The ABC’s of Thanksgiving

Dear Friends,

Without a conscientious effort to maintain an attitude of gratitude we will find ourselves increasingly frustrated, angry and depressed. It’s in the Bible that we find the ABC’s of thanksgiving. If you were to read every verse in the Bible about gratitude it would change your life. Get a concordance and look up those verses on thanksgiving, praise and gratitude. You will discover that an attitude of gratitude is the ability to have thanksgiving in your heart in spite of the circumstances.

Let’s take a look at the “alphabet” of thanksgiving. A is for attitude. When you work to express thanksgiving in and through your life it will affect your attitude. Instead of always seeing the negative in life and complaining about what you don’t have why not begin to thank God for what you do have.

This brings us to the B in the alphabet of thanksgiving. The B is for believing. Believing that God’s blessings are being poured out on you daily. It’s believing God’s promises that are given in the scriptures and thanking Him for them.

As you believe God’s promise for peace in your life it will be like a fog of anxiety lifting from you as your eyes are opened to all you have to be thankful for. Jesus promises, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).

The C in the alphabet of thanksgiving is for choose. Are you going to choose to let your heart be troubled with fear, negativism and ungratefulness or are you going to choose to be thankful and serve the Lord with thanksgiving. Jesus tells us in John 15:16, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.” If we are going to bear forth the fruit of goodness, righteousness and justice we must choose to be a thankful people who… “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (I Thess 5:16-18).

The D in the alphabet of thanksgiving involves determination. It means you are determined to thank God in spite of the circumstances because you know “that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). As you are determined to thank God in all things you will find yourself turning those disappointments into God’s appointments. These times of appointments of time spent in prayer and praise will confirm in your life that “the Lord your God is the one who goes with you” (Deut. 20:4).

Experiencing the alphabet of thanksgiving in your life brings you to the E of enthusiasm. This English word – enthusiasm comes from the Greek word enthos, which means “in God”. When we are living in the reality of God’s presence there is a newfound enthusiasm in our lives, which shows us how much we do have to be thankful for. It is God’s will for our lives to be enthusiastic, rejoicing, praying and being thankful. We read that earlier
in I Thess 5:16-18 where it says, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Let us not forget that the ABC’s of thanksgiving begin with an attitude of gratitude. From such attitude we will believe God has His best in store for us and we will choose to be thankful. In spite of the circumstances we will determine in our hearts and minds to be thankful. These ABC and D’s of thanksgiving will be seen in our lives of enthusiasm reflected through our ability to rejoice, pray and be thankful in spite of the circumstances. After all, “this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Psalm 34 is a classical example of how one can be too blessed to be stressed if they allow the ABC’s of thanksgiving to flow in their lives. In verses 1-3 we are invited to thank and praise God. David declares, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.”

To praise God means to glorify Him and thank Him for being so wonderful, gracious and loving. To thank God is to zero in on some specific things He has done for which we are particularly thankful for. In verses 4-7 David tells us some of the things He is specifically thankful for. “I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.”

Along with David I just want to say thank you Lord. Hounded and lied about, by the Saul’s of this world every time one takes a stand for the poor, homeless and elderly it is easy to get burned out, tired out and worn out. Then as I join David in the ABC’s of thanksgiving and praise, I find myself strengthened and empowered. Yes I have frequently felt overwhelmed but as I thank God and worship Him in praise my eyes are taken off the problem and I see a God who is bigger then every problem.

“Then this poor man cried out and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” But that isn’t all. As I thank God He opens my spiritual eyes and I see that He has even sent his angels to deliver me. Yes, I just want to say thank you Lord.

This brings us to the letter F in the alphabet of thanksgiving. The F stands for faith. By exercising faith in the Living God who loves us we are able to thank God in spite of the circumstances. By faith we accept God at His word when it says, “the righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers Him out of them all.” (Ps 34: 17-19). By faith, with an attitude of gratitude, we can even thank God in the midst of our troubles knowing that, “many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers Him out of them all.”

At this point in the ABC’s of thanksgiving we have seen that the A stands for an attitude of gratitude; B stands for believe; C for choosing to be thankful; D is for being determined to be thankful and F for faith. Now as we come to the letter G we see the wonderful gift of grace that God provides. When we truly understand grace we see that even if we are stripped of every thing else we still have the wonderful grace of God provided through
our resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Martin Luther in his famous hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” put it this way when he declared, “Goods, fame, child and wife let these all be gone, the Kingdom our remaineth.” The reason this is so is because of the grace given through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ. “For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:23, 24). How we need to say thank you Lord for your gift of grace and every spiritual blessing you have so freely given. As Eph 1:2,3 declares, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”

In the ABC’s of thanksgiving the H stands for heaven. Thank God daily for heaven. Heaven is that wonderful place of fellowship with our Living Lord for all eternity. A place where there is no pain and suffering, disappointments or heartbreak. Jesus clearly tells us in John 14:1-3, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

It is because of the saving grace of Jesus Christ you and I can be assured that we will spend an eternity in heaven. While we were yet sinners destined for hell, Christ took our sins upon Himself, died on the cross and then conquered death through His resurrection. Thank God for Heaven. Thank God for grace. Thank God for Jesus. Earlier we read, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23, 24). Because of Jesus work of redemption we have heaven to look forward to. Doesn’t that make you want to shout, “Thank you Jesus!”.

We have so much to thank God for. Being thankful is so therapeutic. I remember reading a book on Thanksgiving Therapy once as I was going through a very difficult period in my life. As I followed this books advice to list each day10 things I had to be thankful for. I would feel the pressures and anxieties lift.

When I put the ABC’s of thanksgiving to work in my life I see there are so many family members, friends and so much more that I have to be thankful for. I could list one for each letter of the alphabet that I have to be thankful for. You also have so much to thank God for. Develop your own ABC’s of thanksgiving and praise as you “Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord” (Ps 150:6).

Thanksgiving is gratitude in our hearts that is always grateful in spite of the circumstances. It is the same attitude of gratitude that the one leper expressed when he came back to thank Jesus for his healing. “And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His (Jesus) feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner” (Luke 17:16-18)?
One had an attitude of gratitude and practiced the ABC’s of thanksgiving. The other 9 had thanksgiving denied in their hearts and went on with lives healed in the body but still ungrateful in their mind and spirit.

Jesus has come to set the captives free. This means freedom from an ungrateful life that has degenerated into simply surviving. There is more to life. Learn to daily live the ABC’s of thanksgiving. After all, this is God’s will for your life. “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (I Thess 5:16-18).

Knowing that a life, health and happiness flow from a thankful spirit causes us to join the Psalmist and declaring, “We give thanks to you, O God, we give thanks! For your wondrous works declare that your name is near” (Ps 75:1).

We have many more reasons to thank God than all the letters in the alphabet can express. Let us allow the attitude of gratitude to come forth for God is good and His mercy endures forever. That is why Psalm 106 verse 1 declares, “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His mercy endures forever” (Psalm 106:1).

God’s goodness and mercy makes it possible for you to know you have been accepted and are secure and significant through Jesus Christ. Thank God you can declare, “I am accepted as a child of God according to John 1:12. I am a member of the Body of Christ (I Cor 12:27) and have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins according to Col 1:14.

As we study the Bible and learn the ABC’s of thanksgiving we see that when we exercise the F of faith and take God at His word we can thank Him for the security we have in Christ Jesus. We are secure because we are free from condemnation according to Romans 8:1, 2. We can also thank God that we are assured that all things work together for good as Romans 8:28 declares.

Life is filled with so much that we have to be thankful for. “O come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the Lord is the great God, And the great King above all gods” (Ps 95: 1-3).

Now may we go forth with the ABC’s of thanksgiving flowing from our lives as we, “Enter into His courts with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations” (Ps 100:4,5).

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice