

1. Bernard Webster's picture appeared in *USAToday*.¹ Why's he smiling?
 - a. He has every reason to have scowl on face and clenched fist.
 - b. Webster 1982 identified by woman as man broke in committed heinous crime.
 - c. At 19, tried, convicted, sentenced to prison. 1 problem. Not guilty.
 - d. After 20 yrs. reopened case and DNA testing proved he was innocent.
 - e. *I'm just happy to be out, Webster said. What an attitude! Prediction.*
 - i. If can keep attitude. Thankful justice finally prevailed. See as 2nd opp.
 - ii. Focus on what been given instead of what taken away, forgive, be fine.
 - iii. But if bitter--woman accused, criminal justice sys. failed, 20 yrs stolen . . .
 - iv. He'll become angry, hateful, embittered man prison own making rest life.
 - f. Tough choice. But he appears to be choosing the right attitude. Life about att.
 - g. *I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to us & 90% how we react to it.*²
 - i. That's why thankfulness so import. Nothing good att. like thankful heart.
 - ii. 2 kinds people: Those complain/grumble spirit and those thankful heart.
2. How do we develop a thankful heart? By understanding it. Show Title & Text.

I. What is Thankfulness?--Its Nature--Verbalized Gratitude

A. Expression Very Important

1. *eucharisteo* = gratitude that finds outward expression in thanksgiving.
 - a. Not "be thankful"--attde; "give thanks" action; Diff. between gldnss/ thnkflnss
 - b. Gladness = feeling good about blessings; Thankfulness = enough to say so
2. Remem. 10 lepers J. cleansed (Only one verbalized gladness to thankfulness?)

B. Gladness Makes Us Feel Good; Thankfulness Gives Glory To God.

1. Grat. 3 forms: a feeling in heart, an express. in words, a giving in return.³
2. Not really thankful until show it to God and others.
3. *Stanford Cobb, missionary to Persia, helped me in another way. Said he, "Do you ever feel thankful when God blesses you?" "Always." "Did you ever tell Him so?" "Well, I don't know that I have." "Well, try it, my young friend, try it. Tell Him so. Tell Him aloud; tell Him so that you are sure you will hear it yourself." That was a new revelation. I found I had only been glad, not grateful. I have been telling Him with grateful feelings ever since, to my soul's help and comfort.*⁴
4. Ever made that discovery in own life? Ever looked to see if only glad, not thankful.
 - a. If glad focusing on gift. That's ultimately selfish & will never transform your heart.
 - b. But if thankful then focus turns to God. As focus on Him transform your life.
 - c. I repeat the words of Stanford Cobb (underlined above).

II. When Should We Be Thankful?--Its Timing--Every Day

A. Always = At Every Time (everyday, NEB).

1. Thankfulness is to be so cultivated that it becomes a daily habit.
 - a. Complaining comes easy - natural to us. Thankfulness must be learned.

¹Thankfulness, prisoner released after DNA testing. File Illustrations. *USAToday*, 11/8/02

²Chuck Swindoll's famous quote.

³Eleanor Doan, *Speakers Sourcebook II*, p. 189.

⁴"Glad, But Not Grateful," *Alliance Weekly, McKnight's Master Book of 4000 Illustrations*, p. 682.

b. **Gratitude not virtue that comes easy to human race⁵**

2. When boy parents constantly doing things for me (clothes, shoes, food, car).
 - a. Got so used to blessings often not thank. Took for granted. Same w/God.

B. **What's Key To Developing Habit Of Thankfulness?**

1. Gratitude = same root as grace; Thank = same root as think.
2. So, if think more on grace of God will thank more, express grat. more.

III. WHAT SHOULD WE BE THANKFUL FOR?--ITS RANGE—EVERYTHINGA. **For All Things--(All means all, etc.)**

1. Nothing excluded (Covers evry circum. even if be disease/pov., Chrysostom, 4th)
2. Troubling cause many things hard take - downright evil. What mean?

B. **Oddly Enough Answer By Actor Kirk Douglas (story of walk/talk).⁶**

1. **Evrything happens for reason. You look for things be thankful for. What I try do.**
2. **Always something which give thanks; even on darkest days blessing count.⁷**

IV. WHO ARE WE TO BE THANKFUL TO?--ITS OBJECT--OUR HEAVENLY FATHERA. **What Think Of When Consider God As Heavenly Father?**

1. **4 Ls = loves me, leads me, looks out for me, leans on me**
2. Therefore, nothing outside His control or plan for us (Rom. 8:28).

B. **Where Was Paul When Wrote? (in prison—house arrest, chained to guard)**

1. Could write words cause knew circum. part of G's plan working for good.
2. Do U know what this is? It's a bouquet of thorns. Thorns? That's right!

a. A floral shop I read about sells these as their *Thanksgiving Special*.⁸

b. If you call Lutey's they'll give them to you for free! Tell about Diane.

V. WHO CAN BE THANKFUL?--ITS PRIVILEGE --CHRISTIANS ONLYA. **Give Thanks In The Name Of Our LJC.**

1. *name* = all that person is. LJC stands for who is and authority possesses.
2. J. said are to pray in His name. He gives author. to approach G in prayer/praise.

B. **Thanksgiving Is A Uniquely Christian Privilege.**

1. It is something believers alone have right to do.
2. **The modern American seldom pauses to give thanks for the simple blessings of life. One reason is that we are used to having so much. We simply assume that we will have all the good things of life. Another reason is that it hurts our pride to be grateful. We do not want to admit that God is the Provider of all good things. We are simply His stewards. Being thankful requires humility and faith in God. When we have these, we can be grateful.⁹**

Conclusion

1. Conclude with story of Henry Smith's *Give Thanks*.¹⁰

⁵W. Somerset Maugham quoted by E. Paul Hovey, *Treas. Inspirational Anec., Quot., & Illus.* #1174.

⁶Douglas was leading man in Hollywood films--handsome, tough, distinctive voice, superb actor--involved in helicopter accident left in extreme pain and barely able walk. Then stroke barely able to talk. Talk about life reversal! The articulate, rugged he-man became crippled with halting, forced speech.

⁷William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, p. 207.

⁸Raymond McHenry, "Thanksgiving," *In Other Words*. Vol. 14, #3, p. 10 fr. *Bits & Pieces*, Nov. 2003, p. 4.

⁹Richard B. Douglass in *Quotable Quotations. Christianity Today*, Vol. 31, no. 17. *The Humility of Thankfulness*, preachingtoday.com/index.taf?, 11/9/02.

¹⁰Raymond McHenry, "Thanksgiving", *In Other Words*. Vol. 11, #3, p. 12 fr. *Christian Reader*, May-June 01, p. 81.