



Cheerful

Week 4: Grateful

Brian Mattson - 10/25/2026

We've spent four weeks now talking about our generosity. We started this whole series by talking about the way we give of ourselves, with our whole lives, not holding anything back, because it all comes from God. And we give, not out of guilt or obligation, but freely and cheerfully, recognizing that God has already given everything we need.

We pulled the name for this series from that passage in 2nd Corinthians where Paul writes to the church in Corinth to take up an offering for the poor in Jerusalem.

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written,

**"He scatters abroad; he gives to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever."**

- 2 Corinthians 9:6-9

God loves a cheerful giver. You know what God also loves? A cheerful thank you-er...? Or maybe a happy receiver, a glad gift-getter, a buoyant beneficiary? I'm not sure what the right term is, I just know it's the opposite of whatever it's called when I do something for my kids and then I have to remind them to say thank you. Parents, does that ever happen to you? If you aren't a parent, or your children are perfect, let me give you the rundown on this recurring scenario.

I notice something—a messy room, a pair of socks on the stairs, a million legos scattered across the floor... it could be anything—and then I gently tell Jack or Dorothy that they need to clean it up, pick it up, or put it away. And at some point in the near future—it could be the next hour, day, or week, honestly—I gently remind them again, though with less love and care than my first warning. Then, without fail, I finally get fed up with the issue and clean it up, pick it up, or put it away myself. And once I do, I wait for a *thank you, Dad*. And then I wait a little longer. And finally—because this is how it always works—whatever it was has completely exited their mind because they don't notice it anymore, and I have to get onto them for not saying thank you. And what's worse, the thank you I get then is one with some real contempt behind it. The words are spoken, but they're served with a side of sass. Has that ever happened to you?

You might think I'm just slowly walking towards the point that we need to say thank you more, especially to God, from whom all blessings flow, as we sing during the Doxology every week. But, no. Actually, *I* want to take this opportunity to say thanks. Enough of this appreciating the pastor nonsense, although you all are very sweet and kind, and I honestly can't thank you enough. But today is all about this pastor *showing* appreciation.

First to my wife, Jessica, and my kids Jack and Dorothy. Without them I don't know what I would do or how I would do it. My kids are the absolute best thing in my world providing me with laughs, tears, frustration, snuggles, and oh so much sermon fodder. They are a living, walking, breathing source of

sermon illustrations and inspirations, and I'm lucky they let me be their dad. It's my favorite job. And Jessica is such a wonderful partner in this journey of parenting and life. We've grown up together. We've served in churches together since we were newlyweds. She knows how weird and wild it can be to see this side of church work, both the good and the bad, and she sticks with me anyway. I couldn't do what I do, be as available as I am, if she didn't make sure our house, kids, and calendars are as finely tuned as they are. So I'm saying it now because I definitely do not say it enough, but thank you to Jess, Jack, and Dorothy who allow me the special privilege of this job.

Next, I want to say thanks to my parents, Mike and Luann. I hit the lottery with these two and although I gave them gray hairs and heartburn during my teens, they let me find my own way. In fact they were the ones who pushed me out of the nest. I was going to stay in town after high school and stick with what was familiar, but they encouraged me to get out of town to experience life on my own. That truly opened my eyes to how big the world was outside of my bubble, but really how small it was. People are people, no matter where they come from. My parents played no small part in fostering my love for the outdoors, family vacations, volunteering, and considering others before myself. They. Are. The. Best.

And last, I want to thank you all. Our amazing staff, and the congregation of The Downtown Church, is the finest collection of humans I've ever been a part of. I've been roaming around this church and downtown for 13 years now, and this congregation still inspires me and surprises me. And if I'm going to try to be a little more thankful, and doing it with a cheerful heart, I suppose I could use the model the apostle Paul used in most of his letters. Here's how he started one to the church in Thessalonica.

Every time we think of you, we thank God for you. Day and night you're in our prayers as we call to mind your work of faith, your labor of love, and your patience of hope in following our Master, Jesus Christ, before God our Father. It is clear to us, friends, that

God not only loves you very much but also has put his hand on you for something special. When the Message we preached came to you, it wasn't just words. Something happened in you. The Holy Spirit put steel in your convictions.

You paid careful attention to the way we lived among you, and determined to live that way yourselves. In imitating us, you imitated the Master. Although great trouble accompanied the Word, you were able to take great joy from the Holy Spirit!—taking the trouble with the joy, the joy with the trouble.

- 1 Thessalonians 1:2-6 MSG

The way this congregation lives its faith is a beautiful thing to watch. I am so thankful and humbled that I get to be your pastor. And people have noticed. Your reputation precedes you. When I'm out and about and someone finds out I'm from The Downtown Church, they say something like, "I have a friend that goes to recovery meetings there," or, "Thank you for supporting XYZ in our community." Paul tells the Thessalonians something very similar.

Do you know that all over the provinces of both Macedonia and Achaia believers look up to you? The word has gotten around. Your lives are echoing the Master's Word, not only in the provinces but all over the place. The news of your faith in God is out. We don't even have to say anything anymore—you're the message!

- 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8 MSG

Your faith is being lived out in real and meaningful ways and it makes a difference. If The Downtown Church wasn't on the corner of Jefferson & Walnut, our community would notice. Our neighbors would notice. Our schools would notice. Wherever you live, walk, eat, work, and play would notice if we weren't around because you take this church with you. You are the Message!

We do not spend enough time talking about, and reminding you all of, the amazing places and ways you give and serve in the world, but reflection is one of our values, so we might as well do a little reflecting today. This church is a generous church, and I'm so thankful for that. A few of you probably know some of the things I'm about to rattle off. Most of you are aware of at least two or three of these, but I'm pretty sure none of you know all of them. And the only way we are able to make these impacts and support these causes is because of the ways you give your money and time.

We do a lot as a church of 200 people to support hunger in the Ozarks. Every time there's a 5th Friday, we collect food for the Rare Breed weekend food program and the kids that come to the YouthConnect drop-in shelter. Rare Breed is a ministry of The Kitchen and serves homeless youth in Springfield. YouthConnect Center is a service of FosterAdopt Connect, which serves families and kids in the foster care system of Missouri and Kansas. Ingrid Denney, Diane Tucker, Megan Rowe, and a team of other volunteers promote, organize, and deliver the food each month thanks to the donations of this congregation. I don't mention these names because these people asked me too. I just want you all to know that they are just regular members of this family who are living out their faith in tangible ways. If you want to get more involved in any of these places or others I'm going to mention, just let us know.

As cold weather approaches, we are helping with Crisis Cold Weather meals. Cristy Baldwin is managing this program and I'm happy to report that **20** of you signed up on the bulletin to help with this initiative just last week! Once a month we will make meals for the unsheltered in our community from November to March. And I've also been told there's another team who's starting the process of serving a meal once a month to the women at Safe to Sleep—an overnight shelter for homeless women at Crosslines.

Speaking of Crosslines, we have been a longtime supporter of this ecumenical community services provider. Lisa Slattery helps organize our

volunteers to serve five times a year at their food pantry for the food insecure in our area. We also have a line-item in our budget to help the operational costs of Crosslines, which we've increased every year as our own operational budget has grown. Besides the food pantry and Safe to Sleep, Crosslines also manages the Diaper Bank of the Ozarks, Ambassadors for Children—which supports local foster children—a birthday wish program for kids in poverty, case managers to help people navigate state and federal social services, and math and reading buddies at local elementary schools.

We also do our own work with our closest school—McGregor Elementary. There's a team of men who run a breakfast and program for fathers and kids every month through Good Dads, and a separate team of women who do the same for moms. There's also no formal PTA at McGregor, so our annual Easter Offering helps fund our efforts supporting the teachers, staff, and students there. Ingrid, Diane, and Cara Jones are on a first-name-basis over there. We buy coats, shoes, pizza, and teacher appreciation gifts. We supply volunteers for school events. Basically, we told them to call The Downtown Church whenever a need pops up.

The Downtown Church is also an important contributor to our local economy and the arts scene. We are active members of the Downtown Springfield Association. We financially support the Springfield Little Theatre. We host the Queen City Shakespeare Company's rehearsals, as well as the Ukestra—an orchestra of ukuleles. We are landlords with a heart, helping keep rent manageable for Queen City Collectors across the street and Good Dads right out front.

And perhaps my favorite way we give back is with our space to people in search of healing and community. There's a yoga group for people in recovery that meets occasionally and a Parkinson's therapy group that gathers on Wednesday afternoons. We are also home to four different recovery communities. The Al-Anon group—Alanooners—gathers in our Recovery Room every day at noon, 365 days a year. Adult Children of

Alcoholics and AA both meet here twice a week, and a new group, Young People in AA, meets once a week. That's 12 meetings a week where people are finding hope and a home at The Downtown Church.

In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he talks about how much he wants to travel back to be with them. He misses them. In The Message it says he is "very homesick" to see his friends who had become like family. This church has become a home to so many people, and you have become like family to some you will never meet. The hungry, the homeless, the poor and destitute. The way you give through The Downtown Church has so much more impact than you probably realize. All of this good work happens because of you. Your money, your time, and your hearts—your generosity. It matters. It matters to God, and it matters to people.

And I hope that you see this church as a home for you as well. A place to heal. A place to rest. A place to experience hope and joy, and be energized to continue the good work Jesus began. Some of my favorite people in the world—Jim and Caralyn Millsap—see this church as a home. A place to give, serve, and be refilled to do it all over again.

<<MILLSAP VIDEO>>

We aren't going to be able to solve all the world's problems. We probably won't even be able to fix everything that is broken right in front of our eyes. Still, I'm hopeful. I'm excited. I'm cheerful even. The journey has been set before us. It's our job to continue the work, and I'm thankful that I get to do it with all of you by my side. Hear these words from Paul as our prayer today.

Get along among yourselves, each of you doing your part. Our counsel is that you warn the freeloaders to get a move on. Gently encourage the stragglers, and reach out for the exhausted, pulling them to their feet. Be patient with each person, attentive to individual needs. And be careful that when you get on each other's nerves you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each

other, and always do your best to bring it out. Be cheerful no matter what; pray all the time; thank God no matter what happens. This is the way God wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:13-18 MSG