

Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life

Thrive with us by following on Instagram @FlagNazChurch and FlagNaz.org

★Write down one new insight you received today...

★Thinking...

- How might you behave differently if you prepared in thankful prayer over the other before every personal interaction?
- In what ways do you imagine the best version of yourself? Can you apply any of these to others in your life?
- How do you *naturally* invest in another's best? How might God have you invest differently?

★Applying...

- Consider another Christian in whom you often see the Bad. List at least five specific qualities of the person about which you are grateful.
- Tell one person each day something about them for which you are grateful to God.
- Persist in prayer of gratitude and hope for another Christian every day for one week. Journal how your thoughts and deeds toward the person change as a result.

★Praying...

- Pray thanksgiving to God for ten specific things daily. *Be specific!*
- Pray for at least one other's future best in Christ. Ask God to give you a detailed vision of that future.
- Pray for the Thriving Church that will come if we each raise up in the discipline of gratitude.

FlagNaz

Be Healed and Thrive

July 31st, 2022

The Thriving Church Part 1 – Be Worthy

Colossians 1:9-10 (NRSV) – For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worth of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work as you grow in the knowledge of God.

1) Love originates in gratitude...

Often we approach the work before us with an attitude of obligation. I *have* to go to work...I *have* to go to church...I *need* to help someone...I can't, I already *committed* to do something else. Through the Holy Spirit we see a member of Christ's Church approach an assignment from the perspective of gratitude. *I get to*. This is the entry point to the Thriving Church and Christian life to which we are called.

♦**Look for the Good:** Through a lens of obligations we look for obstacles, lack, problems. *What can go wrong?* We are programmed to look for the Bad. Live this way long enough, we build massive defenses with lookouts for every conceivable danger that might interfere with our obligation. We look for things to fix instead of things to appreciate. The Holy Spirit would have Jesus followers be different. He prompts *thanksgiving* in the prayers over fellow church members. Not bland, generic, unfelt *thanksgiving*. No, He prompts His people to *look for the Good*, to identify specific reasons to be *grateful* for others with whom we are united in Christ. "In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard... (Col 1:3-4)."

♦**Be encouraging:** We are tempted to be efficient in our interactions when enslaved by our obligations. Perhaps we engage in a bit of anonymous small talk. Most of our conversation is about that which must be said to achieve our objectives. Instructing, planning, persuading, complaining. These are common. How often do we reveal the inner positive thoughts we have about another that do not bear on our obligations? Once we engage in *gratitude* for another, meditating on *the Good* for which we are *grateful*, the Holy Spirit prompts us to communicate this as an *encouragement* in Christ for the other. Telling another we are *thankful* about their "faith in Christ Jesus," "love that [they] have for all saints (1:4)," that the gospel is "bearing fruit among [them]"

(1:6),” and “[their] love in the Spirit (1:8),” is likely to inspire continuance of these behaviors. Using empathy, the deeper understanding of why one exhibits those behaviors, stimulates endurance toward the goal. The “hope laid up for you in heaven (1:5),” is such a reminder. Jesus would have us always be *grateful* for others, look for *His Good* in them, and *encourage* their pursuit of Him.

II) Love envisions another’s best...

Living from the perspective of obligations our imagination of another is limited to how they might make *our goals* more easily achieved. *I just need...* A self-orientation in service of our obligation, even virtuous obligations. Jesus would have us approach life *gratefully*, transforming our *mind*, altering how we consider others. He would have us imagine them Thriving.

♦ **Know one’s full potential:** We easily overlook the immensity of another’s potential when focused on our obligations. We shape the other toward the narrow task needed in the context of our goals, ignoring excess abilities that useless to the task at hand. Reorienting our view from the vantage of *gratitude*, Jesus draws our attention to the fullness of another’s possibilities. Their best self. Their original identity conceived by God in His image. Rather than consider the other’s usefulness relative to our obligations, we see them in relation to Jesus. What we see is another “filled with the knowledge of God’s will...lead[ing] lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him (1:9-10).” We imagine them perfected in Christ (1:28-29).

♦ **Invest in potential:** Far reaching horizons prompt contemplation of long-term obligations. What will it require today, tomorrow, next year to reach my distant goal? This distant horizon in mind, we may consider more fully another’s potential. Still in the context of self-orientation, how they may grow into the obligations we may face together. We are motivated by and may be helpful in the other’s growth. Dropping our obligations toward the other, immersing ourselves in *gratitude* for their being, the Holy Spirit gives us fresh ways to invest in their potential. We are guided to pray continuously (1:9) and specifically for others as *grateful response*. Pray that they know God’s will “in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (1:9),” and “bear fruit in every good work (1:10).” We also are taught to bless them, “may you be made strong...may you be prepared to endure everything with patience (1:11).” We are to activate our faith in Jesus by *praying, blessing, and telling* the other of these encouragements.

III) Love does not frustrate...

Living under obligation, we take stock of the practical resources at our disposal. *I have to...* leads us to find holes in our calendar to fit the task, dollars in our bank account to fund the task, talent in ourselves and acquaintances to perform the task. If any of these are lacking, *I have to* risks

becoming *I can’t*. A perspective of *gratitude* implicitly acknowledges a *Giver*, a *Source* of the subject about which we are *grateful*.

♦ **Tap into the Source:** Entrepreneurs, know how to tap into resources. They build networks of creatives, experts, financiers, so that they can fulfill their *I have to...* Apostles are not unlike entrepreneurs, building up something from nothing but a vision. We see through this text that those of us building the church have a *Source* we must tap into for this work. God is the *Source* of all power to build the church. *Prayer* is the method of tapping into Him. The passion for another’s best inspired by *gratitude* leads us to intercede for others in “praying for [them] (1:9),” that they receive “all the strength that comes from his glorious power (1:11).” In our *gratitude* toward God that He created another, we ask that He fulfill His glory by empowering them to “lead lives worthy of [Him] (1:10).” This is in accordance with His will for their lives, a specific way of praying out Jesus’s guidance to pray that His Father’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Tap into the *Source* of all power by *praying* for one another.

♦ **Our heart’s desire:** Those of us working from obligation have an end in mind. Some job to be done, result to achieve. When we work from *gratitude*, we often want to return in kind the thing for which we are *grateful*. We like to *exchange* gifts and favors. It feels good, not an obligation but a reflection of worthiness, to enrich the other. In praying that others “lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him (1:10),” we seek the other’s enrichment. The blessing “may you be made strong...prepared to endure everything with [joyful] patience (1:11),” is desire of faith that all things work to the good of those who love God (Rom 8:28).

IV) Love provokes worthiness...

The life of obligation is a life of tension. Rarely are we obligated in exactly the same ways. What *I have to...* and what *you have to...* might overlap, but also conflict. Not so the life of *gratitude*. Jesus would have us united in spirit, equally yoked, striving for the Kingdom of Heaven together (Eph 4:26, 2 Cor 6:14, Mt 6:33). The Holy Spirit prompts *grateful prayer* in us. Through that prayer He provokes others to “lead lives worthy of the Lord (Col 1:10).” This is the virtuous cycle of the Thriving Church. The voyage begins with Jesus’s divine Healing, the reception of His Gospel. The faithful in the church pray over new believers, interceding for their growth in Healing. Maturing as Christians, we begin praying over others. As we pray their best, we are inspired to seek to be worthy ourselves. Through these practices, we are “made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power (1:11).” Our character conforms more toward Christ’s as we prepare ourselves to joyfully “endure everything with patience (1:11),” in our acts of *gratitude, prayer, blessing, telling* that may appear futile to us while we wait faithfully on the Lord. We take off the old self and put on Christ (Eph 4:22-24), living worthy of Him, as we fulfill the very blessing we are prompted to pray.