

Compass Bearing #22

Devotions to Navigate the Coronavirus Pandemic

"The Choice of Gratitude" by Pastor Jeremy Duncan

Tuesday, May 12, 2020

Matthew Henry, the eighteenth-century Puritan preacher whose Bible commentary remains among the most popular of all time, was once accosted by robbers while living in London.

Maybe you have had something similar happen to you in the past—maybe you came home to discover that your house had been burglarized or possibly you've had someone break into your vehicle. I had this happen to me. Someone got into my car in my driveway and took anything of value, including my wallet. It's among the most unsettling things that can happen to a person. We can assume this was how Matthew Henry could have felt as well. But, here is what he said:

"Let me be thankful, first, because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."

Wow! Matthew Henry is not upset. He is not angry. He is not unsettled. Instead, he is grateful. What a perspective! I have heard it said before, "If you can't be thankful for what you receive, be thankful for what you escape."

We have a choice to make each and every day of our lives...be grateful or be ungrateful. In other words, we can choose to focus on the abundant blessings of our lives or on the things that we don't have. It's a choice. It's a decision we make daily.

This is really hard in today's society. We are constantly bombarded with advertisements teasing us into a trap of ungratefulness. We see on social media the things that others have and we want them desperately. We watch commercials that show us all that new products, places, and services have to offer and we long for them. This longing for something different can often lead to a discontent heart for what we have.

The truth is that there was once a day in our lives when we prayed to have all of the things that we have today. I am a firm believer that once we begin to take note of all of the blessings in our lives, we begin to lose sight of the things that we lack.

The Apostle Paul talks of gratitude many times in the New Testament, giving us advice for this daily choice. He says in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Take note of the words that Paul chooses. He tells us to rejoice ALWAYS, pray CONTINUALLY, and give thanks in ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. In other words, CHOOSE each day to be grateful regardless of what life throws at you. This is God's will for us! There is always a silver lining!

Gratitude is one of the most powerful human emotions. It changes our attitudes, brightens our outlook on life, and changes our perspective. It gives us new appreciation for what we have and allows us to forget what we don't. It is the foundation of compassion, allowing us to truly appreciate what we have so that we can understand our need to help others. It gives us eyes to see the beauty of life, the joy in our situations, and the abundance that God has provided.

APPLICATION

Take time today to focus on the blessings of your life. Make a list of things for which you are grateful.

Once your list is complete, spend time in prayer thanking the Father for the many things that He has provided you.

In the coming days and weeks, do the same thing. Make a list of the things for which you are grateful. Take time to intentionally seek gratitude and give thanks for the blessings of your life. It will change your heart and bring you closer to the Father.