

***Thankfulness, Even When It Hurts*** by Susan Lutz (PR Publishing, Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 2002) (27 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

## *Introduction*

### **1. Being Thankful in Painful Circumstances**

There's something odd about thankfulness. It seldom seems to fit the situation. In our society of high expectations and instant gratification, people who are thankful for the good things in life seem rather quaint--naïve, sweet, and sentimental. Thankfulness seems like a mindset for people whose lives revolve around politeness and thank you notes.

It's an even tougher sell when we think about being thankful in the midst of painful circumstances. Then, the encouragement to be thankful seems insensitive, even cruel. (Page 1)

### **2. Thankfulness Is God's Idea**

The Bible is packed with commands, encouragements, and invitations to give thanks to the Lord, and with examples of people who do. (Page 1)

### **3. Praise and Blessing Part of Thankfulness**

...in the original Greek and Hebrew, the words that our Bible translates as thankful are related to words translated as bless, praise, to declare blessed, to give glory to. All the words of praise, blessing, glorifying, rejoicing, and exalting the Lord overlap with thankfulness. It is a huge part of the Bible's message to us. (Page 3)

### **4. Why Give Thanks?**

The Bible is full of commands to give thanks to God because it is not our human instinct, and in that way, we are out of sync with the rest of the universe. Jesus once said that if human beings didn't praise and thank God, the stones of the earth would cry out in our place (Luke 19:40). That's how motivated the rest of the created world is to give thanks. (Page 4)

### **5. The Created World Is in Tune with Heaven**

But the created world knows something we human beings do not. It is much more in tune with heaven, where spiritual truth and reality are experienced without distortion. (Page 4)

## **6. Thanks to God Normal for the Created World**

Praise and thanks to God seem to be the natural, authentic, and spontaneous response of the rest of the created world. Human beings are the notable exception. Basically, we're not normal! If we saw things as they truly are, praise and thanks are apparently what we would do all the time. (Page 5)

## **7. Blind to Spiritual Reality**

The Bible teaches that sin not only spoils our environment and the external order of our world, but it has also affected each of us internally, spiritually. Every one of us begins life separated from God. We don't know him, we don't have a relationship with him, and we don't trust him--we don't even like him. This to us feels normal, but to the rest of the universe, it's the most unnatural and tragic state imaginable. It leaves us blind to a lot of spiritual reality, even when we are searching for it.

Not surprisingly, this has had a direct effect on our ability and inclination to be thankful. (Page 5,6)

## **8. Being a Part of Heaven Before We Get There**

But this is the problem that Jesus came to earth to solve. He removed the barrier of sin with his death on our behalf, and he brings anyone who trusts him into a relationship with God as our heavenly Father. When this happens, we start living a whole new reality--the one the rest of the universe has known all along. (Page 6)

Being thankful allows us to be a part of what's going on in heaven even before we get there. (Page 6)

## **9. A Taste of Our Inheritance**

Giving thanks gives us a taste of our future inheritance as God's children. (Page 6)

## **10. A Choice to Trust God**

In every circumstance and relationship of life, we are faced with a choice: How are we going to respond to it? Are we going to move toward God or away from him? Satan wants every situation to be temptation to doubt God and turn away from him. But God wants it to be something that refines our faith and causes us to move toward God and to trust him. (Page 7)

## **11. Being Thankful Helps**

Being thankful is one of the responses that strengthens our relationship with God. As you are thankful, it can help in at least six ways.

As soon as you are thankful, you enter the presence of God. (Page 7)

As soon as you are thankful, you start to see your life differently, through God's eyes. (Page 8)

As soon as you are thankful, you defeat Satan's efforts to control your interpretation of reality. (Page 10)

As soon as you are thankful, you begin to link your life to God's promises. (Page 11)

As soon as you are thankful, you start to see not only your situation but yourself--your own heart--through God's eyes. (Page 12,13)

As soon as you are thankful, your human relationships get healthier because they are shaped by faith. (Page 14)

## **12. Spiritual Preventative**

Along with strengthening our relationship with God, being thankful also serves as a preventative against many problems and sins. If you make the choice to be thankful, there are a lot of battles you probably won't have to fight. It's as if you chose the road with fewer potholes. (Page 14,15)

## **13. God Is in Control**

...if you are thankful, it's much harder to be fearful of circumstances or people. You know God is in control. (Page 15)

## **14. If You Know God Loves You**

It's less likely that you will be devastated by criticism, because you know God has loved and accepted you. (Page 15)

## **15. God Has a Good Purpose**

If you are thankful, it's much harder to be cynical and sarcastic about life. You know God has a good purpose. (Page 15)

## **16. Hard to Be Proud**

It's much harder to be proud. (Page 15)

## **17. Hard to Be Angry**

It's much harder to be self-righteously angry. (Page 15)

### **18. Hard to Be Bitter**

It's much harder to be bitter and unforgiving. You just don't feel the need. (Page 16)

### **19. Impossible to be Hopeless**

If you are thankful, it's just about impossible to be hopeless. (Page 16)

### **20. Hard to be Demanding**

It's much harder to be demanding and fixated on your needs. (Page 16)

### **21. Hard to be Greedy**

It's much harder to be greedy or envious. (Page 16)

### **22. Not Overwhelmed When Wronged**

If you are thankful, you're much less likely to be overwhelmed when you are wronged. (Page 16)

### **23. To Be More Like Him**

All the way through, thankfulness promotes God's loving purpose to draw us close to him, to make us more like him, and to help us live out the life he has planned for us. (Page 16)

### **24. Thankfulness Amid Evil**

The God we serve does not stand at a distance, detached from human suffering. Instead, he sent his own Son to experience that suffering--and the agonies of hell itself--to secure our salvation. God permits evil, but he also committed himself to endure it with us so that we might be delivered from it. (Page 16,17)

### **25. Trusting in Who God Is**

God does not put himself under our judgment, but calls on us to trust in who he is instead. (Page 18)

### **26. Thankfulness Is a Direct Line to God**

Being thankful is God's way of giving us a direct line to him, an instant and intimate connection to a powerful and loving Heavenly Father despite all the evil that surrounds us. It is a way for us to leapfrog over all the things we do not understand and cannot fix, to put ourselves into God's loving, powerful arms. (Page 21)

## **27. Being Thankful Is Being Honest**

Being thankful does not mean living in denial, suppressing our feelings, or ignoring reality. It means being honest, but bringing all those things to God who has promised to love us and demonstrated it by sending his Son to be our Savior. It brings us nearer to heaven, and helps us to overcome the world. (Page 21)