

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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A LACK OF GRATITUDE

Jay Graham

One of the more difficult parts of writing these articles is coming up with a topic that you think will be edifying. As the date for submitting my article approached, I was almost in a panic. I could not think of a topic that “felt right.” I was having a discussion this morning with a lady I was doing business with, and then a “light came on” about a good topic for an article. She asked me how I was doing as I approached her, which is a common greeting in our culture. I responded, “I am very well blessed,” as I like to say, to which she responded, “That was a great answer.” We then got to talking, and I added that I always try to respond like that, even when things may not be going as well as I would hope. She then said, “Yes, we like to complain.” I asked her why that was, to which she responded, “Perhaps it makes us feel better to complain.” I told her, I do not believe it makes us feel better; actually, it makes us feel worse. What makes you feel good is having a feeling of gratitude. Being thankful for what you have always helps you feel much better than complaining.

For a long time now, I have thought a lack of gratitude in our culture is at the heart of many of our problems. And yes, our society has plenty of problems. We are not a very grateful society. We can see this in our constant complaining, even though we still live in a very prosperous land, especially when you compare it to the rest of the world. The vast majority of us have plenty of food, clothing, and housing. I am reminded of the apostle Paul’s words in **1 Timothy 6:8**, “*And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*” The definition for “gratitude” is “The quality of being grateful or thankful.” And, in my estimation, our society certainly does not have such an attitude. Ours has become a society of complainers, even as our bellies are full and our bodies clothed (when we want them to be).

Perhaps my mind has been on this topic since my favorite holiday is approaching (at least at the time I was writing this article). And that is Thanksgiving! I love Thanksgiving and practically all that accompanies it. I love the food and the time with my family, friends, and brothers and sisters. I like smoking the turkey or ham. I like watching the football games, for Thanksgiving is often the only time I can watch very many NFL games. I even like the nice chill in the air as we are in the midst of Autumn. But I think most of all, I am glad our culture has a few days when we are encouraged to be thankful as a nation for what we have, even if it is temporary. Being thankful is always a good thing. I suspect that even in households in which they do not believe in a Creator, someone is usually asked to say a prayer of thanksgiving before they eat. And that also is a good thing.

With all these words, a key for us as the Lord's people is not allowing the lack of gratitude in our culture to drag us down to their level. It surely can if we let it.

In our home, as we are sharing the meal, we ask everyone to say things they are particularly thankful for one by one. And the challenge is that they must say something that has not already been said. This seems to encourage each one to think seriously of things that we may not usually consider. It is pretty cool and thought-provoking when you hear some of the responses! This is just our tradition.

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Our Creator knows what is good for our spirits. He has given us many admonitions in His Word to encourage us to be grateful, such as **Psa 50:14, 2 Cor 9:10-15, Col 2:6-7, Col 4:2, and 1 Tit 4:4,5**, just to name a few. In particular, the New Testament abounds in many admonitions for us to be thankful, and in many contexts.

A passage that comes to mind following my discussion with the lady as to why I believe being thankful, even when things are difficult, is much better for our spirits than complaining is **Philippians 4:6-7**, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* Our Creator knows what our lives and spirits need to thrive, and certainly, being thankful is at the heart of helping us appreciate our lives.

With all these words, a key for us as the Lord's people is not allowing the lack of gratitude in our culture to drag us down to their level. It surely can if we let it. We are to be a grateful people, even if, and especially when, things are not going well for us. People will notice our gratitude, and it may even help plant the seed of the Word in their own hearts! And being grateful will certainly help our own spirits!

Remember **Ephesians 5:3-4** *"But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks."*

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As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:6-7

THE KILLER IN ME

Tad Morris

Solomon must have been disappointed as he concluded, *"Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes"* (**Ecclesiastes 7:29**). This observation is as true today as it's ever been.

The inclination to kill is one of these schemes. When we see people today assassinating their political or theological opponents, we are disappointed, but we are not surprised. Killing is not an anomalous human behavior. In fits of anger, jealousy, and self-righteousness, people will murder their competitors under the illusion of justice and necessity. Of course, we have many virtuous instincts—like kindness, forgiveness, and altruism—but human nature also includes these animal instincts that lead us to lie, cheat, steal, and even kill. This is documented over and over again in the Bible.

In **Genesis 4**, Abel brought a respectable offering, and Cain did not. So, Cain killed his brother. *"Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him"* (**Genesis 4:8**). Cain was jealous of his brother, so he killed him. This revealed a pattern of human behavior that has never changed and never will.

In **1 Samuel 18**, Saul, king of Israel, decided to kill his servant David for no other reason than that David was more successful and more admired than he was.

So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" So Saul eyed David from that day forward (**1 Samuel 18:7-9**).

Saul eyed him to kill him, and tried unsuccessfully many times. David didn't do anything wrong. David didn't need

to apologize for being successful. David had no control over the people who admired and respected him. Saul didn't care. Saul only knew that he hated David, and he wanted David dead.

In **2 Chronicles 24**, the Jews tried to kill Zachariah the prophet because he told them the truth. He told them they had rejected the one true God.

Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God: 'Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He also has forsaken you.'" So they conspired against him, and at the command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD (2 Chronicles 24:20-21).

People hate to be told that they're wrong. Rather than responding with thoughtfulness or introspection, our instinct is to respond with hate, violence, and even murder.

The plot to kill Jesus all started because Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, the Jewish Day of rest.

Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him (Matthew 12:11-14).

Jesus wasn't killed because he did something evil. He was killed because he did something good and told people the truth. The Pharisees and the other religious leaders could not stand to be corrected, so, in their minds, the solution was to kill their opponent.

This is the way people solve their problems. They kill them. Something similar happens in **John 12**. Jesus raised a man from the dead, Lazarus, and many people became believers in Christ on account of this awesome miracle.

How did the Jewish leaders respond to this great work? They decided that Lazarus needed to die again.

Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus (John 12:9-11).

The Bible contains many, many more examples just like this. Stephen, Peter, Paul, James, and almost all of the apostles of Christ were killed for preaching the gospel. They were hated, hunted, and ultimately martyred because they preached the truth about sin, judgment, and salvation through Jesus Christ. They were kind, they were compassionate, and they were the best neighbors a person could ever have. But that wasn't good enough. Their communities decided they had to die for their non-conformance to social and religious traditions. People have a long history of killing their adversaries.

There is only one way out of this cycle. Jesus said, "*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*" (**Matthew 15:19**). The heart has to change, and the human nature has to die. That's the freedom offered to you through Jesus Christ and Christ alone. There is no law, code, or philosophy that can set you free from your human passions. That power does not exist in you, and it doesn't even come from this world. How to conquer your carnal human nature is from God through Jesus Christ, **Galatians 5:24**: "...those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

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And this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother...

I John 3:11-12

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Here and There

The brethren meeting on **Murray Rd in Lee's Summit, MO** plan to host a one-day Men's Study on December 13, 2025. They invite you to join them as they encourage growing in God's grace and increasing our labor in His kingdom.

The Winter Youth Rally, hosted by the congregation meeting at **Gregory Boulevard in Raytown, MO**, is quickly approaching. Reach out to **Doug Twaddell, twadsquad@earthlink.net**, for answers to any questions you may have.

The **Gardner, KS** congregation plans to host a one-day meeting on Sunday, March 22, 2026. The morning meeting will begin at 10 AM. Additional details coming.

The brethren meeting on **Riverside Road, Ozark, MO** plan to host a one-week meeting during the summer of 2026. More details will follow.

We thank these congregations for taking up this good work. Many influential friendships have been forged as iron sharpens iron at these Bible studies.

2025 Special Meetings

December 13.....Men's Study, Murray Rd, Lee's Summit, MO

December 29-31.....Winter Youth Rally, Raytown, MO

December 29-31.....Winter College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

2026 Special Meetings

March 22.....Gardner, KS

June 29-July 3.....Midwest Bible Campout

Summer.....One-Week Meeting, Riverside Rd, Ozark, MO

Special Meetings



The Gospel Message

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