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THANKFUL

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Editor's Note

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Editor-in-Chief



Having taught Bible class for many years, I can recall numerous prayers said by children where the list of “thank you for...” was quite extensive. They would give thanks for anything and everything that came to mind, including beloved toys, favorite TV shows, and names of lesser-known sea creatures. Just as children can recognize things for which to be thankful, we should do the same. God has blessed us so abundantly that even on our most difficult days, there should still be thanksgiving in our hearts. We enjoy our blessings from God, but sometimes we allow ourselves to become so busy that we fail to acknowledge these blessings. When this happens, we risk becoming like the nine lepers who did not return to give thanks. As we head into what can feel like the busiest time of year, I pray that we will all take time to stop, consider what the Lord has done for us, and give Him the glory and thanks due His name.



We invite you to share our website with other women who would be interested in subscribing to our newsletter.



TURNING BACK TO GIVE THANKS

BY: LUVENIA JENKINS

In Luke 17:11-19, we read the account of Jesus' encounter with ten lepers as he was traveling through Samaria and Galilee. As Jesus entered a village, there were ten lepers who stood far from Him but called out, saying, "Master, have mercy on us." Jesus responded by telling them to go show themselves to the priests. As these men went on their way, they were cleansed! One of them, when he recognized he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God! He fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Then the text tells us he was a Samaritan.

Jesus acknowledged that, though ten were healed, nine were not found; only one had returned to give glory to God, and he was a stranger (foreigner). Jesus told the Samaritan, "Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." (Luke 17:19).

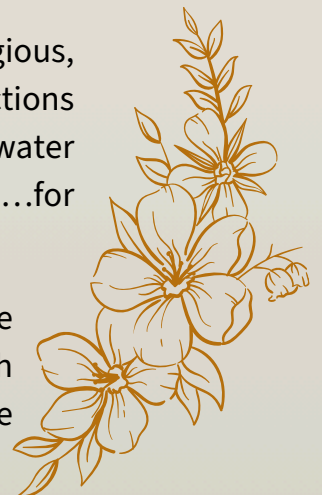
To understand more fully the lessons taught in this account, one must know the condition of the lepers, as well as the animosity that existed between the different nationalities of the people involved.

In Leviticus 13 and 14, one can learn the plight of those with leprosy, the protocols that had to be followed to be declared healed by the priests, as well as what was to be done when a leper was not healed.

The life of a leper was lonely, due to the isolation necessary to contain the illness. Lepers were required to pronounce their condition, lest someone come near to them and become affected. The required methods and degrees of cleansing their garments would have been burdensome. It is understandable that these ten lepers would seek help from Jesus!

The animosity that existed between Jews and Samaritans was rooted in religious, political, and ethnic differences. The Jews looked down upon and avoided interactions with Samaritans. One example of this friction is in John 4, when Jesus asked for water from the Samaritan woman. She was amazed, because He was a Jew, and said, "...for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." (John 4:9).

Taking into consideration the lives that these lepers lived, they all should have expressed great thankfulness for their cleansing! They could once again be with their families, live in their homes, interact with their friends, and not carry the burden of leprosy! Only one gave the Lord thanks for his healing.



The one who turned back in thankfulness was a Samaritan! One man who, by reason of custom and tradition, should have avoided Jesus. One who was thankful enough to overcome bias or upbringing to express gratitude to the Lord for what he had received!

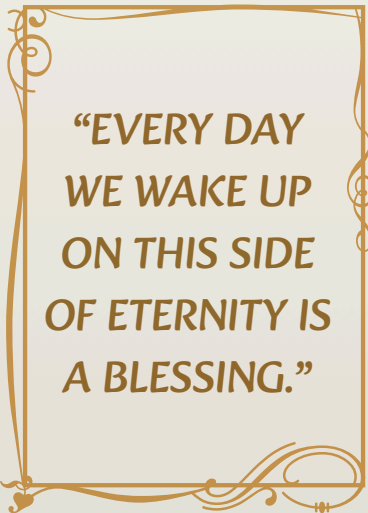
2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Since all of scripture is given by God, and we can profit from it to be complete and thoroughly furnished, let’s examine some lessons we can glean from this account.

1. Turn back and give thanks. No one is an island to himself! As Christians, we were influenced and taught by someone. Maybe there were several people who had a hand in our conversion and taught us how to live godly. We stand on the shoulders of the saints who influenced, instructed, and encouraged us to live a life committed to God and His precepts. What a wonderful blessing it is to know and obey God’s Word! “Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17). The best ways to show our gratitude to those saints who helped us on our Christian walk are by remaining faithful and by teaching others, as Timothy was encouraged by Paul (2 Timothy 2:2).

2. Give thanks today. Every day we wake up on this side of eternity is a blessing. When we are blessed to see the sunrise and other beauties of creation, to enjoy our physical family and church family, to have the privilege of prayer, salvation, fellowship with Christ and His church, and the freedom from sin, we should be reminded to give thanks to our Father and Creator for His wondrous gifts (Lamentations 3:22-23; Psalm 68:19).

3. Give thanks for the goodness to come. For the faithful child of God, death brings rest (Revelation 14:13), a crown (2 Timothy 4:7-8; James 1:12), no more tears, sorrow, death, or pain (Revelation 21:4), nothing that defiles (Revelation 21:27), no night (Revelation 22:5), and forever being in the presence of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Though this earthly life may bring all kinds of trials and struggles, they will all cease if we remain faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10), and then we will hear these words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.... enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” (Matthew 25:21).

Just as the ten lepers received a wonderful gift from Jesus, we, too, receive great blessings from God, our Father. May we always examine ourselves to make sure we are like the one leper who turned back to give thanks! We are blessed beyond comprehension, even on our worst days on this earth. May we never forget the One who blesses and blesses again! ♦



**“EVERY DAY
WE WAKE UP
ON THIS SIDE
OF ETERNITY IS
A BLESSING.”**

We have so many wonderful blessings to be thankful for in our world today. We live in a country abundant with freedoms and liberties that we sometimes take for granted. We have access to food, clean water, nice homes, and endless opportunities for education and jobs. Yet, we see so many individuals who are ungrateful and fail to realize how exceptionally blessed we really are in America.

OFFERING OF THANKSGIVING

BY: ATHENA SCHERFFIUS



What is the meaning behind the word “thanksgiving”? It is defined as “a public acknowledgment or celebration of divine goodness; the act of giving thanks; a prayer expressing gratitude” (merriam-webster.com). As we look through the Bible, we can see that it has quite a bit to say about thanksgiving. The Bible mentions the concept of thanksgiving over 250 times. Depending on the translation used, phrases such as “give thanks” are found 70 to 102 times. God, in His infinite wisdom, has purposely placed these phrases in His word. As we search through the Bible and find teachings and commandments of thanksgiving, various books

may come to mind. Thanksgiving is in almost every book. One book that may not come to our thoughts is Leviticus. We read in Leviticus 7:11-13 of the very first time God gives explicit instructions for a peace offering meant as an expression of thanksgiving:

And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he shall offer unto the LORD. If he offer it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour, fried. Besides the cakes, he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offerings.

Leviticus is one of the best places to start, because it establishes thanksgiving as an intentional act of worship in response to God’s goodness, which ultimately brought peace to mankind (Luke 1:79; Ephesians 2:14-15). To look at and truly appreciate the concept of thanksgiving and apply it properly to our lives, we should understand that something must precede thanksgiving: a peace offering.

How can we be thankful and grateful if we have no peace in our lives? We cannot. When we choose not to obey God and His commandments, we are separated from fellowship with Him. From the beginning, when man sinned in the garden (Genesis 3), he destroyed that precious relationship with God. Since then, man has struggled to repair that holy relationship on his own. God had specific requirements for His offerings, which He so perfectly addressed in Leviticus. Through distinct sacrifices, God showed

how sinful man could approach Him. (Leviticus 1-7). Through the priesthood, their sacrifices were accepted by God (Leviticus 8-10). Yet, these sacrifices were not sufficient. The Hebrews writer affirmed, “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4).

God, through His infinite wisdom and love, offered a sin offering for us, His only begotten Son Jesus (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21), so that we might offer our own peace offering with thanksgiving (cf. Ephesians 5:3-6; 1 Peter 2:5). In Philippians 4:6-7, we read, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us so we can have that hope of heaven, that complete

peace of knowing that someday we will live forever with Him. Thanksgiving is a natural response when we receive that peace that passeth all understanding. By obeying God and His commandments and walking the path of righteousness, we can be and will be thankful. Thankful for God and all His creation, for the love He showed by sending His Son to die on the cross, thankful for the avenue of prayer as His children. Even when we walk through the storms of life, as they rage around us as they did Peter (Matthew 14:22-33), or in times of frustration and disappointment, we can find peace and be thankful because of the One who controls the storm. We can give thanks in every circumstance because we serve a God who knows all things: “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). We can offer up our lives as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1) and continually be thankful for all the many blessings God has given unto us. ♦

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*We can give thanks in
every circumstance
because we serve a God
who knows all things*

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THANKFUL FOR THE FAITHFUL

BY: ROBYNNE ASHBY



*y*ears ago, I was a supervisor at an experimental plant in Southwest Louisiana that was trying to make ethanol from bagasse—the fibrous residue left after sugar cane is processed. Because of the nature of the work, it was inadvisable to carry my cell phone during work hours, so the old landline was the way to contact me.

One night on my way back to the control room from an inspection, the guys told me my husband, Brad, had called. The last time I got a call from him on night shift, he had broken his hand and was headed to the emergency room. I went to my office with some trepidation and made the call. It was worse. It was so much worse; I could not have imagined the scenario in my wildest nightmares. My brother, Andrew, had been shot and was unconscious. He probably wouldn't recover. He and his family were in western Colorado, over 1,000 miles away.

The floor came out from under me, and I was in shock. Was this really happening? Surely this was a mistake, and we were talking about some other person. Brad told me to come home as soon as possible. He would start packing and book a flight. We needed to leave right away, because the doctors didn't know how long my brother would be able to survive. If I wanted to say goodbye, we would need to move quickly. After the phone call ended, I sat there in a state of disbelief. How could this have happened? What was I going to do?

In Colossians 1:3-5, Paul tells the Colossians how thankful he is to have them as brethren because of their faith and love for one another. Philippians 1:3-5 tells us of Paul's thankfulness towards the brethren in Philippi because of their fellowship in the gospel. In fact, it brings Paul great joy! In Ephesians 1:15-16, Paul is again thankful for the Ephesian saints because of their faith and love towards each other. And where was Paul when he received these messages of faithfulness and love about his brethren? He was in Rome under house arrest, unable to move freely (cf. Colossians 4:3; Philippians 1:16; Ephesians 4:1). Receiving reports of faithful brethren would have been such an encouragement. He was thankful for their true hearts. He was thankful for their continued faithfulness in his time of trouble.

We have no record of Paul's being in Colosse and interacting personally with that congregation. In all likelihood, he never met many of the people who read his letter during that time period. Paul didn't need to meet these brethren to have a relationship with them and be thankful for their faithfulness. Their bond had already been forged because of their shared love of God (Mark 3:31-35). His love of the brethren and his prayers for their struggles are made apparent in his epistles, and truly his words in 2 Corinthians 11:28 ("...that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches") were not merely lip service. Paul was thankful for them, and, undoubtedly, the brethren were grateful for him.

I sat at my desk in disbelief and thought about what needed to happen before I could leave. As I finished my inspection, one of the guys looked at my face and knew something wasn't right. I hadn't planned on telling anyone, but once he asked what was wrong, it all came spilling out. Once the situation was known, the guys moved fast. Everything was taken care of, and I was ready to go, but I would not be driving myself home. Shane, a team member on my shift and a member of our congregation, had called his wife, and she would drive me. He didn't ask if I needed it, didn't ask if I even wanted it, and didn't give me a chance to refuse. It was almost a 30-mile trip one way, and I was not going alone. Rochelle picked me up and didn't even know why. All she knew was that I needed a ride home, and that was good enough for her. To this day, I still do not know who brought my truck home, except that faithful brethren from my congregation stepped in to help and make it happen.



At the house, Brad and I packed and confirmed the plane tickets. Terrance, another member of our congregation, picked us up and took us to the airport. It didn't matter that it was the middle of the night, or that he was losing sleep he wouldn't get back. The house and the animals were cared for while we were gone, and I knew I could turn my attention fully to the situation in Colorado.

When it was time for Andrew's memorial service, my mother's family came up from West Texas. But where were we going to put everyone? My brother's house was already full of his family, siblings and their spouses, mother, and friends. We were sleeping anywhere and everywhere. My Grandma was going to need a real bed, not the couch. Rebekah, a member from another congregation in Louisiana, called wanting to help. Her parents were members of the church and lived in the same city as my brother. Their house had several beds, and they would like to help in any way they could. A weight was lifted from my shoulders because of these faithful brethren.

At the first hearing, Rebekah's father (he worked at the courthouse) met us in the lobby and escorted us to the proper courtroom. He told us what to expect. He didn't have to be there; he had only known us personally for half a week. But he and his wife were supportive in a time of great distress and pain. I was so thankful.

In Galatians 6:2, Paul writes, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." This verse is what comes to mind when I think about that time. My brother's death was tragic and horrible. My emotions and those of my family were intense and painful. I cannot imagine having gone through this situation without faithful brethren. Galatians 6:10 states, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." I am so thankful for all the faithful brethren who exemplified these verses during my family's time of need.

Eventually we needed to come home. I would be leaving the cocoon of comfort my family had built together. In it we had a shared grief and understanding. But it was time to get back to my job and my husband to his classes. Anyone leaving such an environment could be like the man in James 1:6, tossed like a wave in the sea, having no anchor and no stability. I was grieving, and I did not feel like myself for a long time. I could have blamed God for my brother's death. This would have been the perfect opportunity for Satan to devour me (1 Peter 5:8), but there was something to keep me from going adrift.

The congregation where we attended (and still do) took (and continues to take) its faithfulness to God seriously. Attendance was not when you had the time, but what you scheduled your time around (Hebrews 10:25). Sharing the gospel was not a burden but a necessity for your soul and others (Mark 16:15,16). Worship of God was serious and reverent; Bible knowledge was the key (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Bible study was encouraged and expected. Before moving to Louisiana, my knowledge of the Bible was minimal. I was a babe in Christ like those talked about in Hebrews 4:12-13 and would not have had the ability to endure this trial. Had it not been for the faithful brethren at this congregation helping me build my faith in the years before my brother's death, I would not have had on the armor of God to protect my soul and fight the battles of God (Ephesians 6:12-17). I was moored to the Word of God, and when my brother passed, I didn't blame God, I didn't find relief for my grief in destructive behavior, and I didn't waver. I was spiritually prepared for the trial of my brother's death.

When my brother died, I wasn't ready for him to be gone, but my armor was ready, and it was thanks in large part to the faithful brethren. The good deeds done by the saints for me and for my family were comforting and something for which I could never say thank you enough. The emotional support and spiritual guidance I received from the faithful brethren were priceless. I will always be thankful for the faithful. ♦

Deliveries happen every day on many levels. The U.S. Postal Service fills our mailboxes with pleas for money, advertisements, bills, and an occasional letter from someone we haven't seen in years. Flowers may arrive on special occasions and put smiles on our faces. Groceries and medications are becoming more common deliveries for busy moms and older citizens. Online orders are watched for like they are gifts. Messages and information delivered electronically are more the norm now. Deliveries are part of our daily schedules, and if delayed or canceled, they become an inconvenience to most and cause irritation or some level of stress to others. Most are minor in the scheme of things.

In Colossians 1:13, Paul tells us, "He (God) has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love...." This is a delivery of great importance for those who have chosen to follow the Lord, a personal delivery of us by God. There can be no more important delivery in our lives than this one. Why? Because GOD delivers us OUT of a power that can hold us down with invisible chains and from an influence so strong we may think we will never be free.



Delivered and Thankful

By: Elizabeth Turner Beall



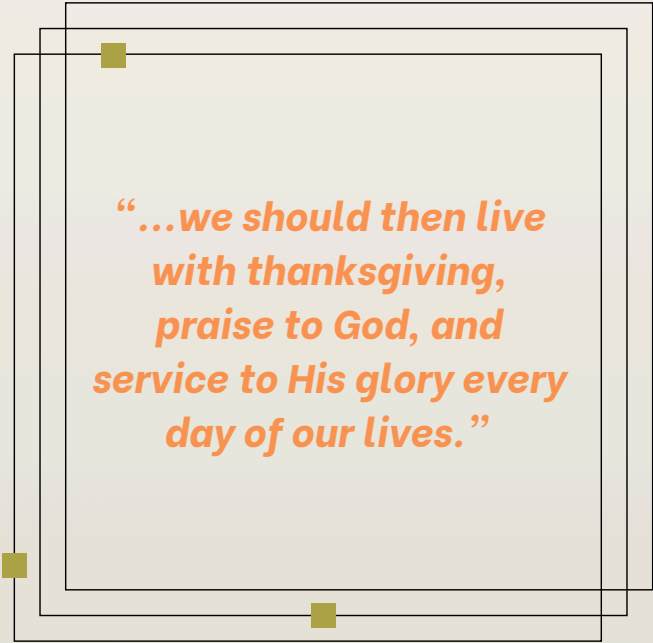
Darkness is the opposite of light and is associated with sin and sinfulness. The Proverbs writer tells us of those who "leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness... rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths..." (Proverbs 2:13-15). Paul spoke of those who had "pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:12) and lists the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. John tells us that walking in darkness blinds us (1 John 2:11c) and "He who sins is of the Devil" (1 John 3:8). The power of this darkness is our life's greatest challenge and our life's worst enemy.

Even though we are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26), Paul tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). God knew His creation would stumble and fall, that this darkness could blind us with its pleasures and glitter. That's why He had a plan before creation that would offer us deliverance and salvation by grace. He loved us even before He created us (2 Timothy 1:9).

When we have some level of understanding of God's love (1 John 4:7-8) and how deep that love is beyond our knowledge (Ephesians 3:19), and when we realize our imperfection and sinfulness, we should fall on our knees deeply humbled and with a thankful heart. From our obedience to the Gospel—repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of our sins—which is the accepting of the grace God has offered, we should then live with thanksgiving, praise to God, and service to His glory every day of our lives.

This wonderful deliverance by God from the power of sin qualifies us to share in the inheritance with other members of the kingdom (the church), where we have redemption through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross for our sins. Deliverance and redemption then give us hope of eternal life. May we ever be thankful. May we continue to encourage each other and keep our eyes on Heaven.

"...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:12-14) ♦



***"...we should then live
with thanksgiving,
praise to God, and
service to His glory every
day of our lives."***

***"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed,
turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God"***

- Luke 17:15

WRITE THE VERSE:

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PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

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***"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the
Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;"
- Ephesians 5:20***

WRITE THE VERSE:

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PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

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"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;"

- Ephesians 1:15-16

WRITE THE VERSE:

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PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

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***"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,
and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear
Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood,
even the forgiveness of sins:"***

- Colossians 1:13-14

WRITE THE VERSE:

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PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

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QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. Gratitude is more than simply saying “thank you”; it can also be shown through our actions. What are two ways you can demonstrate your appreciation to someone this month?
2. All ten lepers received the same blessing, but only one returned to thank Jesus. What might keep us from acknowledging and thanking God for His blessings?
3. Leviticus 7 describes thanksgiving as an intentional act of worship. What does this teach us about making thankfulness an intentional part of our daily lives rather than simply a response to good circumstances?
4. The article “Offering of Thanksgiving” connects thanksgiving with having peace through our relationship with God. How does obedience to God contribute to the peace and thankfulness we experience?
5. Paul was thankful for the faithfulness and love of his brethren, even when he was unable to be with them in person. What are some ways we can show gratitude for faithful brethren and strengthen our relationships with them, even when we cannot be together?
6. Galatians 6:2 tells us to “bear one another’s burdens.” What are some practical ways we can recognize when a brother or sister is carrying a burden and step in to help without waiting to be asked?
7. Think back to the day you were baptized and delivered from the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13). As the years have passed and you have come to better understand what it means to be delivered from Satan and translated into the kingdom, in what ways has your appreciation for your salvation deepened?
8. How does your thankfulness for being delivered by God influence the way you live, speak, and respond to the challenges you face each day?



WHEN YOU PRAY:

1. Take time to name the specific blessings God has given you and thank Him individually for each one.
2. Thank God for the faithful brethren who have supported and encouraged you, and then pray for opportunities to provide that same support and encouragement to others.
3. Give thanks to God for your salvation and pray for opportunities to share the Good News with others.



THANKFUL

M Q E Y P B E C B Y O V O P A N L O T B
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1. Deliverance
2. Salvation
3. Redemption
4. Inheritance
5. Forgiveness
6. Blessings
7. PeaceOffering
8. Goodness
9. Faithful
10. Thankful
11. GiveThanks
12. Gratitude

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