A MONTH OF THANKSGIVING | Thankful Before

It's natural to thank God after prayers are answered, victories are won, and needs are met. Yet throughout Scripture, some of God's greatest miracles were preceded by thanksgiving. God's people learned to trust His character before they could see His hand at work. This study explores three powerful examples of gratitude before the miracle.

- Thankful Before the Victory (2 Chronicles 20:1-29)
- Thankful Before the Provision (John 6:1-13)
- Thankful Before the Deliverance (Acts 16:22-34)

As we discuss these stories, consider what it means to thank God not only for what He does, but for who He is. Let's see what His Word has to say!

Links to References: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Ephesians 5:18-20; 2 Chronicles 20:1-29; John 6:1-13; Acts 16:22-34; Colossians 3:15-17 [**SPANISH**]

Questions for Reflection

1. Did anything catch your attention? What stands out to you? What is the focus?
2. In 2 Chronicles 20:1-29, King Jehoshaphat faced an overwhelming enemy and an impossible situation. Instead of relying on military strength, he sought God. The people worshiped before the battle was fought, trusting God's promise that He would fight for them. What fears or obstacles were the people facing in this story? Why do you think Jehoshaphat sent worshipers ahead of the army? What does this story teach us about fighting battles? Are there battles in your life where God may be calling you to trust Him before you see the outcome?
3. In John 6:1-13, Jesus was faced with feeding thousands of people with only five loaves and two fish. Before the multiplication occurred, He gave thanks to the Father. Why do you think Jesus gave thanks before the miracle took place? How did the disciples view the situation differently than Jesus? In what way was Jesus testing them? What areas of life tempt us to focus on what we lack rather than on God's ability to provide? How does gratitude change our perspective when our resources seem limited?
4. In Acts 16:22-34, Paul and Silas were beaten, imprisoned, and placed in stocks. Yet at midnight they prayed and sang praises to God. Their worship came before the earthquake, before the doors opened, and before the chains fell off. What circumstances might have made praise difficult for Paul and Silas? Why is it easier to praise God after a breakthrough than before one? What was the final result of their miraculous release? What can we learn from this? How does our response to hardship impact those around us?
5. What insight did you gain from this lesson? Identify a few takeaways from this lesson.

A Few Takeaways

- God's promises are greater than our problems.
- God's resources are greater than our lack.
- God's power is greater than our prison.

The stories of Jehoshaphat, the feeding of the five thousand, and Paul and Silas reveal a common principle: Thanksgiving often comes before the miracle. Gratitude is rooted in God's character and who He is – not in our circumstances, but in God's faithfulness.

Remember:

- Gratitude is an expression of faith.
- Thanksgiving shifts our focus from the problem to God's power.
- Thanksgiving is not merely a response to victory. It is often the path to victory.
- Gratitude expresses unwavering confidence in a faithful God despite the circumstance and regardless of what you are going through.
- Our worship is a powerful testimony to others.

Challenge for the Week: Identify one area where you are waiting on an answer from God. Each day this week, intentionally thank Him for His faithfulness before the answer comes. Ask God to help you develop a heart that is thankful at all times and in all circumstances.

Set aside time to reflect on these questions:

- Which of these three stories speaks most strongly to your current situation?
- Are you currently facing a battle, a need, or a difficult circumstance that requires faith?
- What would it look like for you to practice thanksgiving before the answer arrives?
- What is the greater work God is doing through your circumstances? How might your response be connected to the lives of others or a need beyond your own?

Thankful Before | Bible Readings

2 Chronicles 20:1-29

12 [Jehoshaphat prayed] “Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” 15 Then Jahaziel said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. 17 You will not (even) have to fight this battle! Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.’” 21 “After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.’” 22 As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.

John 6:1-13

5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” 6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. 7 Philip answered him, “It would take more than half a year’s wages[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!” 8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, 9 “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?” 10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). 11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. 12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” 13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Acts 16:22-34

22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the

prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. –

Ephesians 5:18-20

18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:15-17

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

A few extra stories:

- Genesis 22:1-14
- Joshua 6:1-20
- 1 Samuel 1:9-20
- 1 Samuel 17
- Jonah 2
- John 11:41-44
- Acts 27:33-44