

## Final Week - Give An Answer: Can I Be Grateful Despite Adversity?

Readings: Psalm 123 // Matthew 6:25-34 // Psalm 92

Series based on 1 Peter 3:15 NIV “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”

### What is Apologetics?

Apologetics is worshipping God with our minds as we defend the Christian faith with logic and evidence that may remove barriers to belief.

From Joshua Johnson: What Apologetics IS and is NOT

Apologetics IS: Worshipping God with our minds, defends the Christian faith with logic and evidence, removes barriers to belief (some call pre-evangelism), ...the science and art of Christian persuasion, any reason why a person believes in Jesus, equips believers to engage hard questions they will face in life, ...connecting faith with science, history, philosophy without sacrificing one or the other, bridges faith with experience, gives believers and unbelievers space to ask questions, investigate holistic discipleship.

Apologetics is NOT: saying “I’m sorry,” ...arguing or bullying people into faith, ...possessing absolute certainty in all theological beliefs, ...debating with people on a stage, ...eliminating the mysterious or the spiritual, ...about winning, ignoring the heart, the spirit, or experiences, ...a purely mental exercise, providing a bubble that prevents questions of the Christian faith, ...cookie cutter explanations.

Five Reasons We Need to be Equipped for Apologetics (from Joshua Johnson);

1. It is biblical, historical, and Jesus and John Wesley used it.
2. It is part of the holiness journey.
3. It is a multi-purpose tool.
4. It demands integrity. [Questions are not accusations; they are opportunities to respond with gentleness and respect. Both require integrity.]
5. It engages the next generation and changing world.

### How does Jesus teach us to go about explaining the reasons for what we believe?

Matthew 10:16 – NASB 16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so [a]be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.”

The Message: 16 “Stay alert. This is hazardous work I’m assigning you. You’re going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack, so don’t call attention to yourselves. Be as shrewd as a snake, inoffensive as a dove.”

## **Thanksgiving focuses our attention on God rather than our circumstances.**

The preparation for Thanksgiving Day includes how many are coming for dinner, the menu, who is making what, what time will we serve dinner, and so forth. We can become so absorbed in the planning we forget why the holiday exists. We take a day apart to thank God for our blessings and His Sovereignty over our lives.

## **Gratitude to God not only honors Him, but it is good for us.**

Consider this quote from an article about gratitude benefits; “Counting our blessings requires a shift in perspective. Our Father’s thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are His ways our ways. If we drift towards the comparative structure of societal materialism, allowing social media feeds and nightly news reports to determine how satisfied we are with the status quo of our lives, we’ll embark on a never-ending quest of never enough.” Therefore, when tempted to go down the rabbit hole thinking spawned by too much media consumption, turn it off. Put down the devices. Look out a window. Look around. Name three things you see for which you can thank God? Shift that perspective to an attitude of gratitude.

**Today’s takeaway:** God has given us three important truths; 1) God is holy, 2) man is sinful, and 3) obedience is essential. Commandments are not suggestions. The suggestion of reading the Psalm in the last section is a not to the Lord’s call of a sacrifice of thanksgiving every morning and evening. Reading any part of Scripture twice a day opens the possibility of being blessed to be a blessing to others! Having a grateful heart keeps our mind focused on the Lord. An attitude of thanksgiving honors God. Thankfulness is expressed in a variety of ways, including regular worship with the body of Christ. A spirit of thanksgiving is the direct result of remembering all God has done for us.

## **Meditations for the Week:**

1. Try a daily routine of reading Psalm 92 in the morning and before bed. How might considering the deep thoughts of God recenter you as your day begins and ends?
2. True, heartfelt daily thanksgiving has a powerful impact on OUR lives. This is a deeply personal exercise. We might not understand what God is doing in our life or the lives of our loved ones, but thanking Him for goodness and blessing, known and unknown, is acknowledging His loving sovereignty.
3. Life on this side of heaven will never be perfect. We live in a fallen world. Our God is an awesome God, always doing something new, making a way where a way seems impossible. Jesus is the light in our darkness. Focus on the Lord. The situation may not change, but our attitude will. Breathe in God’s grace. Exhale God’s praise.