MORNING STAR MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Thanks *in* Every Season

A Three-Week Wednesday Bible Study

Week 1

Thanks in Plenty

Deuteronomy 8:10–18

Week 2

Thanks Under Pressure

Daniel 6:1–10

Week 3

Thanks in Confinement

Philippians 4:4–7

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

1 Thessalonians 5:18

CONNECT • GROW • SERVE · 114-44 MERRICK BLVD, JAMAICA, NY 11434

SERIES OVERVIEW

Thanks in Every Season

Gratitude is not a feeling that depends on the season. It is a practice we carry into every season. Over three Wednesdays we will look at people of God who gave thanks in plenty, under pressure, and in confinement, and ask what that requires of us today.

> *"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."*
>
> THEME VERSE · 1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

The Three Weeks

WEEK 1 — 1

Thanks in Plenty

Deuteronomy 8:10–18

When God blesses you, don't forget the God who blessed you.

WEEK 2 — 2

Thanks Under Pressure

Daniel 6:1–10

Gratitude is a habit you build before the crisis, so it holds during the crisis.

WEEK 3 — 3

Thanks in Confinement

Philippians 4:4–7

Thanksgiving turns worry into prayer and opens the door to God's peace.

Session Flow *60–90 minutes*

- 5 min — **Welcome and opening prayer**
- 5–10 min — **Icebreaker** — A light question to get everyone talking.
- 5 min — **Read the text aloud** — Have two readers, one for each half of the passage.
- 10–15 min — **Background** — The leader walks through the setting, the key words, and what was happening.
- 25–40 min — **Discussion** — Three rounds of questions, moving from **Our Society** to **Our Families** to **Ourselves**. In a 60-minute group, choose two questions from each round. In a 90-minute group, use them all.
- 5–10 min — **Practical applications** — Each person chooses one to practice this week.
- 5 min — **Closing prayer**

LEADER'S NOTE

The questions move from the outside in, from the world around us to the home to the heart. The Ourselves round is where change happens, so protect time for it. Allow silence. Not everyone will share, and that's fine.

WEEK 1

Thanks in Plenty

Deuteronomy 8:10–18 · *Read 8:1–20 for full context*

1

BIG IDEA *The wilderness tests whether we will trust God. Prosperity tests whether we will remember Him. Plenty is the more dangerous test.*

THE TEXT · DEUTERONOMY 8:10–18 (KJV)

10 When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

11 Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

12 Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

13 And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

14 Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

15 Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

16 Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

17 And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

18 But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

ICEBREAKER *What is one Thanksgiving table tradition from your family, past or present?*

Background

- **The setting.** Israel is camped on the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River, after 40 years in the wilderness. Moses knows he will not cross over with them. Deuteronomy ("second law") is his farewell sermon to a new generation about to inherit the Promised Land.
- **The audience.** Most of these listeners were children or not yet born when Israel left Egypt. They never made bricks for Pharaoh. They know the deliverance only as a story, so Moses is preaching to people who are about to receive what they did not build.
- **The wilderness as a classroom (vv. 2–4).** God led them 40 years "to humble thee, and to prove thee." He fed them manna so they would learn "that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD" (v. 3). Jesus quotes this verse when He is tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4:4).

- **The land ahead (vv. 7–9).** Brooks, fountains, wheat, barley, vines, figs, pomegranates, olive oil, honey, iron and copper. They are going from manna to abundance.
- **The command (v. 10).** "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God." Notice the order. The thanks comes *after* the meal, when you are full. This verse became the basis for the Jewish prayer of thanks after meals, still prayed today.
- **The warning (vv. 11–14).** "Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God." The danger is not the houses, herds, silver and gold. The danger is that "thine heart be lifted up" (v. 14).
- **The lie (v. 17).** "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth."
- **The truth (v. 18).** "It is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." Even the ability to work, think, and earn is a gift.
- **What happened.** Israel did forget. Centuries later, Hosea said: "they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me" (Hosea 13:6).

KEY WORDS

Remember
Hebrew *zakar*
More than recalling a fact. It means to call to mind and act on it. It is one of the central words of Deuteronomy.

Forget
Hebrew *shakach*
Not losing a memory, but living as if it doesn't matter.

Beware
Hebrew *shamar*
To guard or keep watch, the same word used for a watchman.

Discussion Questions

OUR SOCIETY *the world around us*

1. Our culture celebrates the "self-made" person. How does verse 17 challenge that idea? What is the difference between working hard and believing "my hand hath gotten me this"?
2. Many of us have more than our grandparents ever had, yet anxiety and dissatisfaction seem higher than ever. Why does having more so often make people less grateful?
3. Thanksgiving Day is now squeezed between Halloween and Black Friday sales that start on Thursday. What does that say about what our society values? How can believers push back?
4. Our parents and grandparents came through their own wilderness and built churches, homes, and institutions. How do we keep their testimony from being forgotten by those who inherited what they built?

OUR FAMILIES *the home*

1. Moses was speaking to a generation that never saw Egypt. How do we teach gratitude to children and grandchildren who never knew the struggle?
2. Does your family have practices of remembering, such as grace before meals, sharing testimonies, or telling the stories of how God brought you through? If not, what has crowded them out?
3. When a family moves up, with a new house, a better job, or a degree, what changes in how they talk about God? What should stay the same?
4. Verse 10 says to bless God *after* you are full. What would it look like for your household to give thanks after a blessing, not only before asking for one?

OURSELVES *the heart*

1. Verse 2 says the wilderness was meant to humble and prove. What did your own wilderness season teach you that you are in danger of forgetting now?
2. Is it easier for you to pray when things are hard or when things are good? Why?
3. Where in your life are you most tempted to say "my power" and "my hand": your career, your health, your finances, your education?
4. Verse 14 warns about a heart "lifted up." What are the early warning signs that pride is creeping in? (Think about prayer life, giving, worship attendance, patience with others.)

Practical Applications

Choose one to practice this week.

- [ ] **Give thanks after the meal.** Practice verse 10 literally. This week, pause after you eat to thank God, not only before.
- [ ] **Write a remembrance list.** Write down five times God brought you through. Keep it in your Bible, and bring it to your Thanksgiving table.
- [ ] **Tell the story.** Call or sit with a young person in your family or church, and tell them one wilderness story and how God brought you out.
- [ ] **Give God credit out loud.** When someone compliments your success this week, answer with "God did it," and mean it.
- [ ] **Honor the Giver with the gift.** Verse 18 says God gives the power to get wealth. Bring a thank offering, or give to a food pantry or a family in need this Thanksgiving season.

This week, I will...

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious God, we thank You for bringing us through the wilderness and for every blessing we enjoy today. Forgive us for the times we were full and forgot You, and for the times we took credit for what only You could do. Guard our hearts from pride. Help us to remember, to tell our children, and to give You glory in plenty as we did in need. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MY NOTES

WEEK 2

Thanks Under Pressure

2

Daniel 6:1–10 · *Read 6:1–28 for the full story*

BIG IDEA *Daniel did not start praying when the decree was signed. He kept praying the way he always had. Gratitude built before the crisis is what holds you up during the crisis.*

THE TEXT · DANIEL 6:1–10 (KJV)

1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;

2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.

3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever.

7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

8 Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

ICEBREAKER *Who taught you to pray, and what do you remember about how they prayed?*

Background

- **The setting.** Babylon has fallen to the Medes and Persians (539 BC), and Darius now rules. Daniel was carried off to Babylon as a teenager around 605 BC. By this chapter he is likely in his eighties and has served under several kings and two empires.

- **Daniel's position (vv. 1–3).** Darius sets 120 princes over the kingdom and three presidents over them. Daniel is "preferred above" all of them "because an excellent spirit was in him," and the king plans to set him over the whole realm.
- **The plot (vv. 4–5).** His rivals search for a fault and find none: "neither was there any error or fault found in him." Their conclusion: "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." His faithfulness was the only thing they could attack.
- **The trap (vv. 6–9).** They flatter the king into signing a decree: for 30 days, no one may petition any god or man except the king, on penalty of the lions' den. Under "the law of the Medes and Persians," a signed decree could not be changed, not even by the king.
- **Daniel's response (v. 10).** He went home, knelt at his open windows facing Jerusalem, and "prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."
- **What he did not do.** He did not protest at the palace, hide, close the windows, or change his schedule. He also did not open the windows to make a point. They were already open.
- **Windows toward Jerusalem.** At the temple's dedication, Solomon asked God to hear His people when they were captive in a foreign land and prayed "toward their land" and the house built for His name (1 Kings 8:46–49). Jerusalem lay in ruins, but Daniel still faced the place of God's promise.
- **Three times a day.** This echoes David: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray" (Psalm 55:17).
- **The outcome.** Daniel is thrown to the lions, and God "shut the lions' mouths" (v. 22). Darius then decrees that all his kingdom should "tremble and fear before the God of Daniel" (v. 26).

KEY WORDS

Gave thanks

Aramaic

This part of Daniel is written in Aramaic. The word is related to the Hebrew *yadah*, to praise, acknowledge, or give thanks. Daniel's thanks came *before* the lions' den, not after it.

As he did aforetime

Key phrase

"Just as he had always done." Daniel's response under pressure was a habit, not a new decision.

Excellent spirit

v. 3

An extraordinary or surpassing spirit. Daniel's excellence opened the door to promotion and also drew the jealousy.

Discussion Questions

OUR SOCIETY *the world around us*

1. Daniel's enemies could find no fault in his work, so they went after his faith. Where do you see people of faith pressured to keep their faith private at work, at school, or in public life?
2. The decree was built on flattery and meant to trap one man. As a people, we know what it is like to live under rules that were not written with our good in mind. What does Daniel teach about responding with faithfulness rather than either fear or bitterness?
3. Daniel served in a government that did not share his faith, and he served it with excellence. How can believers be both excellent and faithful in workplaces and systems that don't honor God?
4. Our society often treats "thank you" as a reaction to good news. What would it look like for the church to be known as thankful people even when the news is bad?

OUR FAMILIES *the home*

1. Daniel's open windows meant people could see him pray. What do the children and young people in your home see you do when the pressure is on?
2. What "decrees" are pressing on families right now, such as rising costs, health scares, job loss, or caring for aging parents? How can a family give thanks in the middle of those?
3. Daniel's habit was in place long before the crisis. What prayer or gratitude habits does your household have now that would hold if a crisis came tomorrow?
4. Who in your family is facing their own "lions' den" right now? How can the family stand with them?

OURSELVES *the heart*

1. When you received hard news recently, what was your first response: worry, anger, phone calls, or prayer?
2. Daniel gave thanks before he knew how the story would end. Can you thank God before you know the outcome? What makes that hard?
3. What is your "aforetime"? Describe your prayer life as it really is, not as you wish it were.
4. Have you ever been resented because God blessed you or because you were faithful? How did you respond?

Practical Applications

Choose one to practice this week.

- [ ] **Morning, noon, and evening.** Follow Psalm 55:17 and Daniel's pattern. Set three phone reminders this week and stop for a one-minute prayer of thanks at each one.
- [ ] **Open a window.** Choose a prayer place in your home, such as a chair, a corner, or a window, and go there daily this week.

- [ ] **Thank first.** The next time bad news comes, name three things you are thankful for before you ask God for anything.
- [ ] **Let your work speak.** Do your job with an excellent spirit this week, as a witness, especially where you feel unappreciated.
- [ ] **Stand with someone in the den.** Call, text, or visit someone facing a hard season, and pray with them, not just for them.

This week, I will…

CLOSING PRAYER

God of Daniel, we thank You that You are the same today as You were in Babylon. When the decrees are signed and the pressure is on, keep our windows open toward You. Build in us habits of prayer and thanksgiving that will hold when trouble comes. Shut the mouths of the lions in our lives, and let others see You in how we stand. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MY NOTES

WEEK 3

Thanks in Confinement

Philippians 4:4–7 · *Read 4:1–13 for context*

BIG IDEA *Paul wrote "rejoice" while chained to a Roman guard. Thanksgiving doesn't deny the chains. It turns worry into prayer, and God's peace stands guard over the heart.*

THE TEXT · PHILIPPIANS 4:4–7 (KJV)

4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

ICEBREAKER *What is one small thing that brought you joy this past week?*

Background

- **The writer's situation.** Paul is a prisoner, most likely under house arrest in Rome around AD 60–62. He says his "bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace" (1:13), meaning the whole imperial guard knows why he is chained. He does not know whether he will live or die (1:20–23).
- **The church.** Paul founded the church at Philippi on his second missionary journey (Acts 16). Lydia was converted there. Paul and Silas were beaten and jailed there, and at midnight they "prayed, and sang praises unto God" until an earthquake opened the doors (Acts 16:25–26). The Philippians had already seen Paul give thanks in chains.
- **Why he wrote.** The church sent Epaphroditus with a gift for Paul (4:18). Epaphroditus fell sick "nigh unto death" (2:27) but recovered, and Paul sends him home with this letter of thanks.
- **A letter of joy.** Joy and rejoicing run all through this short letter, written from one of the hardest places of Paul's life.
- **What comes just before (4:2–3).** Paul pleads with two women in the church, Euodias and Syntyche, to "be of the same mind in the Lord." The call to rejoice and to peace comes right after a church conflict.
- **Joy in the Lord (v. 4).** The joy is *in the Lord*, not in the circumstances.
- **What follows (4:11–13).** "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Contentment is learned. Then: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

KEY WORDS

Moderation
Greek *epieikes*
Gentleness, graciousness, a spirit that doesn't insist on its own rights.

Careful
Greek *merimnao*
Anxious, pulled in different directions. Jesus uses the same word: "Take no thought for your life" (Matthew 6:25).

Thanksgiving
Greek *eucharistia*
Grateful acknowledgment of God's grace. Our word "Eucharist" comes from it.

Keep
Greek *phroureo*
To guard, a military word. Philippi was a Roman colony, and Paul was guarded by Roman soldiers. God's peace will be the soldier standing guard over your heart and mind.

Discussion Questions

OUR SOCIETY *the world around us*

1. We live in an anxious age, with nonstop news, social media, and economic uncertainty. What are people around us most worried about right now? Where do they turn for peace?
2. Verse 5 says to let your gentleness be known to all. Public conversation, online and off, has grown harsh and divided. What would it look like for believers to be known for gentleness?
3. Many people today live confined: loved ones who are incarcerated, seniors who are homebound or in nursing homes, people trapped by illness, addiction, or debt. How can the church carry the message of Philippians 4 to them?

OUR FAMILIES *the home*

1. Paul's call to rejoice comes right after a conflict between two church members. The holidays often bring family tensions to the table. How can we bring peace to our gatherings this season?
2. Who in your family is "confined" right now, by illness, age, a hospital stay, or incarceration? How could the family include them in this year's thanksgiving?
3. What are parents and grandparents most anxious about for their children today? What would it look like to turn those worries into prayers with thanksgiving?

OURSELVES *the heart*

1. What are you anxious about right now? Name it honestly.
2. Look at your recent prayers. Are they mostly requests, or requests "with thanksgiving"? What changes when you thank God first?
3. What confines you right now, whether a situation, a limitation, or a season you can't get out of? Can you rejoice in the Lord there?
4. Describe a time when God's peace guarded your heart even though your circumstances didn't change.

Practical Applications

Choose one to practice this week.

- [ ] **Trade worry for prayer.** Write down your three biggest worries. Beside each one, write a prayer request and one thing you can thank God for in that situation. Pray through the list daily.
- [ ] **Memorize Philippians 4:6–7.** Say it every time anxiety rises this week.
- [ ] **Visit the confined.** Call a shut-in, visit someone in a nursing home or hospital, or write to someone who is incarcerated. Bring them a word of thanks and hope.
- [ ] **Make peace before the meal.** If there is tension with a family member or church member, reach out before Thanksgiving Day.
- [ ] **Practice gentleness online.** For one week, post or comment only what is gracious, or don't post at all.
- [ ] **Rejoice at the table.** At Thanksgiving dinner, ask each person to share one thing they are thankful for that came through a hard season.

This week, I will…

LEADER'S NOTE

If this session falls on Thanksgiving Eve (November 25), consider closing with a testimony circle. Invite each person to share one sentence of thanks from this year, and then pray together.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, You are near. We bring You our worries tonight, and we choose to bring them with thanksgiving. Thank You for being with us in every confinement, every chain, and every season we cannot change. Let Your peace, which passes all understanding, stand guard over our hearts and minds. Make us gentle people and joyful people, so that in every season we give You thanks. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MY NOTES