



## 04\_How & Why Gratitude Heals

**0:00:00.3 Speaker 1:** Are you dissatisfied with your spiritual progress, feeling stuck without knowing why even after deliverance, prayers or years of therapy? Recover your dignity, find your purpose and discover the thrill of walking with God once again. Explore spiritual consultations with Sonja at biblestudyevangelista.com. Click Go Deeper on the home page and then one-on one and find out how to cooperate more deeply with the Holy Spirit's action in your life with the spiritual consultation. If you like having Bible Study in your pocket and you have an iPhone or iPad, why not leave a review? Search Bible Study Evangelista in iTunes, and tell everyone how you're loving and lifting all you've been given. Here's Sonja.

[music]

**0:00:51.6 Sonja Corbitt:** Welcome to the Bible Study Evangelista show. I'm Sonja Corbitt, Catholic Evangelista. We're in our last show, a series about gratitude. So this is gonna turn out to be a little shorty series, and our next series is gonna be on healing and deliverance. So we're gonna talk about angels. And so you're gonna wanna watch your email box for information on that, but our last show on gratitude is the science, the research behind gratitude. And so far, we've looked at the difference between thanksgiving and gratitude and how the world sort of uses that word gratitude, whereas the Bible uses the word thanksgiving, specifically to help us see the difference between thanking the force or the universe and thanking a person, a person who has actually given us a gift, a benefactor who has given us a benefit. So we looked at the [0:01:45.2] \_\_\_\_.

**0:01:45.9 SC:** And then the second week we looked at gratitude and blessing, and how blessing is the word in the Old Testament that is used for that word gratitude or thanksgiving. And so to confess, to praise and to bless, they all sort of wrap up the root of the word that we use for thanksgiving. And then we looked at Jesus's prayers of thanksgiving in the New Testament and the Eucharist, and how God commands us to be thankful, which on the surface sort of sounds like he's commanding us to worship Him, which if a political figure did that, or a Hollywood figure or a dictator of any sort, we would call him a tyrant, right? But what we've discovered last week is that God only ever asks us to do the things that are good for us. So we can trust His commands, and I know this is a backward, this is a backward kind of thing to say, "Do it because it's good for you."

**0:02:53.1 SC:** Today we're gonna look at the difference. Do it because it glorifies God. But in keeping God's command to thank him and in keeping him in mind, what we discover is that it's very, very good for us, and that's where we are beginning today in the fourth show on gratitude, because thanksgiving heals, literally. You know, I'm always amazed when I am researching for a series or a book or something like that, and I start really digging into the nitty-gritty on something, and I'm just always blown away by the stuff that God shows me to share with you, and I'm

actually... I feel sorry for you all 'cause you're not doing this part of the dig-in, because it's different when you research for say, a political show or a show about culture or cooking. Being in the scriptures is so healing itself.

**0:03:58.1 SC:** And so I am always surprised by the kind of healing that God offers in the scriptures, and the amount. And that is exactly the part of healing gratitude that I wanna look at today. The type of healing and the amount of healing that happens for us when we are grateful, when we are thankful, it's actually pretty shocking. The amount of research that has been done at this point is shocking, first of all, but then secondly, what they have found through that research. So get this, everybody wants to be happy. A Christian or a Catholic might say, "No, we don't wanna be happy, we wanna be full of joy." And they wanna make a distinction between happiness and joy. But as I stated in one of the earlier shows, the philosophers in the church, in church history, they talk about happiness as being the end of the person.

**0:05:01.6 SC:** Teleology is that idea of looking to the end, looking to eternity, and the end that all of us are searching for is how to be happy, how to be happy, not just here on Earth, but forever. How can we have eternal happiness? Eternal bliss, Beatitude. Well, so far, gratitude is the only thing that has been found to actually measurably increase your baseline happiness. They call it the dispositional gratitude. Disposition of gratitude is your baseline gratefulness, and that's related to your baseline happiness, so things like self-medication or a sweet treat or a kiss from your spouse or a hug from your child. All of those things will cause a temporary increase in happiness, but then you return to the baseline, and that baseline is called the dispositional gratitude.

**0:06:03.3 SC:** Over time though, a habit of gratitude increases the dispositional well-being or the happiness permanently. And as I said, I was shocked by the number of studies on the impact of gratitude interventions on psychological well-being, and then the reviews on the impact of gratitude on physical healing too. So gratitude is massively important, and you can grow in the habit of gratitude as a virtue, both in the type of gratitude, the way that you're grateful, and then the depth of your gratitude, meaning the happier... How happy you are. I find this all absolutely fascinating. I think this is why we've had this plethora of, or multiplication of gratitude focus in, say, the media and in Psychology, in pop culture. People talk about a gratitude journal and how we should practice gratitude daily.

**0:07:08.9 SC:** Well, this is why, because the research... I don't know why no one has actually said, say like a documentary or something like that. Why they haven't taught us why we should have the gratitude journals or why we should practice gratitude every day, it just sounds really new agey. I mean, yes, it's something we should probably all do, right? But they don't tell us that it is healthy, that it is the one thing that increases your dispositional gratitude, your dispositional happiness and your health. [chuckle] It's good for your health physically, and here's why, gratitude boosts the neurotransmitters, dopamine and serotonin, and the hormone oxytocin, those are the love chemicals, you all.

**0:07:56.6 SC:** We talked about those in Cherished, we talked about them in Somata, we talked about them in Freedom from anxiety, those love chemicals, and especially the master class, those love chemicals are necessary, but they're associated with well-being and having a positive outlook on life, and they're necessary for growth and development. This is what... These neurotransmitters, dopamine and serotonin and oxytocin, those are the chemicals that are stunted by trauma and stress. Remember that you can't grow and protect at the same time. Your body has to choose one or the

other. If you're in protective mode, the fight or flight, the constant stress response in your body or a trauma response, if you're protecting then you're not growing, and you need these chemicals to grow.

**0:08:51.3 SC:** So if you're grateful, you're happier. You have a more positive outlook life, and this is something you can practice, it's not something that you have a Pooh personality or a Tigger personality, and then some people have an Eeyore personality, it's not built in, you can grow in being more grateful. But let me give you the science on this, a recent collaboration between UC San Diego Center of Excellence for Research and Training in Integrative Health and the Chopra Foundation, these two entities, medical entities, examined associations between gratitude and well-being in men and women with asymptomatic heart failure. They found that heart patients, which I always say if you have a heart issue, like physically a heart issue, it's a broken heart.

**0:09:43.3 SC:** And they found the heart patients with more gratitude slept better, were less depressed, had less fatigue, had more self-confidence to take care of themselves, and they had less systemic inflammation. Inflammation is a killer, it's what causes arthritis, it causes so many awful, ugly things. Gratitude helps reduce inflammation. Why? Because it increases dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin, the growth chemicals, the love chemicals. Remember, love heals. I'm sorry, I actually... That's a sacred healing Master Class theme. Love heals, and I go through in the master class why love heals. And this is part of why, because those chemicals that are released in love are what heal us, thoughts, emotions, body and soul, and God knows that, and that's why He commands us to be grateful, but we now we have the science to back all this stuff up.

**0:10:50.6 SC:** Feeling thankful and appreciative calms the brain. It calms the body by releasing chemicals that foster feelings of contentment and safety, and they encourage motivation. So people who are focused on things they're thankful for, and they kept a gratitude journal, they exercised more, they experienced fewer physical symptoms of illness. They were more optimistic, they felt better about their overall lives than those who focused only on the negative or even just the neutral things. In another study, people who practice gratitude had more progress in their academic relationship and their health goals. Practicing gratitude on a daily basis increased pro-social motivation and participants reported offering others emotional support or help with personal problems. And now I'm just rolling through the benefits.

[music]

**0:11:52.6 Speaker 3:** You're listening to the Bible Study Evangelista show. Bible study spinach that taste like cake.

**0:12:02.4 SC:** Let's get social. I'm no longer on Facebook, so come and connect with me in the new Catholic Evangelista community. Visit [biblestudyevangelista.com](http://biblestudyevangelista.com) and click community on the menu or scroll down to the radio notes and click the link to our community. We're sharing picks and prayers, love the word, takeaways and insights on the daily readings and everything else social. Come share with me.

**0:12:26.2 S1:** Sonja created the Love the Word Bible study method just for you, based on Mary's personal practice and formulated for your personality and temperament. Get your Love the Word meditations every Monday morning by signing up at [biblestudyevangelista.com](http://biblestudyevangelista.com). Now, here's Sonja.

[music]

**0:12:54.5 SC:** Researching gratitude shows that participants who had chronic diseases reported sleeping better and feeling more refreshed upon awakening, so you can sleep better if you're just grateful. I'm gonna give you some ways to practice this so that we can increase our baseline happiness and our disposition of gratitude and happiness, but I wanna just give you the research, you just won't believe it. Young people who engaged in daily gratitude practice showed increases in alertness, attentiveness, enthusiasm, energy and determination, so you want your kids to be practicing gratitude too. Children who were encouraged to practice gratitude and thankfulness showed a more positive attitude towards school and their minds and brains were more open and ready to learn.

**0:13:37.2 SC:** Several gratitude studies showed links to depression. In short, the more grateful a person is, the less depressed they are, well, go figure. Gratitude can make you more patient. Research from Northeastern University showed that people who felt grateful for little everyday things were more patient and better able to make sensible decisions compared to those who didn't feel very gracious on a day-to-day basis. And this is where the [0:14:01.7] \_\_\_\_ come from, y'all. All of that care and attitude and all that care and craziness in the grocery store comes from a lack of gratitude. Stop with the entitlement and pause for a moment and think about what you're grateful for. It makes you more patient. It improves your relationships.

**0:14:19.3 SC:** According to a study in the journal of theoretical social psychology, feeling grateful towards your spouse and vice versa improves feelings of connectedness and overall satisfaction as a couple. So, hey guys, every single day, you should point out something that you love about your spouse to them. Gratitude leads to healthy tendencies. In a study published in the Journal of Personality and Individual Differences, researchers asked people to rate their levels of gratitude, physical health and psychological health along with how likely they were to do well being boosting behaviors like exercise, healthy eating, going to the doctor and they found positive correlations between gratitude and every one of those behaviors, suggesting that giving thanks or being grateful helps people appreciate and care for their bodies. [chuckle]

**0:15:16.3 SC:** Gratitude can help you sleep. Research in the Journal of psychosomatic research has found that feeling grateful helps people sleep better and longer, I already said that. Gratitude can help you from self-medicating. This was crazy to me. Gratitude can give you more willpower. Gratitude replenishes willpower says Susan Pierce Thompson, a cognitive scientist who specializes in the psychology of eating. The concept is similar to the North Eastern Research that found a connection between gratitude and patience. Thomson says that cultivating feelings of gratitude can boost your impulse control, helping you to slow down and make better decisions.

**0:16:00.5 SC:** Now, my priest actually... I noticed while I was doing the research for this particular podcast series, I noticed something that my priest did in confession. He gave me a gratitude [0:16:16.7] \_\_\_\_\_. And I thought that was neat. I mentioned that actually to my son in conversation, my oldest son, and he said that Father does that for him quite a bit. So I texted father and I said, "Why do you do that?" And he said, because it keeps us focused on eternity. It keeps us focused on eternal happiness. It keeps us focused on the long-term view, but he said, because of that, when I give a gratitude [0:16:46.8] \_\_\_\_\_, it helps with sins of impulse. So he knew by spiritual means, what science is learning through research means that gratitude can help us with sins of impulse. It gives us more will power, crazy. Is that not crazy?

**0:17:08.4 SC:** Gratitude help ease depression. Thompson says that experiments have shown that people who do the three good things exercise is what she's calling it, which as the name suggests, prompts people to think of three good moments or things that happen that day. They see considerable improvements in depression and overall happiness, sometimes in as little as a couple of weeks. So if you struggle or have always struggled with depression or struggle with depression on a regular basis, you want to get out of yourself and start thinking about other people and practice gratitude, practice thinking about the good things. Remember this negativity cycle. And I talk about this in unrest all the time, this negativity, complaining cycle is so evil. It's the essence of what Hebrews 3 says prevented the people of Israel from entering the promised land of rest.

**0:18:02.8 SC:** This negative cycle and fearful cycle of thinking and emoting, and we can see here that the research shows that part of how you can stop that is simply to practice some gratitude, just be thankful. Be thankful for the things that God gives you and find... We'll talk about this in detail in a moment. Find the good in the crappy situation. There's always something you can be thankful for. Always, always. So one of the ways that we can do this three good things, she's calling it three good things, but we can do the Ignatius Examen, and we'll talk about that in a few moments when we get to the ways to practice gratitude. But we can already see, just through some of these studies, that a habit of gratitude gives you happiness that lasts. It becomes permanent. It re-wires your brain.

**0:18:51.8 SC:** Lots of things from a complement to a sugary treat, all of those things can bring you little bursts of happiness. Instant gratification though, it goes away quickly, does it not? You go run to the cabinet, you eat that candy bar and you get a rush of the sugar because the sugar pushes out the dopamine and the serotonin and the oxytocin, but it is a short-term burst, it's a fake one because of the sugar. So it gives you that burst of love chemical, which is why we keep going back to it, and sugar becomes our mother or our spouse, or our lover or whatever, but it is short-term. Gratitude though, can actually... If it's a frame of mind and you regularly take time to express your gratitude, you're going to see permanent results in as little as a couple of weeks, that's what the research is showing, in as little as a couple of weeks.

**0:19:47.3 SC:** So 40 days, right? A Linton practice for 40 days, practice maybe all of the methods I'm gonna give you for the entire 40 days, every single day and just see what happens. I dare you. So there are so many studies that document all of this. I'm gonna drop several of them like a list. I actually did a search on a research study website just with the word gratitude. And I'm gonna post that link in the show notes so that you can just look at how many there are, hundreds of them, but we know now, definitely that gratitude elevates your happiness. It increases resilience to trauma. It benefits your social relationships and your personal relationships. Individuals always vary, obviously, in how grateful they tend to be or they, for instance, this would be based on personality and temperament.

**0:20:41.9 SC:** So if you're an Eeyore, you're not as grateful as the Tigger [laughter], but those who are more grateful, show enhanced psychological wellbeing. So we want to learn to practice the virtue of thankfulness. Naturally, the increase in overall happiness is directly related to how much trauma you've lived through, so that people with less trauma, they can become more happy. But that's just in the natural. Think of what happens in the supernatural when a general sense of gratitude is activated in the Holy Spirit by thanksgiving. In active thanksgiving to God, in active praise of God, imagine what happens in the supernatural realm, the realm of grace. Imagine how good that can be for us. If you think about like scar tissue, you that healthy tissue can stretch a

whole lot more than scar tissue.

**0:21:37.6 SC:** And so that's kind of what we're saying here, that the amount of trauma that you've had would be likened to the amount of scar tissue. So it's not as stretchy, but that is a natural view of it. That's the way it normally is, but you add grace to it and who knows what's possible. You get an immediate bump, the research shows, in your happiness without a permanent fix. But a couple of weeks of practice does produce permanent measurable outcomes. So we need to make gratitude a habit. And how do we do that? Well, here's the practical. If you're in a family or you're in a religious community, wherever you are, say thank you, express gratitude out loud.

**0:22:25.1 SC:** It significantly increases the quality of your relationships and your dispositional gratitude, which leads to permanent happiness. When someone does their chores, just say thank you. And I know you're thinking to yourself, well, they're supposed to. Well, say thank you anyway. You like to be thanked even when you're doing stuff that is a normal duty or a routine because you don't wanna be taken for granted. So if somebody opens the door for you, say thank you, when somebody does what they're supposed to do, say thank you, and you will become more grateful in your relationships and your relationships will flourish Just from that, just from your being more thankful and pointing it out.

**0:23:04.6 SC:** If you're complaining about your spouse or your kids or whatever, why don't you try grateful? [laughter] Be be grateful and point it out and just try it for 40 days and see what happens. See what improves. You can do a gratitude journal. This is something where you choose to write like three to five things to be grateful for every day. And this is actually a lot of fun to go back and read this kind of journal because you remember little things that brought you happiness and you re-participate in those again, you're bringing them into the present and then you feel happy and grateful all over again. So that's good all the way around, a gratitude journal.

[music]

**0:23:53.9 S3:** You're listening to the Bible Study Evangelista show. Bible study spinach that tastes like cake.

**0:23:58.8 S1:** Did you know you can get Bible study evangelista radio notes and podcasts delivered to your inbox every Monday morning? Redeem your Mondays. Join thousands of your fellow listeners by subscribing at [biblestudyevangelista.com](http://biblestudyevangelista.com). Now, here's Sonja.

**0:24:21.2 SC:** If you're tired of being harassed by anxiety, fear, and depression, if you're ready to end the constant drama and pain in your relationships and circumstances, if you're sick of pain and disease and constant fatigue in your body, you need the Sacred Healing Masterclass. It's packed with practical tools for healing anxiety and woundedness. 10 hours of biblical Catholic teaching on healing for the heart, soul, mind, and body, and the latest science in physics, neuroscience and somatic psychology. Healing is your promise and inheritance in Christ. Go to [Biblestudyevangelista.com](http://Biblestudyevangelista.com) homepage and click on the Sacred Healing Masterclass for details on how you can be healed. You will experience healing through this masterclass. And what you learn will dispose you for love, heart, soul, mind, and strength for the rest of your life.

[music]

**0:25:25.6 SC:** All right, practical ways to increase your gratitude, to increase your baseline happiness. So we talked about simple thankfulness, saying thank you to people. We talked about a gratitude journal. To increase the depth of your gratitude you can write letters, you don't have to send them, but why not send them? But definitely write them. Write them to your kids, write them to your parents. Write them to God. On our community Michelle T did something similar. Well, she did. This is what it was in the community. She told us about her Christmas practice where she wrote letters to God and she told him the stuff that she's thankful for in her life. What a beautiful sort of practice. I mean, I've never even tried this to be honest. I cry [laughter] when I get started. I've thought about doing this so many times, but I start to feel so thankful, I start to cry and then I feel silly and I've stopped. But I'm gonna do this.

**0:26:18.5 SC:** I'm gonna do this for each of my kids. I'm gonna do it for my husband. I'm gonna do it for God. I'm gonna write a gratitude letter because just thinking about it, it makes me tear up again how much you love people and they never hear from you. There are so many instances in so many relationships that people flounder and they don't know what to do with themselves and in the world in their lives. And a simple appreciation, just telling them how much you appreciate them, it can really, really make a difference. So think about that. Samantha L in the community shared a method, I don't even know what to call it. Imagine the steps maybe. But she shared a gratitude practice that I found really interesting.

**0:27:04.5 SC:** Think over all the steps between what you have and where it came from, and be grateful for that. Think about all the steps. So as an example, she used a pencil, a pencil requires wood from a forest, which had to be collected by a logger and driven by a trucker. It requires graphite, which was mined by somebody and sent to a factory where somebody else operated a machine. The copper on the eraser, the holder for the eraser came from a different mine. Then the rubber eraser came from a tree and all of that, the wood, the graphite, the copper, the rubber, it was shipped and processed, and then someone else at a different factory worked to make it a pencil within the machine. Then somebody painted it, then somebody inspected it, then it was shipped to the store wherever you bought it from, and then you purchased it from a cashier.

**0:27:54.7 SC:** Now, I know I didn't list all the steps there, but can you see how many steps it takes to just make a pencil? And if you think about how many steps it takes to have the things that you have, things like electricity, running water, food, we just go to the kitchen and we get it. And we don't think about where it came from. We don't think about the chicken that laid that golden egg. Now with the economy, the eggs are golden, man, \$7, \$10 a dozen. I'm glad I have chickens. So if you think about all those steps, there are so many steps to even the smallest things and all of that requires people to do that stuff, the human collaboration. So think about those things and that feeling of gratitude, that rush of oxytocin and serotonin and dopamine. You start to feel it, right?

**0:28:47.3 SC:** And I got to thinking about this with my donors and my monthly donors. And so I wanna take a moment to thank my latest friends of the show, Jennifer M, Deborah W, Maureen G. And I thought about all the steps that it takes for you guys to support me like that and how you must hear it in perhaps one of these podcast shows. And you hear other people and you make a mental note, hey, I might want to do that and maybe you forget it, but for those of you who actually donate, you either make a note or you don't forget and you make the effort to go to the website. You make an effort to find the link, you make an effort to type all that stuff in. You gotta go to your wallet or your purse or whatever and pull out your credit card.

**0:29:33.2 SC:** You gotta type all that stuff in and you gotta fight with my website. You gotta do all those steps just to do an act of kindness, which I appreciate dearly, desperately. I am so thankful that you think of me in that way, that you think of me and my effort to share God's word and my effort to share him with you and the things that we're learning through research, but definitely through the Bible. To think that you think of me in that way is so very humbling. And I'm sorry I didn't mean to get all up weepy and emotional, but you know, this is what gratitude does. It puts you in the frame of mind that you are so very thankful for the small things. And to you perhaps, that \$20 donation is a really small thing.

**0:30:26.6 SC:** Maybe it's a really big thing and you've sacrificed even more, but I appreciate it so very much. I thank God for you. I offer masses for you. I pray for you. I am so very thankful and I say it all the time, but it feels so good. It feels so good to truly thank you. And that's part of why I wanted to begin the monthly Bible study for friends of the show because [laughter], I'm always so shocked at how excited you are to learn stuff in the Bible. And so I thought, what better thing to give them, what do I have to give them Lord? It was that sort of like that same, that same sentiment in the psalm. What do I have to thank them with for the benefit that they have given to me? Well, I have a Romans Bible study, [laughter], right?

**0:31:08.0 SC:** And so it's about time for us to figure out what our next study is gonna be on. But anyway, so you can imagine the steps between the things you have and the things that you're using and where they came from. Here's another one that is so very simple. These are so simple, y'all. It's amazing how simple it is to be more happy. [laughter] I don't know why we're so miserable. What it tells me is we're very negative. We're negative, and we're afraid instead of grateful and thankful. Simply smile more. A University of Kansas study found that smiling, even fake smiling reduces your heart rate and your blood pressure during stressful situations. So just try a few minutes of YouTube humor therapy or just sitting around smiling when you're mad while you're waiting in a line or you're fuming over work or a family situation.

**0:32:02.5 SC:** It's difficult not to smile when you're watching a funny video or a comedian online or you're just smiling. It really is. I remember my dad telling me this one time when I was a teenager. I was working in a restaurant. I was a... I waited tables for years. I absolutely loved it, but I don't even know how this conversation came about. But he said that he had, he came to eat at the restaurant that I worked at, and he made a comment that the hostess smiled the whole time she was washing the door, the glass door of the restaurant. She was just cleaning the door. And he said, he just commented that she smiled the whole time and he smiled sitting in his booth, watching her. And he commented on it, on how easy it is to just smile. And I thought, well, it might be easy for you [laughter], right?

**0:32:52.0 SC:** But it really is, it really is easy. And I think Mother Teresa said this, she told her nuns all the time, just smile. Just smile. It makes you more happy. It's absolutely free. It is a free antidepressant. We don't need antidepressants as much as we need to be more thankful. We need to smile. We need to imagine the steps. We need to keep a gratitude journal. We need to say thank you to people who do things for us. Here's another one, practice reframing. I've said this over and over and over again. This is on the anxiety checklist, but I haven't said it this way, so I'm gonna say it. I'm gonna reframe it. Instead of stressing about a traffic jam or some sort of terrible situation you're in, stressing over it, and freaking out, appreciate the fact that you can afford a car.

**0:33:43.6 SC:** If you're in traffic, appreciate the fact you can afford a car and you get to spend a



few extra minutes listening to music or a podcast and just accept that there's nothing you can do about the traffic. And just sit. Reframing builds resiliency. That is biblical. But now we have scientific research to back that up. Resiliency is the ability to adapt to stressful and negative situations and losses. So if you're not entitled, if you can accept the change, the change in suffering are trials and tribulations, all that stuff is part of life. Stop, practice the stop tool. Take the action that you can on problems rather than just hoping they're gonna disappear or waiting for them to resolve themselves or white knuckling it and trying to force something. Practice the stop tool and practice reframing on the anxiety checklist is called wisdom.

**0:34:34.5 SC:** James 1:2-8 tells us all about reframing or finding the good in everything. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work or mature work that you may be perfect or mature and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach and it will be given to him. Wisdom in the Bible is God's perspective. It's a reframing of your situation. But let him ask in faith, James says, with no doubting for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind for let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is double minded, unstable in all his ways. So there James tells us to reframe, to look for wisdom, to look for God's perspective in all of our suffering, in all of our tribulation, in every single circumstance. And now we know we can be happier.

[music]

**0:35:54.3 S3:** You are listening to the Bible study Evangelista show, Bible study spinach that tastes like cake.

**0:36:01.5 S1:** If you love having Bible study in your pocket, you can become a friend of the show. Click on the yellow friend of the show button on biblestudyevangelista.com and become a supporter of any amount and any frequency. Now here's Sonja.

[music]

**0:36:33.1 SC:** I hope you're starting to see that everything, everything, everything God commands us to do is ultimately good for us. Even reframing, even asking for wisdom in our suffering, in our difficulties, practicing the stop tool and especially that T step where you're telling God and you're asking for his perspective and you're trying to decide in the O step what the right thing to do is. All of that helps you reframe the situation. And reframing increases happiness, it increases gratitude, it builds resiliency. Here's another one. So the three blessings, we talked about this earlier. This is basically an Ignatius Examen. Before going to bed at night or before you fall asleep, designate a little bit of time to write down at least three things that went well for you during the day.

**0:37:25.1 SC:** And those three things you write down, they don't need to be big events or major feelings. They can be small, especially they really, most of the time as you start to see those things, they get smaller and smaller and they multiply. You start to realize, oh my gosh, I love this and I love that. I mean, I was standing in the window and saw a red bird, a cardinal out my office window and I was absolutely shocked at how brilliant the red was. And I said to God, I said that is really neat. Thank you. And then I was outside sitting on the front porch in the sun, the sun was just so warm, but that was the day when the wind was like hurricane force, there wasn't any rain, but it was

really, really windy. And somehow my ducks finally found the creek. They finally figured out how to go down there, but down by the creek, there is a low spot that collects water.

**0:38:14.6 SC:** And so it's almost like a little pond, and they... I watched them run down... They waddle, you know. I watched them run down the driveway and take a hard right, and they were gonna go down into the creek, and then somehow one of them must have seen the glare of the water and off they go waddling as fast as they can to this little low spot with all the water in it. And they hit that water. And I mean, they were diving under the water and they were flipping it up in the air, and they were just having so much fun being ducks. And it was just the cutest thing, and I got tickled. Those are the kinds of things that you start to notice, but not just notice, you start really being thankful and enjoying them, you really enjoy them. They almost... It's almost like time stops for just a second, and you know how this works, I'm not telling you anything you don't already know, all I'm saying is, do it more.

**0:39:05.3 SC:** So the small and the ordinary things like remembering how the sun was shining during the day, or the appreciation you felt when you got a card in the mail from somebody, like a friend or somebody else, all of that increases your appreciation and the memory of your blessings. So St. Ignatius of Loyola created the Examen as a daily practice to cultivate that gratitude as the foundation of a relationship with God. What a wise man he was. So that Examen recalls our experiences through the day in prayer in order to help us recall when we felt God's presence. Now, I had a really hard time with the Ignatius Examen because every version that I ever saw, it sucked me into scrupulously where I got sucked into the negativity of how I should have done that better, and I should have done that better, and, "Oh my gosh, that was a disaster," and I started focusing on the negative.

**0:39:57.1 SC:** But I had a friend of mine, a friend whom I love dearly, she's my bestie, her name is Julie, and she's a spiritual director. So one of the things... We were talking about something one day and she said, "You know, just try a really gentle Examen where you're just really looking at the good things, and you notice the things that could have maybe gone better, but you don't stop there, you just kind of skim over it, 'Yes, Lord, that could have been better, I'll try better next time,' but don't focus on the bad, focus on what you're grateful for." And ever since she told me to do that, I have absolutely loved that practice, and I go to sleep doing that every single night. When you practice then the Examen, those three blessings, you're looking in the worldly or the secular three blessings.

**0:40:42.0 SC:** You're just looking for three. But for me, I go through the whole day, I start from the beginning and I just kind of skim through the day and I just thank God for all the things that I'm thankful for, and then by the end, I'm falling asleep. But you encounter the presence of God, you feel thankful, you feel him with you throughout the day, and that is excellent for your health. It's really good to be falling asleep in those love chemicals. So you can do the three blessings or the Ignatius Examen, that's another method. Random acts of kindness, I call these love bombs, and I love doing this. I love to sneak up to somebody in a grocery store and stick my debit card in the reader before they can get it out of their wallet. I love it, I love doing stuff like that. Those love bombs are so much fun.

**0:41:34.1 SC:** Look for ways to do things for people, to give to others without expecting anything in return. Y'all, this is the definition of charity, to treat people better than they deserve, to do an act of charity, something good, a grace, and never expect anything in return. That's the definition of

charity, and we're supposed to be people of charity. And what's amazing about this is that it's good for your health. It's good for your spiritual health, it's good for your mental health, it's good for your emotional health, and it's good for your physical health. Random acts of kindness. You can send a note or a gift to somebody who needs cheering up, you can help somebody carry their groceries to the car, you can help let people cut in front of you in the line or the check out line, you can write thank you notes and good reviews.

**0:42:22.9 SC:** What about going online somewhere with somebody that you love or something that you bought that you love, or somebody at a store did something great and leave them a good review and try to call them out by name. All of those things. Think of somebody who has been especially kind to you, or generous, or good, or that had a really major impact on your life. Write them a letter, write them a thank you note and give them examples of what they've done for you, and perhaps hand deliver it, give it to them in person. If they're no longer living, then perhaps give it to another family member so that they can be blessed by your memory of their loved one. I don't know, but practicing gratitude, it does sometimes take time, but it definitely takes commitment, and it feels a little bit awkward at first, it might feel even fake, especially if you have a terrible habit of negativity.

**0:43:13.5 SC:** It's gonna be harder to practice, but you should. It can take up to two weeks to re-train your brain to notice the benefits of your positive thoughts and experiences, but that's when all the goodness starts to kick in mentally and emotionally and physically. So, practice it for lent, let this be a solution for you at lent, because all of this stuff is free. It's free. It doesn't have to be some big, dramatic thing, but imagine what would happen if you built this practice through these methods. The saying thank you, simply saying thank you in your family and everywhere, just say thank you for the stuff people do for you. Keep a gratitude journal, write a couple things down every morning or every evening. Write a letter, imagine the steps between the thing you have and where it came from, smile. Just smile. [chuckle] Just smile.

**0:44:12.4 SC:** Practice reframing, do the Ignatius Examen and a random act of kindness. Do that stuff every single day for 40 days, and honey, you're gonna be happy into the stratosphere. Okay? It's interesting because I was doing a consult with a married couple, and I assigned them basically, I signed them a gratitude exercise to do for one another, every single day. I wanted them to tell the other... Each of them to tell the other something that they love about them, or something that they're grateful for, or something that they appreciate. And I assigned this to them, and what I thought was funny was that when they reported back the second week, the husband said it was hard for him because he couldn't find anything big. He was looking for the big things. And they've been married over two decades, so the big things...

**0:45:04.5 SC:** You notice the big things back on your first date. And so now, he got a little stuck in that exercise 'cause he was looking for the big stuff. I want you looking for the little stuff, I want you to look for those little things, not the big or dramatic things or the moments, your deepest feelings of gratitude are almost always connected to the very simple, very small, very sweet daily experiences of life; noticing the beauty of a tree or the leaves, the softness of a pillow under your head, the smell of your loved one's hair, the interesting ideas in a book you're reading, the sound of your kid's laughter, the taste of your favorite food in your mouth, those are the things we're talking about. The answer to negativity and worry and fear is written in the lesson book of creation, and it's mirrored in our own conscience.

**0:45:52.7 SC:** Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork. The sky, day unto day, utters speech, and night unto night, reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." And yet, it's silent. Creation itself gives praise to God. Paul says so in Romans 1:20. Creation knows its creator, and creation gives praise and glory to God. And Jesus in Luke 19:37-40, it says, "As he was now drawing near at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God, thanking Him with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in Heaven and glory to God in the highest.

**0:46:37.0 SC:** And some of the Pharisees in the multitude said, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." And he said, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." If creation understands the glory of God and gives Him praise, if the stones understand the glory of God and give Him praise, then surely we must. We must thank him. If I can't add to His glory, then I need to at least honor his glory. And gratitude and thanksgiving honor God. It is the echo of grace in the hollows of the human heart, gratitude is the unashamed acceptance of the free gift of God, all of them, and the heartfelt declaration, both privately and publicly, that we cherish what we cannot buy, we're thankful for all of our blessings. Therefore, gratitude glorifies that free grace of God, and it signifies the humility of a needy and a receptive heart. Gratitude heals, my friend. Gratitude heals. So, let us practice it in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

[music]

**0:47:51.0 S3:** Thank you for listening to the Bible Study Evangelista show. Find out more at [biblestudyevangelista.com](http://biblestudyevangelista.com).