

Riverview Baptist Church

Sunday School Teaching Plan

November 22, 2015

“An Attitude of Gratitude”

Memory Verse

“Give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever.” Ps 107:1, NIV

The Big Idea:

Sunday School Scripture: Numbers 11:1-4; Luke 17:11-19

Sunday School Title: “An Attitude of Gratitude”

ESS: God notices and punishes an attitude of complaining, while He recognizes and rewards an attitude of thanksgiving.

Presentation

4 days from now, most of us will celebrate Thanksgiving. Let’s see how much you know about the origin of our country’s Thanksgiving holiday.

ASK & DISCUSS:

Read each statement. Instruct participants to show a “thumbs up” if they believe the statement to be true, or show a “thumbs down” if they believe the statement to be false. After participants have voted on the statement, then reveal the answer.

- The Pilgrims sailed on a ship known as the “Mayflower.” (*BELIEVE IT*)
- The Pilgrims sailed across the Pacific Ocean to get to North America. (*FALSE - The Atlantic Ocean*)
- Pilgrim leader William Bradford invited Wampanoag Indians to the first Thanksgiving. (*BELIEVE IT*)
- One of the main reasons the pilgrims came to North America was for religious freedom. (*BELIEVE IT*)
- The first Thanksgiving feast did not feature forks. Participants ate with spoons, knives, and fingers. (*BELIEVE IT*)
- Mashed potatoes, pumpkin pie, corn on the cob, and cranberries were all present at the first Thanksgiving dinner. (*FALSE - probably wild meat, fish, dried fruits, and nuts*)
- Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be the national bird of the United States. (*BELIEVE IT*)
- The annual Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade tradition began in the 1890’s. (*FALSE - 1924*)
- Although it is widely considered an American holiday, Mexico celebrates Thanksgiving on the second Monday in October. (*FALSE - Canada does*)
- In the United States, about 280 million turkeys are sold for the Thanksgiving celebrations. (*BELIEVE IT*)
- Congress made it a law in 1941 to celebrate Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday of every November. (*BELIEVE IT*)

With Thanksgiving coming up, our lesson today will focus on cultivating an attitude of gratitude in our lives. But before we discuss gratitude, let’s discuss the opposite.

What is the opposite of thankfulness?

Though we desire to have thankful hearts, too often we complain instead of giving thanks to God. Let’s look at several times the Israelites complained instead of showing gratitude.

READ these passages:

- Numbers 11:1-4
- Numbers 11: 4-6, 31-34
- Numbers 14:1-4, 26-32

Answer the questions:

1. What were the Israelites complaining about?
2. What was God's response?

REPLACE A COMPLAINING ATTITUDE....

1. The Israelites COMPLAINED

What is complaining? Complaining is expressing our dissatisfaction about a circumstance that is not wrong and about which we are doing nothing to correct.

What is the difference in just “venting” and complaining? Is complaining a sin? What’s so bad about it?

The Israelites complained about Moses' leadership, their weariness and hunger, their thirst, and other things. And each time they complained, they were exercising a choice. They were choosing to focus on the negative instead of on the positive. Just like the Israelites, we choose our attitudes. Each time we choose to complain, we minimize God's blessings and magnify the negative circumstances. The Israelites certainly didn't have a choice about their circumstances, but they did have control over their attitudes. The same is true for us today. We may not be able to choose the situation we're currently in or the circumstances that surround us each day. But we can choose how we respond to them all: with a complaining attitude or a thankful one.

2. God HEARD it and PUNISHED them

In each passage we read from Numbers, notice that God heard the complaints of His people. Their complaints reached God's ears, and He became angry.

Have you ever thought about the fact that God hears you every time you complain? How does that change things? Why do you think God became angry when the Israelites complained?

God hated their complaining! And we can tell He hated it because He punished the Israelites for it! In each passage, we see God punish the Israelites for complaining. God punished them because their attitude of complaining was sinful! Complaining is sinful because it:

- **Ignores God's presence**
The Israelites complained as if God had totally abandoned them! In reality, His presence had never left them. He led them every step of the way by a cloud and pillar of fire. He was there the whole time!
- **Questions God's Sovereignty**
When the Israelites complained, it was because they were longing for something God was unwilling to give them at the time. They thought they knew what was best for them, and their complaining questioned and criticized God's plan and providence.
- **Ignores God's Blessing**
Each time the Israelites complained, they focused on their hardships instead of on God's blessings.

So we agree that we definitely need to find a replacement for a complaining attitude. Let's focus now on giving thanks.

READ Luke 17:11-19

3. Thankfulness is a **CHOICE**

Just as the Israelites often chose to complain, we see in this passage of Luke that 1 man chose to give thanks. All 10 lepers received healing, but only 1 of the 10 men healed by Jesus chose to give thanks. The 1 leper who thanks Jesus made a conscious decision. Notice in Luke 11:15-16 that he returned from the temple and found Jesus, praised God in a loud voice, and literally threw himself to the ground at Jesus' feet thanking Him. None of this happened on accident. This man's act of thanksgiving was intentional! He made a choice and acted upon it. His decision to give thanks cost him time, travel, energy, and humility. Sometimes giving thanks cost something, but it will always require making a choice.

Knowing that having a thankful attitude is a choice, how often do you choose this attitude? Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = Not very often; 10 = Always).

4. Jesus **RECOGNIZED** and **REWARDED** It

Not only did Jesus recognize the man who returned to give thanks, but Jesus also noticed the other nine men who didn't return. In verse 17-19, we see Jesus' sorrow and frustration at the nine lepers who received healing but refused to express their gratitude. We need to realize that God notices when we ARE thankful, but he also takes notice when we AREN'T.

Think about a time when you were frustrated by someone overlooking your generosity or refusing to say "thanks" to you. How did it feel? How do you think God feels when we forget or refuse to thank Him?

And in verse 19, we see Jesus reward the thankful leper. Jesus says, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." Now, all ten lepers had already received physical healing, so Jesus' use of the word *well* doesn't mean physical well-being. Jesus means that because this one leper expressed thanksgiving to God, he received and developed a faith and relationship with God that was deeper than the other nine would ever possess. Author James MacDonald writes, "Only when we recognize God as our gracious provider can we comprehend our need for God and begin to express faith in Him. Faith grows in the soil of thankfulness" (from his book *Lord, Change My Attitude*). According to this quote, we must recognize God and offer thanks to Him for His blessings. When we do this, our faith in Him grows stronger and our relationship with Him becomes more intimate. The easiest way to grow your faith: give thanks. The easiest way to stunt your faith: refuse to be thankful.

CLOSING:

God notices and punishes an attitude of complaining, while He recognizes and rewards an attitude of thanksgiving.

Apply It!

- We CHOOSE whether we will have an attitude of complaining or an attitude of thanksgiving.
- To help you choose to be thankful this week:
- Begin listing things you are thankful for.
- Put the list in a prominent, easily accessible place.
- Add to the list multiple times each day.
- Encourage other members of the family to add to the list, too!
- Bring your list to the table at family meal or prayer times.
- Read new entries aloud and give thanks to God in prayer.
- Write a note to someone special – your child, spouse, parent, friend, etc. In the note, explain how/why you are thankful for him/her.

STUDY NOTES:

(These are for your own study. This is NOT the lesson. Commentary written by David Guzik and available online: http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/guzik_david/)

Numbers 11:1-4

- **Now when the people complained:** Israel, having been ordered, organized, cleansed, separated, blessed, taught how to give, reminded of God's deliverance, given God's presence, and the tools to advance to the Promised Land, is now on the march to Canaan - and immediately, **the people complained**. How can it be that a nation so blessed can still complain? God had done so much in and for Israel; yet they still murmur against Him. Of course, their circumstances were not easy - but what sin it is for them to complain against God, wiping out the spirit of gratitude in their hearts!
- **The people complained ... it displeased the LORD:** This was a simple case of cause-and-effect. Our complaining hearts displease God, because it shows so little gratitude for what He has done in the past, and faith for what He can do right now. We aren't even told here exactly what Israel was complaining about. Perhaps here, it is because their complaining is just that generally dissatisfied heart - complaining not for any one great reason, but because that is where their hearts are.
- **The fire of the LORD burned among them:** Israel had valued the fire of God as the emblem of His presence at night; but now, that fire and the presence of God becomes somewhat of a two-edged sword - the presence of God was there to deal with sin as well as to comfort Israel.
- **The people cried out to Moses:** Ideally, they would have cried out to God Himself; but with their low walk with God, they feel more comfortable with Moses.
- **When Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched:** Moses intercedes for the people, and the fire is quenched - but the place is named **Taberah** ("burning") as a reminder of God's estimation of the complaining heart.
- **Luke 17:11-19**
- **As He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers:** It was not unusual for these lepers to congregate with one another. They were outcasts from society at large, and had no company other than other lepers.
- **Go, show yourselves to the priests:** It is remarkable that Jesus asks them to go to the priests while they are still lepers. This was truly stepping out in faith, like putting on the new man even when we still look and feel like the old man.
- **And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed:** Just as God blessed the faith of the lepers to step out as the new man even when they feel like the old, so will He bless our faith.
- **And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God:** Only one came back to give thanks; and he was the *unlikely* one - a **Samaritan**. And, though he was only one, at least he was very **loud** about his thanks!
- **Were there not ten cleansed?** Jesus *missed* the nine who did not return to give thanks. He wondered where they were. Jesus also notices our lack of gratitude. We would think that everyone who would pray would also praise God; but this is sadly not always the case. What possible excuse is there for this?
- **Your faith has made you well:** There was an extra healing for this tenth leper. When Jesus said this, He likely meant God's work within the man's heart. The other lepers had whole bodies, but sick hearts.