# Thanksgiving Lesson

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### Luke 17.11 - 19

### OPEN

Let’s each share your name and one thing you are grateful for.

### DIG

1. Locate this setting on a map.

The exact place where the miracle took place is not indicated, and is of little importance. The ten lepers were of mixed nationality (verses 16, 18); this is not a strange phenomenon where two provinces meet. Besides, misery loves company, and when one is afflicted with leprosy nationality ceases to be a barrier to fellowship: Jew and Samaritan unite. For more on leprosy see on 5:12-16. In view of Lev. 13:45,46; Num. 5:2-4; 12:14, 15; II Kings 7:3 it is not surprising that these ten leprous men stood at a distance. When Jesus was entering the unnamed village the ten cry out—their voices still enabling them to do so—”Jesus, Master, take pity on us.” — *Baker New Testament Commentary – Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke.*

1. How is this healing different from the one in Matthew 8.1ff? How are they similar?

In Matthew 8, Jesus touched a leper and he was healed immediately. Here, however, he sends lepers on a journey, and they’re healed eventually. Sometimes He spat in men’s eyes, and they could see instantly (John 9:6–7). Another time, a second touch was required for a blind man to see clearly (Mark 8:25). The same is true today. Sometimes we pray for sick people and hear reports of wonderful healing. Other times, there is no sight of healing. In fact, sometimes things seem to get worse after we pray. Sometimes people who are faltering in their walk with the Lord are healed, while those who have a profound walk with God remain in a state of illness. As illustrated by the variety of ways Jesus healed the hurting during His earthly ministry, God will not be boxed in by any preacher or program, by any man or method. Therefore, the manner and timetable of healing remain a mystery. Of, this, however, we can be sure: By His stripes we are healed indeed (Isaiah 53:5)—whether that be on earth presently or in heaven ultimately. — Jon Courson*, Jon Courson’s Application Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 386.

1. What did the ten lepers have in common? How was the one different?

Note in how many respects these ten men were alike: (a) all were afflicted with the dreadful disease; (b) all were determined to do something about it; (c) all had heard about Jesus, and believed that he might be able to cure them, at the very least would take pity on them; (d) all appeal to Jesus, acknowledging him as Master or Rabbi; (e) all, in obedience to Christ’s command, proceed on their way to the priests; and (f) all are healed.

But at this point the similarity ends. The evangelist must have been happy to be able to record that not all the ten were like the unprofitable servant of the immediately preceding parable, who did only what he had been commanded to do. It must have grieved the beloved physician that he was unable to report that what was true of the one was also, in every respect, true of the nine. — *Baker New Testament Commentary – Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke.*

1. Vere 12. How far did the lepers stay away? What does this tell you about how they experienced life?

The lepers stood far off. (Compare Lev 13:45-46; Num 5:2.) There was no specified distance at which they should stand, but we know that at least one authority laid it down that, when he was to windward of a healthy person, the leper should stand at least fifty yards away. Nothing could better show the utter isolation in which lepers lived. — *Barclay’s Daily Study Bible (NT).*

1. Verse 16. I draw your attention to the phrase, “and he was a Samaritan.” It does not mean all that much to us. What would it have meant to the Christians in the first century?

It is with marked emphasis that the evangelist adds, “and he was a Samaritan!” As if to say, “Think of it, a Samaritan!” A man belonging to a race hated by the Jews. Were not Jews and Samaritans enemies? See 9:52, 53; cf. John 4:9. Did not the Jews look down on the Samaritans because this mixed race was not “sound” in its theology? But this Samaritan is different; by God’s grace, of course. He thanks... a Jew! When the present passage is added to such other Lucan references as 4:25-27; 7:9 (cf. Matt. 8:10-12); 11:30-32, does it not become clear that what Luke is saying is this: an international church, consisting not only of Jews but certainly also of non-Jews; is gradually being established? *— Baker New Testament Commentary – Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke.*

1. We know from history that Jews had nothing to do with Samaritans. Yet, apparently some of these other lepers where Jews and this one was a Samaritan. How is it that these Jewish lepers associated with this Samaritan leper?

Jesus was on the border between Galilee and Samaria and was met by a band of ten lepers. We know that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans; yet in this band there was at least one Samaritan. Here is an example of a great law of life. A common misfortune had broken down the racial and national barriers. In the common tragedy of their leprosy they had forgotten they were Jews and Samaritans and remembered only they were men in need. If flood surges over a piece of country and the wild animals congregate for safety on some little bit of higher ground, you will find standing peacefully together animals who are natural enemies and who at any other time would do their best to kill each other. Surely one of the things which should draw all men together is their common need of God. — *Barclay’s Daily Study Bible (NT).*

1. Verse 15. What is the grateful leper feeling in this verse?

But for one of the healed lepers, gratitude was his first, immediate reaction to grace. Before running off at a dead sprint to do all the things he’d been missing during his years as an outcast, he returned from his appointment with the priest to say thanks to his Rescuer.

He didn’t care who heard him. He didn’t care how dusty the ground was at Jesus’ feet. He didn’t care where the others had gone or that he was there all by himself, his exuberant display making him look foolish to onlookers. All he wanted was to thank Him. Nothing mattered more. Before anything else, “Thank You, Lord!” — Nancy Leigh DeMoss and Lawrence Kimbrough, *Choosing Gratitude: Your Journey to Joy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009).

1. How did the other nine experience this day differently?

The other nine returned to lives they thought they’d lost forever. They reunited with friends, with parents, with children. I’m sure they never forgot the day when their long, waking nightmare was miraculously transformed into a dream come true.

But unless they found their way to Jesus at a later time–in an event not recorded in the biblical accounts–they were left to enjoy their new life with at least this one caveat of emptiness: They may have come close to having everything restored to them, but they had not come close to Jesus. — Nancy Leigh DeMoss and Lawrence Kimbrough, *Choosing Gratitude: Your Journey to Joy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009).

1. Verse 17. How is Jesus feeling in this verse?

Now God, in contrast to a wife or husband, is a mind reader, and knows very well (and in great detail) what you’re thinking. Even so, He wants you to give a sacrifice of praise that is the fruit of your lips. We need to give God what He deserves, and that is glory. Psalm 29 says, “Give unto the LORD the glory due His name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.”

Far too often, however, we’re like those ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19, who called out loudly to Jesus for intervention. He graciously heard their prayer and healed all of them of the dreaded disease of leprosy. But as may remember, all ten went on their way…and only one returned to give thanks. And Jesus said in response, “Didn’t I heal ten of you? Where are the other nine?”71

We’re often quick to ask God for help during times of crisis, but very slow to offer thanks after He intervenes in answer to our cry. Our attitude is, “Thanks, God. See You next crisis.”

After Jesus healed the ten lepers, we read this of the one who returned to offer a sacrifice of praise: “With a loud voice he returned and glorified God falling at His feet and giving Him thanks” (v. 17). That phrase translated “loud voice” in our English Bible is from two words from which we get our English words megaphone. He was loud with His praise to God. — Greg Laurie, *Upside down Living: A Template for Changing Ourselves and the World from the Book of Acts* (Dana Point, CA: Kerygma Publishing—Allen David Books, 2011).

1. People today are not as ungrateful as this, are they? Or, are they?

It was nearly midnight on Friday, September 7, 1860, before the Lady Elgin eased into the waters of Lake Michigan on its overnight return trip from Chicago to Milwaukee. A passenger list of around four hundred were on board, comprising mostly a Union militia group and their families who had planned this late summer day-trip as a fund-raiser for their unit.

The evening’s activities had ended with dinner, dancing, and a speech by Democratic presidential candidate Stephen A. Douglas. And though the wind and spitting rain threatened ominous weather, causing the captain to ponder delaying the voyage till morning, the decision was finally made to heave anchor.

Spirits remained high among the partygoers long into the night, as the spacious salons on board the Lady Elgin buzzed with music and dancing. It was sometime between 2:00 and 2:30 in the morning, while the band was still playing, that a tremendous jarring shook the entire vessel, shattering the oil lamps and sending passengers into a darkened, rolling panic.

Augusta, a 130-foot schooner loaded with lumber and hurtling recklessly at full sail in the high wind, had struck Lady Elgin’s left rear side.

It should have been a somewhat glancing blow, the much smaller Augusta getting the worst of the accident. In fact, the crew of the steamer waved Augusta on, sure that the schooner was in greater need of haste toward the shoreline. But within a half hour, the boilers and engine had broken through the weakened bottom of the steamer, further rupturing the hull. The great ship was shivering off in pieces.

Lady Elgin was sinking.

For six hours, survivors floated on lifeboats and other bits of wreckage while lightning crackled across the sky, illuminating the horror. The northerly winds and furious surf drove the larger part of them backward toward a high bluff near Evanston, Illinois. Local residents and farmers, waking up to the sight of wailing men and women scattered across the water, ran for help, trying to organize a rescue party.

Among those recruited was Edward Spencer, a seminary student from nearby Northwestern University, who had grown up along the Mississippi River and knew how to handle himself in the water. Tying a long rope around his waist and diving into the choppy waters of western Lake Michigan, he pulled victim after victim to shore, struggling hard against the ferocious undertow that was claiming the last strength of many along the cliff walls, so tantalizingly close to safety.

While lunging and heaving with one person after another under his strong arm, the sharp edges of floating debris grazed his head and body. Again and again he returned to shore with another survivor, along with bloodied face and aching muscles.

But gathering strength and breath around a campfire, he would spot another person thrashing weakly in the surf. Tossing off the blanket that was conserving his body temperature, he hazarded out into the deeps again, muscles tensing and cramping as he strained against the current.

Eventually, of the thirty victims who survived along the water’s edge in Evanston that day, seventeen of them would owe their lives to Edward Spencer’s heroic efforts.

But although his bravery would be the beginning of new life for many, it became the end of a dream for the young seminarian. Never quite able to recover from the physical toll of that fateful day, he was forced to abandon his schooling, his livelihood, and his dreams of becoming a pastor and scholar. Some remember him being nearly paralyzed the rest of his life, often confined to a wheelchair.

And though his valor would at times be recalled in newspaper accounts and other general tributes, when asked by a reporter what he most recalled about the rescue, he replied, “Only this: of the seventeen people I saved, not one of them ever thanked me.” — Nancy Leigh DeMoss and Lawrence Kimbrough, *Choosing Gratitude: Your Journey to Joy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009).

1. This story reminds us of the ingratitude in the human heart. What are some examples of ingratitude that you have seen in your life?

No story in all the gospels so poignantly shows man’s ingratitude. The lepers came to Jesus with desperate longing; he cured them; and nine never came back to give thanks. So often, once a man has got what he wants, he never comes back.

(i) Often we are ungrateful to our parents. There was a time in our lives when a week’s neglect would have killed us. Of all living creatures man requires longest to become able to meet the needs essential for life. There were years when we were dependent on our parents for literally everything. Yet the day often comes when an aged parent is a nuisance; and many young people are unwilling to repay the debt they owe. As King Lear said in the day of his own tragedy.

“How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is  
To have a thankless child!”

(ii) Often we are ungrateful to our fellow-men. Few of us have not at some time owed a great deal to some fellow-man. Few of us at the moment, believed we could ever forget; but few of us in the end satisfy the debt of gratitude we owe. It often happens that a friend, a teacher, a doctor, a surgeon does something for us which it is impossible to repay; but the tragedy is that we often do not even try to repay it.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,  
Thou art not so unkind  
As man’s ingratitude.

(iii) Often we are ungrateful to God. In some time of bitter need we pray with desperate intensity; the time passes and we forget God. Many of us never even offer a grace before meat. God gave us his only Son and often we never give to him even a word of thanks. The best thanks we can give him is to try to deserve his goodness and his mercy a little better. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” (Ps 103:2.) — *Barclay’s Daily Study Bible (NT).*

1. What good things come to the grateful?

The professors took three groups of volunteers and randomly assigned them to focus on one of three things for a week: hassles, things for which they were grateful, or ordinary life events. Group A focused on everything that went wrong or was irritating, such as “The battery was dead on my car” or “That jerk cut me off on the highway.” Group B volunteers honed in on situations that they felt enhanced their lives, e.g., “My boyfriend is so kind and caring; I am lucky to have him” or “That was the most spectacular sunrise; I’m glad I got up early.” Group C just remembered events: “I cleaned my closet,” or “I went shoe shopping.”

Participants were asked to list five examples in their respective categories and then quantify how they felt about what they’d listed: irritated, ashamed, stressed, joyful, grateful, forgiving, calm, proud, etc. They were also asked specific lifestyle questions: How much time do you spend exercising? What physical symptoms do you experience—are you sick, suffering from allergies? Do you feel particularly energetic? If they had received assistance from someone, participants were asked how they felt about it: grateful? annoyed? embarrassed? appreciated? Finally, they were asked how they felt overall, both as they looked back at the past week and as they looked forward to the week ahead.

The people who focused on gratitude were just flat-out happier. They saw their lives in favorable terms. They reported fewer negative physical symptoms, such as headaches or colds, and they were active in ways that were good for them: they spent almost an hour and a half more per week exercising than the people who focused on their hassles. In addition, those who’d been on the receiving end of someone else’s kindness rated higher in joy and happiness than the others. In short, those who focused on what they were grateful for felt a higher level of gratitude. Life just seemed better for them.

People around them recognized that. Professor Emmons says, “They noticed that the people had more joy, more energy. They could see that they were becoming more optimistic. They even seemed to be perceived as more helpful, you know, going out on a limb to help people.” Emmons was surprised by this result. “This is not just something that makes people happy like a positive thinking/optimism kind of thing, but really gets people to do something, that is, to become more prosocial or more compassionate or more optimistic.” This didn’t happen in the other two groups.

Emmons and McCullough took their study further. Rather than focus on hassles, blessings, or events on a weekly basis, they rounded up some volunteers—college students, who received course credit for their participation in the experiment—to do it every day. Along with the focus on life events, the researchers asked for specifics: how many alcoholic drinks volunteers had, how many aspirin or other pain relievers they took, the quantity and quality of their sleep—and they wanted folks to compare themselves to others: Are you better or worse off?

If you were going to have dinner with anyone from the study, you’d want someone from the gratitude group at your table. Right off the bat, Emmons and his team recognized that there was something especially impactful about a regular gratitude check. A follow-up study found the effect even more powerful when the gratitude exercises were done on a daily basis. Those who found something to appreciate every day were less materialistic, that is, they were less apt to see a connection between life satisfaction and material things. They were more willing to part with their possessions. The bumper sticker that reads “The one with the most toys, wins” was unlikely to be found on any of their cars.

The grateful people were less depressive, envious, and anxious, and much more likely to help others, a fact not lost on those around them. When other people were asked their impressions of the daily-gratitude students, they generally judged them as empathetic, helpful, and prosocial. That is, they felt the members of the gratitude group were more likely to put themselves out for others.

Here’s a laundry list of the study’s conclusions about test subjects who were consciously grateful:

* They felt better about their lives as a whole.
* They were more optimistic.
* They were more energetic.
* They were more enthusiastic.
* They were more determined.
* They were more interested.
* They were more joyful.
* They felt stronger about handling challenges.
* They exercised more (nearly an hour and a half more per week!).
* They had fewer illnesses.
* They got more sleep.
* They made progress toward important personal goals.
* They were more likely to have helped someone else.
* They were perceived by others as more generous and helpful.
* They were less envious of those with more possessions.
* They were less cluttered.

Deborah Norville, *Thank You Power: Making the Science of Gratitude Work for You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

1. What price do the ungrateful pay?

Related studies have found additional benefits, all of which could arguably be linked to a grateful mind-set:

* Clearer thinking—more creativity and openness to ideas
* Better resilience during tough times
* Higher immune response
* Less likelihood of being plagued by stress
* Longer lives
* Closer family ties
* Greater religiousness

Along with thinner thighs and six-pack abs, this is a fairly comprehensive list of what most of us would wish for in life.

“I have studied a lot of topics in the nearly twenty-five years since I’ve been in graduate school, but there is no topic that has gotten more interest from people than this—and it’s exciting,” study coauthor Robert Emmons told me. In fact, Emmons says he was pretty jazzed about the research results himself. “From the very beginning, when I first started this research, I was so excited that I couldn’t sleep.” Emmons is eager to see others begin the practice he studied in the lab. “The challenge,” he warns, “is not to make it sound too corny or simplistic or superficial.” — Deborah Norville*, Thank You Power: Making the Science of Gratitude Work for You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

1. How do ungrateful people make you feel? How does ingratitude harm those around the ungrateful person?

One type of sin is particularly contagious. It is an infection with great resilience that spreads quickly among people, despite the availability of an effective vaccine (more on that tomorrow). I’m speaking of grumbling, whining, and gossiping. Part of the reason the children of Israel were stuck in the wilderness on a 40-year journey that could have ended in a week is because they were obstinate, grumbling people. Nothing ever seemed to be good enough to fully satisfy them; they complained about everything, even though God provided for them daily. Basically all they had to do for dinner was pick up the bread God blanketed the earth with the night before.

In my opinion, the sin of grumbling or ingratitude and her ugly twin sister gossip are radically contagious sins. When someone comes to you and starts complaining, it is easy to get sucked in. It seems like the moment you start grumbling or whining, a chemical release happens in your brain that gives you a momentary high.

We understand we are all sinners in need of God’s grace. Yet in the New Testament Paul is really clear: if you find someone who is complaining and grumbling, gossipy and divisive, go and rebuke that brother or sister once, and if they don’t listen to you, be done with them. What! Really? You could be a struggling alcoholic and a community will walk with you, but a grumbling, complaining person is to be ejected? To be clear, we are not talking about constructive criticism or thoughtful complaints—we are talking about gossip and murmuring. If you call over the manager at a restaurant because there is a hair in your salad, you are helping them to know that someone needs to wear a hairnet. A word of critique is necessary at times as we all work toward improving our lives. Our problem is that we fall too easily into selfish criticism. — Chris Seay, A Place at the Table (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012).

1. The opposite of gratitude is grumbling. Why is grumbling such a popular past time?

There was a boy named Grumble Tone who ran away to sea,  
“I’m sick of things on land,” he said, “as sick as I can be;  
A life upon the bounding wave will suit a lad like me!”

The seething ocean billows failed to stimulate his mirth,  
For he did not like the vessel, nor the dizzy, rolling berth,  
And he thought the sea was almost as unpleasant as the earth.

He wandered into foreign lands, he saw each wondrous sight,  
But nothing that he heard or saw seemed just exactly right;  
And so he journeyed on and on, still seeking for delight.

He talked with kings and ladies fair; he dined in courts, they say,  
But always found the people dull, and longed to get away  
To search for that mysterious land where he would like to stay.

He wandered over all the world, his hair grew white as snow;  
He reached that final bourne at last where all of us must go,  
But never found the land he sought. The reason you would know?

The reason was that north or south, where’er his steps were bent,  
On land or sea, in court or hall, he found but discontent;  
For he took his disposition with him everywhere he went.

Robert J. Morgan, Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, and Quotes, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 393–394.

1. Philippians 2.14. Is a little bit of grumbling OK?

Paul’s command might not seem too difficult until we consider what “all things” actually entails. Have you grumbled about the weather lately? How about a sore throat? We might feel convicted when we grumble about the little daily inconveniences, but we feel justified in complaining when the major crises hit. What else can we do when our husband loses his job or we get the news that our child has serious learning disabilities? But Paul meant what he said. “All things” means all things, because there is nothing—absolutely nothing— that touches our lives that somehow slipped through the cracks of his providential ordering.

When we grumble about the weather, we are arguing against God’s ordering of creation. When we complain about illness or job loss or whatever it may be, we are declaring, whether we realize it or not, that God isn’t handling our affairs very well. Complaining is actually a form of pride, which makes sense when we recognize its rebellious undertones.

There just isn’t any need to complain, because whatever circumstances God sends—rain and snow, sickness, and trouble of various kinds—he sends in order to bless us. But it is impossible to keep an eye out for God’s blessings while harboring a complaining spirit. Grumbling about hard things blocks our expectation of good things, and if we are not looking for the good things, we may fail to see them when they come. That’s part of why thankfulness is so important. Offering thanks to God, no matter what is going on in our lives, is a way of acknowledging that he knows exactly what he is doing and that we can trust him.

The antidote to a complaining spirit is a thankful spirit. “Give thanks in all circumstances,” Paul wrote, “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:18). Sometimes thankfulness is a choice we make rather than a feeling we have. We can choose to give thanks even when we don’t feel like it. God is pleased when he sees our willingness to give thanks because it demonstrates our trust in his goodness and our willingness to let him run the show. If we practice thanksgiving, before we know it we will actually find ourselves feeling thankful, which is always accompanied by joy. God delights to bless a thankful heart. — Lydia Brownback, *Joy: A Godly Woman’s Adornment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

1. Why is it important to God that we take seriously the idea of replacing grumbling with gratitude?

A few years ago, I hunted longbeards along the Oregon coastline. I was with a group of professionals from the outdoor industry. The companies that hosted the event spared no expense placing us in comfy accommodations, partnering us with skilled guides, and putting us into some of the most breathtaking environments Oregon has to offer.

One night, after feasting on wild game, I sat by a roaring fire and chatted with six other hunters. Disregarding the rules about polite company, we talked about politics, the outdoor industry, and religion. A few of the men complained the entire night; according to them, the president was a failure, the outdoor industry was falling apart, and all churches were filled with hypocrites. As we moved from one topic to another, a fog of cynicism mixed with the wood smoke and made the air feel thick.

One of the men, Joel, participated in the conversations but never complained. He asked good questions, listened well, and at times challenged the other men in what they were saying. But his challenges were playful and nonthreatening. Joel’s presence helped fight back the fog and steer the conversation in productive directions.

At the end of the evening, I asked Joel why he refused to join the other men in their complaining. He replied, “If I grumble and complain, how will the world know that I’m a Christian?” Joel’s response reminded me of Philippians 2:14–15: “Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God.” — Zeke Pipher and Steve Chapman, *In Pursuit: Devotions for the Hunter and Fisherman* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014).

1. Do you think grumblers have any idea how much they grumble?

Beverly Bush Smith was shocked when her husband finally spoke his mind. “It’s hard to come home from work,” he said, “and listen to you complain.”

“Me? Complain?” thought Beverly. She had never thought of herself as a complainer. But her husband continued: “I listen to you grumble that you were caught in traffic, or that your editor trashed the lead on which you worked so hard, or that my mother demanded your time, or that the washing machine overflowed.”

“I though I was just telling you about my day,” Beverly replied.

“But it comes through in your tone of voice and body language.”

For several weeks Beverly tried very hard to utter no grumbling sounds, but at length on a particularly bad day, the complaints poured out like a torrent. The next morning in her Bible study she looked up the word “murmuring”—which means to grumble. She read of how the Israelites had grumbled in their wanderings, and how it was displeasing to God. She read Philippians 2:14 which says, “Do all things without complaining and disputing.”

All things.

Beverly later wrote, “Now evening conversations with my husband are more pleasant. I hear a lot more about his concerns by encouraging him to tell me his feelings before I leap in with my problems.

“When I am tempted to launch into a monologue of the day’s woes, I remind myself that I do not want to quench the Holy Spirit with my complaining. And I pray that God will help me reflect His love.” — Robert J. Morgan*, Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, and Quotes, electronic ed.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 395–396.

1. How can we become more grateful than we are?

Take a moment during the day—most people find those last minutes just before retiring to be best—to jot down three things that happened today for which you are grateful. Buy yourself a simple spiral-bound notebook or a fancy journal—what you write on doesn’t matter. What matters is what you write. Use the Thank You Power Checklist on the next page to help you get started. What merits inclusion in your notebook? Anything that uplifted you at the time it happened, that brought a smile to your face or your heart. Put another way—something you’re glad about, that made you happy today or will contribute toward your future happiness.

After each situation or event for which you feel thankful, write why this was good for your life. Perhaps today you received a letter or e-mail from an old school friend who hadn’t been in touch for years. Why was this a good thing? Well, it reminded you of the good times you had together way back when. It forced you to realize that people think of you even though you’ve had no contact with them—which must mean you are a pretty special person. It prompted you to think of other long-lost chums and planted the seed that a reunion with the old gang would be really fun to organize. That message from your friend reminded you that it is the people in your life that really give it meaning. — Deborah Norville, *Thank You Power: Making the Science of Gratitude Work for You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

1. How can we support one another in prayer this week?