

I don't know how many of you read the best seller years ago called the **One Minute Manager by Ken Blanchard**. Most of you probably have heard about it...it's was a best-seller.... But one of the things Blanchard talks about in his book is that leaders need to develop the practice of the "one-minute praising" practice in which they are intentionally all about "catching (their employees) doing something right."

We're all used to bosses who catch us doing something wrong, aren't we? How rare it is to be praised when we have done something well!!

Blanchard's says that once we catch them doing something right its time to give those employees a one-minute praising right on the spot. Don't wait! he says, Because waiting takes away the impact. Tell them right then, right there, how much you appreciate the good job they are doing.

This actually is more difficult than it appears. ***Most of us are far better at criticism than at praise.***

We're much better at that "one-minute blaming" ritual than the "one-minute praising." idea What would happen if we put the "one minute praising" into practice, do you think?

Catch someone doing something right and praise them right on the spot! It could revolutionize our marriages, change the way we relate to our children,. We don't ignore them and then when they do something wrong give them negative attention...instead we are postured to find something they do well, and then praise them for it, right on the spot.

But the point here is that expressing our gratitude needs to be intentional, because we are a negative people with a negative tilt. If we don't intentionally make a choice to be grateful, and praise others, often we won't. That's Blanchard's whole focus.

In our relationship to God it's the same way...We are apt to forget the benefits that surround us...forget about gratitude in our lives...

Go out the door without it each morning.

Come back in the evening grumbling more because we are tired and worn down.

Unless we are intentional about gratitude.

But before we can intentionally improve our gratitude functioning, the first step is to assess where we are, right? So here is a **Grumbling**

TO Gratitude scale. (see screen) Eeyore...the perpetual grumbler... and Tigger..the joy filled bouncy Tiger.

This is an exercise between you and God....if you were to choose a number between 1-10...10 being really super grateful all the time, praising God constantly, forgetting NOT your benefits, and 1 being the Eeyore of the world, seeing the glass half empty all the time, or totally empty, or no glass at all...always looking at the gloomy side of things, where would you rate yourself along this continuum?

Just take a minute...and of course there are bad days and good days...we all have them but in general where about on that scale do you fall? Be honest...no one has to come up here and share....

Because this morning wherever you fall on that gratitude scale, I want to improve your score.

I want it to come up one notch at least from where it is right now. And like those people who guarantee that if you work with them they'll improve your SAT, ACT, GRE score by so many percentage points...I guarantee that if you work with me and do what I am telling you to do today...your gratitude score will increase!! Did everyone come up with a number...Everyone did a self assessment..

Now if you brought it with you, take out your right hand and look at it a moment; exercise it a bit if you can, because we're going to be using our right hand to do a gratitude work out in order to remember the five benefits that David lists right at the outset of Psalm 103. That's our focus.

There are five things that David outlines that God does for us, right at the beginning of Psalm 103, that ought to boost us up that gratitude scale. Any day. No matter what the circumstances. Now, we can be grateful for a lot of other things too of course...and many people go to life circumstances to remind themselves to be grateful...there's just some hard facts that can tweak our perspective a bit like...

If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death...you are more blessed than three billion people in

the world.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead, and a place to sleep...you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace...you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

All of this is important to remember. It puts things in perspective. We have great benefits you and I by virtue of where we live and our lot in life.

But in this psalm David is talking about something a little bit different than life circumstances; gratitude always get a bit cheesy when we start being grateful for the fact that we are more fortunate than others who are suffering. That some people don't have what we have and therefore we should be grateful for that? Doesn't quite add up for me.

But the five benefits that David talks about totally adds up

David is talking about benefits that come to those who know the Lord...Because God is so good...he gives great benefits. These benefits belong to everyone who trusts in him, regardless of life circumstance.

Everyone wants a job with benefits...the perks...the supplements... What are they? Well David tells us right here...he tells us...YOU've GOT BENEFIT...as I said there are five..

And each one of the five fingers on our hand is going to represent one of those benefits. This is the intentional "one minute praising God" method that I want to teach you...guaranteed to increase your gratitude score. And guaranteed to help you FORGET NOT God's benefits...

So by the time you leave here you are going to literally have a handful of benefits that you can thank God for in just one minute...

and if you think its gimmicky...it is...but it works...so just bear with me in this...

The first benefit that Psalm 103 says that God gives to those who love and trust him is that he 1. **Forgives our sins.** Now you may have heard that one before. You may have heard it, so much that you think, yeah, yeah...next. But I wonder how many of us have actually received that truth way down in the depths of who we are.

Have you received that truth in your heart? When God says he forgives your sins, it means he doesn't remember. He doesn't hold a grudge. He's thrown away the checks and balances sheet.

Today, if you ask for forgiveness from your heart, it's a new day folks. There isn't anything in the past that you have done, no ways in which you have messed up, that God even remembers. We are going to use the index finger right here to remember this benefit #1...OK?
(picture of index finger)

The reason we are using the index finger is that for starters we often use our index finger to represent the number 1...and forgiveness is the first benefit that David mentions in this psalm. Often in the old days people used to tie a string around their index finger to remember something. Anybody ever do that long ago? **(picture of index finger with string)**

With Syrie, and cell phones, and computer reminders we don't do that anymore. But when you look at your index finger you can think...God forgives my sins. He doesn't remember...

"As far as the east is from the west," David goes on to say in psalm 103. **"So far does he remove our sins from us."**

David messed up a lot in his life. He was so grateful that God forgave him for it all and that every day was a new day.

Benefit #1 – the index finger – Let's take our index finger at point upward...**You forgive my sins.**

Benefit #2 – He heals all our diseases. This doesn't mean that every time you pray for healing you get well. Sometimes you do. Miracles happen. But sometimes you don't get healed right away. The promise here is that one day we will have a new body without its aches and pains. (**Romans 8:23**) says “**we wait for the redemption of our bodies.**”

We are going to use the longest finger, the index finger on your hand for benefit #2. If you hold your hand up like this (everyone do it) it is the closest one to heaven. (**image of hand with fingers together showing index finger as the longest**) That's how you can remember that benefit, OK?

One day, in heaven, all that aches, and hurts, and all that holds us back will be healed. Healing sometimes happens in this life. I remember praying for a woman who was in a coma, and after we prayed she came out of the coma and was healed. It was an immediate miracle. It doesn't always happen that way on earth... when it does, we rejoice. The promise is, it definitely WILL happen in heaven. We can remember this benefit and praise God “that (one day he will) heal all our diseases.” And we remember that...why? Because it's the longest finger....the finger closest to heaven. God is faithful to heal our diseases.

Let's lift our hand up one more time and say together “**He heals all my diseases**”.

That's benefit #2

Benefit #3: This is a great one. “**He redeems your life from the pit**”. We're going to go over to the thumb right now. When you are in the pit, you feel as if you are cast off from God. You feel estranged, and often separated from others, just like the thumb is separate from the other fingers. I've been in the pit. I know what that feels like. I've shared some of that with you....But Something else I also know.

God specializes in the pit. He rescues the lamb that falls into the pit. He welcomes home the prodigal son who lived in the pit of a pigstye. Estranged, alone, outcast, God redeems us and brings us back. He is faithful to that end.

Bring your thumb next to the rest of your fingers. Let's say together
"He redeems my life from the pit."

Benefit #4: He crowns you with love and compassion.

That is going to be the ring finger for love and compassion, ok folks?
(Image of ring finger) Love in marriage is symbolized by putting a ring on this finger (on the other hand), and the ring is round symbolizing the eternal significance of love.

God's steadfast love is stronger than any human love of course. The word love, can be translated here "covenant love" that has nothing to do with what we deserve. Its all about who God is for us...

Being crowned with love and compassion suggest that our identity as children of God, our calling is found when we truly recognize how much God loves us...(those of you who went to family camp, its recognizing our Belovedness)..and how strong that Divine love is...
"God's love is an in spite of what we do" love...that goes to the cross for us when we don't deserve it.

The psalm goes onto say... **For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him;**
That is good news because no matter how high you can imagine, God's love is greater, and no matter how far we try to explore the universe, **(image of stars/planets)**and we have more tools and technology than ever before to plumb the depths of the universe God made,
As we do this the amazing this is that We keep discovering more and more billions of galaxies upon galaxies, and it keeps going. As far as the universe stretches beyond our ability to measure, so far is God's great love for you...

Hold your hand up like this and let's say verse 4b together: **He crowns me with love and compassion.**

Finally, Benefit #5: **He satisfies your desires with good things so your youth is renewed like the eagles.**

Can anyone guess what finger this is? My kids tell me I have the smallest, weakest pinky finger in the world. They tease me about it. I can't help it. I was born that way.

And you know what? As a human being I am generally weak as well. And the more that I advance in years, the weaker I feel. I bought a plaque yesterday that says,

THE OLDER I GET, THE BETTER I WAS

It's a downward slope ...

Psalm 103:14 says

He knows how we are formed. He remembers that we are dust.

Still, he restores our strength. He restores our strength like the eagles. And part of the way an eagle flies is to soar. (**image of an eagle soaring**) They don't flap too much. Eagles aren't frantically trying to make progress by batting their wings up and down like little sparrows. Eagles soar on the currents. They have learned how to ride the wind currents, and in doing so they are strong in flight, and go for many miles.

God restores us and gives us strength like the eagle by buoying us up by the power and wind of his Spirit. As we learn to follow him, we learn better and better how to ride the currents of his grace. That is why Paul wrote,

"His (Gods) strength is made perfect in my weakness".

So when you look at the smallest finger on your hand...remember benefit #5...let's say it together

My youth is restored like the eagles

So now you have a handful of benefits from psalm 103. It says FORGET THEM NOT and I hope through this exercise you can remember all five of them.

Let's do them once more:

1. He forgives my sins
2. He heals my diseases
3. He redeems my life from the pit
4. He crowns me with love and compassion
5. My youth is renewed like the eagles

My challenge to you?

For at least the next week go through all five of these benefits at least 5 times a day. I don't care where you are. In the grocery store, at the office, in a classroom, on a treadmill, in the shower, at the beach, if you feel yourself slipping into Eeyore mode...try it...3-5 times a day... Do a one minute intentional praising session to God.

I guarantee you, by doing this...by forgetting NOT his benefits...over time, your gratitude score will go up.

By doing this intentionally, even when you don't feel like it, you will begin to find that the actual discipline of forgetting **not** God's benefits increases your ability to be a grateful person...

Your joy will also increase

Your sense of God's presence will increase. You will find that God is faithful to you to deliver these benefits to you in spades...

And your ability to notice all your benefits and to cry out from your heart "Bless the Lord Oh My Soul...and all that is within me, bless his holy name." will be magnified.

Let us pray.