

# Thanks Living: Grace That Becomes Gratitude

Stu Epperson Jr. on Scripture, Encouragement, and Practicing Thankfulness Every Day

**Stu Epperson Jr.** | Thursday, October 8, 2026 | Host: Donna Leland

## Program Summary

Donna Leland continues her conversation with Stu Epperson Jr. about his book *Thanks Living: Embracing the Power of Gratitude Every Day*. They explore how gratitude differs from positive thinking because it grows from God's grace and the truth of Scripture. Stu encourages listeners to begin each day in the Word, interrupt spirals of complaint by naming something for which to give thanks, and express appreciation to people through texts, notes, and conversations. He recounts a respectful conversation with an atheist and a story about Corrie ten Boom and her sister in a concentration camp to illustrate gratitude amid opposition and suffering. His concluding point is that gratitude is fruit, not the root: God's gift of Jesus at the cross is the source. The program invites listeners to take thanksgiving beyond a holiday and live it every day.

## Key Takeaways

- Christian gratitude begins with grace: what God has given in Jesus Christ.
- Scripture nourishes gratitude and can redirect thoughts when fear or discouragement takes over.
- Giving thanks is a conscious practice, not simply a feeling that arrives on its own.
- A short thank-you note or text can bless someone and turn my attention outward.
- Thanksgiving can become a daily family conversation rather than an annual holiday tradition.
- Recognizing another person's gifts can open a respectful door for gospel conversation.
- Even difficult waiting or inconvenience can prompt gratitude for ordinary provision.
- The account of Corrie ten Boom and her sister illustrates Stu's point about gratitude during suffering; it is shared as his retelling.
- Gratitude is not a substitute for acknowledging pain; it is a response to God's grace within it.
- Jesus' death and resurrection hope are the ultimate foundation of Thanks Living.

## Scripture References

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18
- Colossians 3:16
- 2 Corinthians 10:5
- Romans 5:8
- Philippians 4:6–8
- Psalm 103:1–5
- 1 Corinthians 13:13
- James 1:17

## Quote of the Day

"Gratitude is a fruit. Gratitude is a result." — Stu Epperson Jr.

## Broadcast Notes

Donna begins by distinguishing biblical thanksgiving from secular self-help. Stu describes the Living Thanks questions in his book and a planned Scripture-linked bracelet, then emphasizes meditating on God's Word. They discuss deliberately turning from rumination to thanksgiving, including Stu's habit of writing thank-you cards. He encourages listeners to send a message to someone who has helped them and to ask family members what they are thankful for throughout the year. He recalls a discussion with an atheist in which appreciation for the man's intelligence became a way to share the gospel. He also retells the Corrie ten Boom story of giving thanks for fleas and lice in a concentration camp, which he says kept guards away. This historical anecdote is attributed to Stu's account. At the close, he says gratitude is the fruit of grace, pointing to Christ's sacrificial love and the cross. Donna thanks Stu and reminds listeners of the online transcript and resources.

## ♥ Practical Applications

- Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 and identify one way to practice it today.
- Before checking the news, read a verse and name one gift from God.
- Send a sincere thank-you message to someone who has encouraged or prayed for me.
- Ask each person at a meal to share one thing for which they are thankful.
- When I begin to ruminate, stop and name one evidence of God's goodness.
- Look for a person's gifts before deciding how to respond to disagreement.
- Thank God for one ordinary convenience I usually overlook.
- Remember that gratitude is rooted in Christ's grace rather than my circumstances.

## Today's Challenge

For seven days, begin with a Scripture verse and one specific thank-you to God. Each day, express gratitude to one person—by text, phone call, conversation, or handwritten note. At the end of the week, ask whether this practice helped move thanksgiving from an occasional feeling to a way of living.

## Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the grace You have shown me through Jesus Christ. When my thoughts drift toward complaint, fear, or discouragement, bring me back to Your Word and the goodness of Your character. Teach me to give thanks in every circumstance without pretending that hardship does not hurt. Open my eyes to the people You have used to encourage, help, teach, and pray for me. Give me the humility to tell them how grateful I am. Let my words bring encouragement, even when I disagree with someone. Above all, keep the cross of Jesus at the center of my gratitude. May thanksgiving grow as the fruit of Your grace in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## About Today's Speaker

Stu Epperson Jr. is the founder of the Truth Network, host of Truth Talk, and author of *Thanks Living: Embracing the Power of Gratitude Every Day*, published by Moody Publishers. Through Christian broadcasting and writing, he encourages listeners to center their lives on Jesus, Scripture, and gratitude grounded in God's grace.

## About Today's Host

Donna Leland regularly hosts the Thursday edition of Mark & Friends for Great News Media. Through warm conversations with authors and ministry guests, she seeks to encourage listeners in their walk with Jesus and provide practical, faith-centered resources.

## Proofread Broadcast Transcript

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Welcome to Mark & Friends. I'm your host Donna Leland and we're getting a jump on Thanksgiving by thinking about thanks living and Stu Epperson Jr. is going to stay with us and help us to dig into this concept of making gratitude an integral part of our every moment. Stu talked about what sets us apart from just your everyday positive thinking self-help.

It's that we base all of our gratitude on the reality that there is a Creator and we use Scripture to back it up. Well, yeah, and each chapter has a few questions at the end to get people thinking. The book's called Thanks Living but at the end of each chapter I have a little section called Living Thanks where we actually kind of live it out and really Scripture is the center of that and at the back of the book I have all these scriptures that people can read.

I'm coming out with a Thanks Living bracelet, a little rubber band that you put on with a QR code that if you hit it, if you take a picture of it, it'll put a Thanksgiving Bible verse on your phone. We got one for each day of the year and that's kind of what... So that's where Colossians says, I think it's 3:15, let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. And there's something that's just powerful about meditating on God's Word and going to God's Word and there's something that will create, that will engender that gratitude as you read His Word and you read the goodness of God and it really does change the trajectory of your thinking and it really will color your whole day, you know, if you start there every morning and then just during the day giving God thanks.

You know, that's why Paul says in everything give thanks. It's not to walk around, you know, like some monk in a monastery with your eyes shut, running into walls, you know, giving these little chants, you know, pray without ceasing, it's the same idea. In the same passage we have 5:18, we also have that verse pray without ceasing.

We have that word rejoice evermore. So Paul's given these little punchy challenges, words, the whole point of it all is walking in God's Spirit and walking in union with Jesus Christ and as you do, He takes over. The Holy Spirit is working through you and it's always bearing the fruit of gratitude.

I know I'm thinking, okay, that's a very practical step is to have a verse every day that focus my thoughts back on the gratitude God would have me. You know, it's like a wrestling, taking every thought captive in my brain because, you know, I want to spiral. I just, you get into that lazy habit of you hear the bad news, you start ruminating over it, you start feeling bad, here comes the feelings and then the next thing you know you're just sitting in your little puddle and I know it's going to take action.

It's going to take a conscious decision not to let ourselves puddle in despair, you know, in self-doubt, in, you know, basically unbelief, isn't it, Stu? Absolutely, it's a choice. You know, we have these cliches, you know, attitude of gratitude, make a choice to rejoice these things, but they are just so true and sometimes if I'm having a rough morning, I'll get out a little card, a thank you card and I'll write thank you. Those are the first two words I write, that'll kind of unlock the mind and the pen and I'll send a thank you to someone who's made a difference in my life or someone who's treated me to lunch recently or shoot someone a text.

Just everyone just take a second later today, not while you're driving, of course, and shoot a little thank you text to someone. Hey, thanks for being a good friend for me. Hey, thanks for being there for me, you know, when the family member passed away.

You know, hey, thank you for your, you know, thank you for your prayers. You know, here's what happens. When you're doing that, when you're thanking someone like that with a DM or a text or a message or something like that or even a

handwritten note, which are very powerful, very important to do.

I try to do a couple of those every week. Donna, when you do that, in that moment, you're not thinking about yourself. In that moment, you're not complaining, you're not grumbling.

Grumbling and complaining is the language of hell. Gratitude and thanksgiving is the language of heaven. So everyone, you can do it right now, wherever you are driving around at home, listening online, wherever you are, just stop for a second and say, hey, what are you thankful for? Now, I just asked you a question.

What are you, what's one thing right now you are thankful, you're grateful for? And what just is about to happen in your brain is a really good thing. It's a really positive thing because we just took it out of the negative. We took it out of the world's category.

We took it out of the hopeless and the shame and the curse and we moved it in the category of blessing. So, you know, take a moment and do that around the table. And Donna, I've done this around the Thanksgiving table.

But here's the thing. Let's take that beyond after the food coma lifts, you know, after that delicious Thanksgiving meal, after we've zoned out, you know, watching the football game on the lazy chair. Let's take it beyond that.

Let's take it beyond Black Friday. Let's take it beyond Christmas. Let's live out a life of gratitude.

Let's go around the table tonight in the middle of whatever. And let's say, hey, let's all go around and say one thing that we're thankful for. And watch what God does just in that little experiment right there.

I am rich, I am rich because of what the Lord has done for us. And now, let the poor say, I am rich, I am rich because of what the Lord has done for us. And now, let the poor say, I am rich, I am rich because of what the Lord has done for us.

I have had all kinds of opportunities that the Lord has opened some great gospel doors to share. And, you know, through, you know, it comes down to, you know, looking at someone else and saying, wow, you know, this person, you know, I've had people that I know weren't believers. And I just started thanking God for them for just how gifted they were.

You know, I was on the air with a brilliant atheist one time debating him. And I just said, just this just kind of came to me, you know, you know, the Holy Spirit had to put this in me. I said, you know, isn't it interesting, sir, that the very mind that you're using to contrive all of these arguments to destroy Christianity and to destroy God and to basically deny God, God himself created your mind.

He gave you the genius that you're using to deny him. I said, how wild is that? And it went on to be a great discussion. And I was complimenting him.

I said, hey, you know, it's amazing how God has given you this. But then we took it, you know, I took it to, hey, now look, why don't you recognize that this same God loved you and this same God sent his son for you? And so I just I pivoted in that moment, you know, into the gospel, you know, but it but it was just recognizing that even, you know, it could have gone the other way. I could have been angry and mad.

I could have yelled at him. I could have said, how dare you deny God? And, you know, how dare you waste your life, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I could have grumbled and complained, but I used gratitude to express, you know, the goodness of God to give this guy such a mind, even that was doing that as a way to get into the gospel.

And there's something you can see in every circumstance of life where you can do that very practical way, because not everyone's going to be, you know, on a national radio show debating an atheist. OK, so I'm not like, but even in your in the ordinary, mundane things of life, you're sitting there in a doctor's office and it's a little bit longer. Wait, well, thank God that you are in a doctor's office.

Thank God that in some countries you wouldn't even see a doctor. In fact, you could die of the smallest, most minor, most easily treatable diseases because you have no medicine in a lot of these countries. And here you are, you know, you know, so just thank God that you have this.

Wow. Thank God that you're you got air conditioning, which most folks in the world don't have. You know, I mean, so the list goes on and on.

And these are material things and these are sometimes trivial, but we should thank God for all these things. You know, Corrie ten Boom and her sister were in a concentration camp and they were studying 5:18 of First Thessalonians. This is in the book, too.

I put all these stories in there, Donna, and this is one of them. And they were like, OK, this is like we're like we just lost half our family. He just got gassed down the hall and killed.

This is a horrible place. This is the Holocaust. And we're studying 5:18 of First Thessalonians.

And so Corrie ten Boom turns to her sister, says, how can we what can we give thanks for? And her sister said, let's give thanks for these fleas and the lice in here. And Corrie was like, what? How can we give thanks for the fleas and the lice? They just started to thank God. They're looking around the room and and they're just grasping for straws.

They started thanking God for the fleas and the lice. Well, something interesting happened over the next few days. And then over the next few weeks, none of the guards would come into their cell block.

None of the guards were coming in and molesting and in roughing them up and brutalizing them. And they found out later through the grapevine that the guards were afraid of the lice and the fleas. They didn't want to get the lice.

And so what what was an absolute annoyance. And, you know, the the old, you know, the the old pebble in my shoe that was just horrible for them and none of us can even imagine being in a Jewish concentration camp, being tortured and being killed and all that stuff ended up being a blessing ended up. God used those those little pesky creatures that we're all still trying to figure out why they're even on this earth, you know, like mosquitoes.

But God used those creatures. And they're hard of gratitude as a way of protecting them from these awful, you know, violent guards. That's such a good illustration.

Now, Stu, if listeners if you want them to remember one message from your book, Thanks Living, what do you hope they take away from God's character and the life changing power of gratitude? Well, I just I would just point them to Jesus. I would say just at the end of the day, you know, gratitude is a fruit. Gratitude is a result.

It's a result of this one word we kind of started with the word grace. In fact, the reformers. And the Puritans, they hung the whole Christian life on the one big hook of grace and gratitude.

They said, if you want to summarize the whole Christian life, it's grace and gratitude. Grace, God's gift to us. What has he given you? What has he done for you? What has he shown for you? God demonstrates his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

So the first step is you can conjure up a lot of gratitude like we talked about. The secular world does it every day. And there's all kinds of benefits of it.

There's all kinds of benefits of following the Ten Commandments. There's all kinds of benefits. The secular world has been eating from the tree of life of the Christian life and of the Bible for millennia, for centuries.

But if you want to go to the source, you go to grace and you go to an old rugged cross where the Savior bled and died for me at the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burden of my heart rolled away. It was thereby by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day. Now I am grateful all the day.

So gratitude results. And I wrote a little thanks living song. It's in the book too.

And I'm not going to sing it because I don't want to run all your listeners off today, Donna. Okay, so I'm going to abstain from singing it. But effectively, one of the phrases in the song that's repeated over and over again in the refrain is, he gave everything.

So we give thanks. Well, thank you so much, Stu, for being a part of Mark & Friends. We've been talking with Stu Epperson Jr. And he has recently come out with a book by Moody Publishers, Thanks Living, Embracing the Power of Gratitude Every Day.

Thanks again for being a part of Mark & Friends. Thank you, Donna, so much for having me. It's been a blessing.

And I'm grateful for you and for this wonderful ministry. Thank you, dear listener, for being a part of blessing his holy name here on Mark & Friends. Maybe there's something in the program you heard today or on any of the Mark & Friends program that you'd like to revisit.

Maybe it was a reference to a website, maybe other resources that you'd like to take advantage of. Well, all of this is now sitting on their website under the Mark & Friends tab, and it's the program notes. Basically, the entire program is transcribed.

Even the songs are transcribed. And you can always access that 24 hours a day, seven days a week, because it's just another thing that we can do because of the gifts that you have given to this ministry. We are listener-supported Christian radio, and we feel very supported by you.

So we can go ahead and access some of these great resources, like having a website and having a Mark & Friends tab, where all of this information is available to you. Coming up tomorrow on Mark & Friends, it's the Bible study, a wonderful time where our friends have gathered here in the studio and are able to share what the Lord is teaching them. Thanks for being a part of Mark & Friends, a ministry of Great News Media.