

## **Be Ye Thankful:**

### **God's Recipe for Happiness**

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As we enter the holiday season, how can people experience the peace and joy the season represents?

Messages bombard us every day about how we need this new gadget or how that new toy will make our child advance more quickly. This season many of us and the people around us are likely to experience slim pocket books, fewer resources in comparison with the need, along with increased time pressures and demands.

It's so easy to get caught up in it all and subtly shift our focus from what we "do have" onto what "we don't have" ... the car needs a tune up....I need to buy presents but I don't have enough money.... I need new shoes...there's not enough time...and the list goes on and on.

This line of thinking will eventually leads us to worry, dissatisfaction, and discouragement; thereby robbing us of the very peace and joy God promised!

Scientists have recently been proving the mental health and physical health benefits which come as a result of practicing gratitude and thankfulness. In one study, researchers had teens in an inner city write a letter of gratitude to someone who had impacted their life positively. They found that the teens experienced increased happiness and joy following writing the letter. (1)

In another study, organ recipients were found to experience better physical health and sense of well being when keeping a gratitude journal in which they recorded things to be thankful for. (2) Wow! They're proving the health benefits of practicing what God exhorted us to do all along. If expressing gratitude to other people creates these types of health benefits, just imagine what benefits come from expressing gratitude to God!

How do we then experience the joy, peace, and happiness God desires for us? It seems simple, yet so profound. God said "be ye thankful (Col. 3:15)"... with thanksgiving let your requests be made known....celebrate God everyday... and (Phil. 4:4, 6)".

Thankfulness and gratitude move our focus back from what we "don't have" to what we "do have" and from outward circumstances back to God who is the supplier of all of our needs. He desires to fill us to the brim and running over with His joy. But we first have to shift our focus back to him and cultivate thanksgiving in order to experience it.

This season be ye thankful. Carve out times to express thanksgiving to God and teach our children to do so. Romans 13:8 (The Message) - offers a practical and powerful exhortation this holiday season: “Don’t run up debts; except for the huge debt of love you owe each other...don’t always be wanting what you don’t have” and Phil 4:4 (NIV) states “Rejoice in the Lord always... and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” What a powerful promise!

Writing down thankful thoughts, choosing a time of day to express praise and thanksgiving to God, and expressing appreciation to others are all ways to help us shift our focus back to God and what we “do have”. This will result in greater peace, contentment, and joy through this holiday season and beyond!

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#### References

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2- Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association (2008) Gratitude increases quality of life for organ recipients. COPYRIGHT 2008 American Psychotherapy Association. This material is published under license from the publisher through the Gale Group, Farmington Hills, Michigan. Retrieved November 20, 2009 from <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-180860860.html>