** is that God would **continue** the miracles in my son's life! But, as we know, **all things** are **not** good, **every situation** is **not** as we might want them. God's **ways** are not always our way, His **thoughts** are greater than ours and His **time** is often not our time. So how can we **give thanks in every** situation? I propose we must have a strong **faith** in a **loving** God and in His having **a good** long term plan. Now having said that, as I mentioned two weeks ago, in my opinion, the most painful experience in this life, would be the **loss** of a child. I am very compassionate toward anyone who has lost a child, perhaps some of you have lived through that **deep** sadness. My heart goes out to you, **now** more than ever.

In the midst of our **pain** and suffering we are challenged and **called** to our topic tonight, **gratitude**. Gratitude is a choice, every day. **Faith** in a loving God is a **choice**, and a gift. Gratitude, even in deep sorrow, **must be a choice**. Now let's **reflect** on the underlying CR principle and step for tonight.

> **Principle 7:**

**Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading and prayer, in order to know God and His will for my life and to gain the power to follow His will.**

> **Step 11:**

**We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and power to carry that out. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.**  
– Colossians 3:16

> First of all, here is **a quote** I found on Gratitude.

*“Gratitude turns what we have into more than enough. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity, it makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow.”*

So here is our **main take away** for tonight, if you haven’t guessed it already, what I hope we remember from this night’s teaching:

> **Gratitude is a Choice.**

Having gone through the most difficult time in our family recently, **I felt the need** to make a **Gratitude list**. This might not have been on my mind, except I had been asked a month prior, to **teach** on this topic tonight. Let me share my gratitude list with you ...

Now, tonight I want to **invite you to make your own Gratitude List**, wherever you are at, in your story. Even if you are in deep pain or a dark place, I am going to encourage you to make a **gratitude list**. Here are some helpful categories:

- > What are you thankful to **God** for?  
On your handout, Be thankful to **God**.
- > Who are the **people** you are thankful for?  
On your handout, Be thankful for **People**.
- > What **in** your **recovery** are you thankful for?  
On your handout, Be thankful for **your recovery**.
- > What **in** your **church** are you thankful for?  
On your handout, Be thankful for **your church**.

There are blanks on your **handout**, or for those of you, who don't like boxes, or **lines** ... just turn your paper over and use the blank back side! I suggest a minimum of **10** things you are grateful for, on your list tonight. If you're having a difficult time, coming up with 10, **ask** a neighbor to help you. Ready, **GO**.

> Show the **four above questions**, during this time.

Ok, **Why Gratitude?** Where are we tonight? **Celebrate** Recovery! This has not been my strength, Celebrating, that is. Did being **here** tonight make your list? I hope so! We want this to be a safe, open, honest place where **real** recovery, **real** life changes can happen and be **celebrated** together. When **your day** seems horrible and even hopeless, **ask** yourself, "**when** is the last time I made a **gratitude list?**" When **your friend** is struggling and hurting, maybe suggesting a gratitude list is not your first response, but my friends and I have often reminded one another of this powerful tool, when times seem tough. **Why** a gratitude list? **Because** it works! It helps us to **shift**, to get our focus off all the horrible things and remind ourselves of what we **have** to be thankful for. **It helps change** our hearts and minds. Just like **helping**, praying for, or encouraging a friend, takes our mind off our own problems and **shifts us** into a new place of concern for others. I have often said, "It could always be worse." As **bad** as you can imagine things are, "it could always be worse." We **always** have many things **to be thankful for**, that is **your gratitude list**. What are some basic, everyday, simple things most all of us can be grateful for?

Good, Now with all of that in mind, I say **recovery** is about **life or death**. Not only physical life and the potential of dying from our addictions, but **quality of life!** What kind of **life** do you want? **Do you and I** want to be miserable and complaining all the time? Or do we want to take **action steps** that will **change our attitude and outlook on life?** If you are a believer in Jesus, meditate on this truth in Romans 8, it says, **there is now no condemnation, for those that are in Christ Jesus!** We are **forgiven!** That is something to be grateful for, we need to remind ourselves and **one another** of **who God says we are** and **His promises! We are His children.** Here is just one promise, also from **Romans 8,**

> “For **I am convinced** that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, **will be able to separate us from the love of God** that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So, in conclusion, just like **Recovery** is a choice ... **going to meetings** is a choice ... **getting a Sponsor** is a choice ... **working the steps** is a choice ... **preventing relapse** is a choice ... **connecting** is a choice ... **making a phone call** is a choice ... **being honest** is a choice ... **personal responsibility** is a choice ... so what is our **take away** thought tonight? **Gratitude ...**

> **Gratitude is a Choice.**

Oh, one last thing, speaking on Gratitude, I can not fail to mention.

> **JAZZ**, our marriage therapy dog, Kim and I are both very **grateful** for him and all he has added to our lives. We learn from him daily about **love, joy, gratitude and contentment!**

**So let's close** our time together, before the Serenity prayer and our Open Share groups, with a **music video**. A song with amazing lyrics, that are important to our topic of gratitude and **our Faith**. This song was played at the request of our friend Holly, in our church service 8 days ago, after her story of long term disability and her current struggle with cancer. The song talks about, **Holding on to Hope, that God is in the waiting, the painful “waiting” times. Take Courage, He's never failing. He's in the waiting.**

As you feel lead, join in the song, with your own form of worship, even if you are **hurting**, even in your **deep losses, disappointments and pain, take courage, He's in the waiting. For that we can be grateful.**

**Song:** Take Courage. 6:18 length

<https://youtu.be/z6itgjC2IYY>