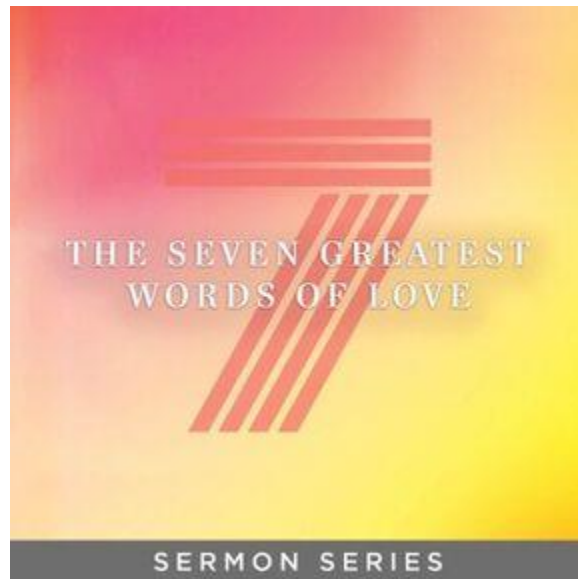


THE SEVEN GREATEST WORDS OF LOVE

Part 5: THE WORD OF HUMANITY
John 19:28-29

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Words of Encouragement Days 195-200



THE SEVEN GREATEST WORDS OF LOVE

Jesus walked this earth teaching about God's LOVE. But do you know what that kind of love really means? Discover anew the meaning behind the last seven words Jesus spoke during his final hours on the cross. These powerful words of Jesus, full meaning and amazing blessing, are His message to us before His resurrection — words of forgiveness, assurance, love, trust, and so much more.

This Week's Memory Verse:

**"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said,
'From his innermost being
shall flow rivers of living water.'"
John 7:38**

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 195

WAYS TO CULTIVATE A GRATEFUL HEART

“Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim His greatness. Let the whole world know what He has done. Sing to Him; yes, sing His praises. Tell everyone about His wonderful deeds. Exult in His Holy Name; rejoice, you who worship the Lord.” 1 Chronicles 16:8-10

THE FOUNTAIN OF GRATITUDE

ALL of these words individually and interchangeably describe what the overflow from a heart of gratitude looks like:

Give Thanks
Sing to Him
Sing Praise
Tell of His Wondrous Acts

Rejoice

Declare His Glory
Proclaim His
Salvation Day After Day

Bring an Offering to Him

Worship the Lord
Give Thanks to the Lord
Remember the Wonders He Has Done

Ascribe to the Lord Glory and Strength

When we are cultivating a grateful heart, we can give thanks to Him, praise Him, proclaim to the broken world

around us the truth about our God, and remember all that He has done and give Him the glory due.

REFLECT: Which of the words from the list come easily for you? Worship? Singing Praises?

RESPOND: Today we are going to “tell of His wondrous acts”. Grab your journal or notebook and write five (or more) wondrous acts that God has done in your life recently. A wondrous act can be how He provided in a time of need, someone He used to impact you or your family’s life, how He protected you or someone you love, or anything else that made you go “Wow, God!” Remember, what is a big deal to you might not seem like a big deal to others, but it still is a big deal. If it matters to you, it matters to God. As you pray today, pray those things back to Him as an offering.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, grant me wings to soar. Set me upon high places and show me the wonders of Your love. Open my heart to new things, and watch me grow. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 196

WAYS TO CULTIVATE A GRATEFUL HEART

“So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!”

2 Corinthians 9:12-15

WE CELEBRATE THE SACRIFICE

GOD sent His son, Jesus, to live a perfect life in an imperfect world to bridge the gap for God’s children to come back to Him. When He did this, God made the ultimate sacrifice by allowing His son to experience humanity and in humility be put to death for our sin and shame. His inexpressible gift was given to us through the person of Jesus, one that we cannot just skim past with a passing thought or no thought at all.

As believers, it can be easy for us to get comfortable with the knowledge of what Jesus did and go about our days as if the crucifixion and resurrection does not really make a difference in our everyday life. That, however, is like saying it never happened. Instead, we need to daily choose to remember the sacrifice, the covenant with God, our Father, that was fulfilled by that sacrifice, and the love that washed over us that day, restoring a right relationship with our heavenly Father. Instead of acting as if it were just another story in the Bible, we need to intentionally, daily celebrate the sacrifice. Celebrating the sacrifice acknowledges what God has done, what He is doing, and what He is going to do for us because He loves us.

REFLECT: Think about something you have had to do recently that felt like a sacrifice. Did you celebrate it even though it was hard and cost you something? As you process these questions, ask God to give you a picture of sacrifice and a heart to celebrate in the middle of it.

RESPOND: Are you grateful for the sacrifice God made on your behalf? Take out your journal and write down a few things that come to mind when you recall the sacrifice and why you’re grateful for it.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father, Thank You for rescuing me from a place of not knowing about Jesus and bringing me into the knowledge of His sacrifice on my behalf. Thank You that through Jesus finished work on the cross, You have called me from the grave into newness of life. You literally spoke the word, and I came alive in Christ—no longer dead in my sin and trespasses. I would never have chosen You if You had not first chosen and called me to Yourself. I praise You for Your sovereign mercy and power, Father.

And now, alive in Christ, I am beloved in Your sight. May the name “beloved in God the Father,” trump and mute other names with which I have been branded through the years. When You look at me, You always delight and You always say of me, “My Beloved”. May this good news free me to live and love others to Your glory, until I take my last breath in this world. In Jesus’ wonderful and merciful name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 197

WAYS TO CULTIVATE A GRATEFUL HEART

“I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:12-13

CELEBRATE THE STRUGGLES

HOW can we cultivate gratitude in seasons of plenty *and* seasons of want? We all experience both. We can look at other people and think to ourselves they don't know struggle like I know struggle, or they don't know the pain that I've walked in. While they might not know your specific struggle or your exact pain, I can guarantee that every believer who has walked the face of this planet, including Jesus himself, knows struggle.

Today's scripture is a favorite for many to quote, and it speaks to the most basic battle for all of us as believers; being grateful in the highs *and* the lows. Throughout our lives, we come to know what it feels like to experience God's best on the mountain tops and God walking with us through the hard times in the valleys. Rejoicing on the mountain top is easy. The real struggle is finding God in the middle of the struggle, and a major part of maturing as a Christian is discovering how to be grateful for the smallest things in the middle of our biggest battle.

REFLECT: What are the greatest struggles you are walking through right now? What is God doing in the midst of the struggle? What are you learning about yourself and others?

The abundance and the need are both a part of our journey and the reason why we know we can do all things through Christ!

RESPOND: One of the best ways to respond in the middle of the struggle is to celebrate. You know the drill, grab your journal or notebook and write out five (or more) of your struggles you can celebrate today.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father, Thank You that Your word says, *“I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength.”* Thank You that You are always with me, even when it may not feel like it. You are faithful in every circumstance, for Psalm 16:11 says, *“You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”* (ESV)

Thank you for knowing exactly what I need. Speak to my heart in those moments when I feel unseen or uncared for, and remind me that You are always with me, for You promise You will never leave me nor forsake me. As I seek You, You promise, *“Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will hear you. You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.”*(Jeremiah 29:12-14 ESV). Thank You for loving me so much. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 198 WAYS TO CULTIVATE A GRATEFUL HEART

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.” Ephesians 2:10

CELEBRATE YOU!

THAT'S right, today we are going to celebrate YOU! Way to go!! You did it!! You’ve successfully completed the first week of your *21 Days to Cultivate a Grateful Heart* challenge.

Today's challenge focuses on celebrating who God created us to be. You were created perfectly for His perfect plan. Many times, however, we can see and call out everything we don't feel at ease with, while we often struggle to see the good things God sees in us. The good things in us are the God-things in us.

Throughout this *Cultivating a Grateful Heart Challenge*, we are learning the practice of celebrating people and things around us. Central to all of that is us. God created us, perfectly designed in His image and, as a result, because His word says that we are His masterpiece or workmanship, celebrating us means we celebrate His creation. If you can, turn your heart toward gratitude to God for yourself and your uniqueness - physically, spiritually, emotionally. The whole package was perfectly designed in His eyes, and while we live on earth, we have the opportunity to practice living like we believe that each day.

REFLECT: If you are God’s workmanship, it’s only fitting to celebrate His work. Think about the things you love about yourself and the things that drive you crazy. Can you see

God in both your strengths and weaknesses? The things that are our strengths are easy to celebrate. It is a bigger stretch to celebrate our weaknesses, but both are a part of God's great design!

RESPOND: As you get ready for your day or pause in your car today, take a moment in front of the mirror to take a good look at yourself. Spend a couple of extra moments there and thank God for the specific things that make you, you.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, Thank You for Your amazing power and work in my life, for Your goodness, and for Your blessings over me. Thank You that You are able to bring hope through even the toughest of times, strengthening me for Your purposes. Thank You for Your great love and care, and for Your mercy and grace. Thank You that You are always with me and will never leave me. Thank You for Your incredible sacrifice so that I might have freedom and life. Forgive me for those times I don't thank You enough for who You are, for all that You do, for all that You have given to me. Help me to set my eyes and my heart on You afresh. Renew my spirit and fill me with Your peace and joy. I love You and I need You, this day and every day. I give You praise and thanks, for You alone are worthy! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 199

WAYS TO CULTIVATE A GRATEFUL HEART

“Praise the Lord! Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His faithful love endures forever.” Psalm 106:1

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His faithful love endures forever.” Psalm 107:1

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His faithful love endures forever.” Psalm 118:1

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His faithful love endures forever.” Psalm 136:1

ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S GOODNESS

GOD is good, He has done great things for His people, and every good thing He does is fueled by His love. These truths are played over and over in scripture. Take a closer look at Psalm 136 from today's verses. The writer of this Psalm repeats the statement “His love endures forever” throughout the entire Psalm. When he writes “forever”, he means for all of eternity, every minute of every hour of every day.

You will also find this phrase at the beginning of multiple chapters in the book of Psalms. Not only is it a very common theme in the Old Testament, but the call to thank God for His goodness is also the most famous call to worship. In fact, when King David appointed Asaph over the musicians at the tabernacle, they thanked God for His goodness and everlasting lovingkindness. As believers, we, too, are called to celebrate the good things God gives us in our lives. Cultivating a heart of gratitude allows us to shift from our selfish thinking to God-centered grateful hearts.

REFLECT: God's love endures forever, through all things for all of time. His love covers your sin. His love fills in your gaps. His love grows in you. His love provides for you. His love lavishes good gifts on you. What has happened recently in your life that feels like a good gift? Where in your life can you say God is good?

RESPOND: Take a minute to write in your Gratitude Journal or notebook the specific times where you have seen God's goodness in your life. Offer those as a prayer to Him fueled by gratitude, and above all else, thank Him for His love that motivates His goodness towards His children.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Thank you, God, for all Your blessings to me and my family. Thank You for the strength You give me each day and for all the people around me who make life more meaningful. Help me to begin and end each day thanking You for Your goodness in my life. May others see in my words and actions my gratitude to You, and may my gratitude help to open up opportunities to share with them what You have done for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 200

WAYS TO CULTIVATE A GRATEFUL HEART

“I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things You have done. I will be filled with joy because of You. I will sing praises to Your name, O Most High.” Psalm 9:1-2

CHOOSE TO FIND GOD IN THE ORDINARY

GOD is in the big moments of our lives like the birth of our children, and He is in the little moments like the thank you card you receive that you weren't expecting to. What do you do with God during the moments of your day? Throughout the day, we have a choice. We can choose to rush through our days completely unaware of His work in and through us, or we can find Him in the ordinary moments of life. Praise-worthy moments happen every day, throughout the day, and we can easily miss them because of the busyness of life and frustrations that happen throughout our day. In fact, our natural tendency is self-focus, which can cause us to look to the next thing or event or what others are doing instead of acknowledging God's goodness right in front of us.

God's Word instructs us to recount all of His wonderful deeds. In God's economy, a coffee date with a friend is just as wonderful as receiving a prestigious award in the workplace. Movie nights at home with your family are just as praise-worthy as tickets to the coolest concert or sporting event of the year. Because God with us every step of every day, we need to remember to praise Him throughout the day. He is worthy of our praise!

REFLECT: Think through the events of your day and write them all down. Now, look at your list. All of the events on your list in and of themselves may seem pretty ordinary, but the fact that you have a bed to make, clothes to wear,

food in the pantry to fix when you're hungry, a computer and the freedom to work from wherever you work, people in your life that you can talk to and spend time with, these are just a few of the ordinary, everyday things we get to be thankful for.

RESPOND: After you've written out your events from the day, big and small, take a minute and thank God for each of them. His provision and presence in each and every one of them. Even if you can't see Him, I promise you He is there, in the middle of all of the ordinary moments of your ordinary days. Thank Him for showing up. Start watching for the ways He can show off as He becomes more visible in the everyday, ordinary moments.

TODAY'S PRAYER:

Jesus, I want to be like You who obeyed the Father without complaint. You embraced the chains of humanity when You walked this earth. Convict me whenever I complain or compare myself with others, and give me Your attitude of humility and thankful acceptance. I want to be like the Apostle Paul who learned contentment in every circumstance, and so I choose to continually offer You a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that give praise to Your name (Hebrews 13:15). I long to bring a smile to Your face so teach me the power of a thankful heart, for I know that Your truth dwells in a thankful heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve