

Thanks-living II

Credit Check

November 20, 2022

Today we're talking through part two of gearing up to give thanks on our path to that escalation of appreciation. And this week we're taking on this question: **Who's responsible for you?** That is, who do we commend when you crush it and condemn when you botch it? We'll see...



But first, let's *recap*: last week we saw how overcoming our *anxiety* takes the constant *gratitude* that comes from *filling* our lives with prayerful reminders of the good God gives. Because those *reminders* inspire and empower *us* to let go and give God control. Because, **worry is born from a belief that we have control over our lives**. Whereas **gratitude is born from a belief that God has control over our lives**. So today, we're gonna look for the wrench in our *gears* that gets in the way of thinking those *thoughts* that fix our *focus*. Cuz remember, **sin is not conquered by the will of our heart but the fill of our heart**. And like we discussed; *our* whole job is just being careful to let the *right* stuff in by being *thoughtful* about what we *let* get our *attention*. So, we need to find the reason *why* all of us still have hearts and *minds* with bits and *pieces* of selfish sin. **We need to see what makes us mix up the good things with bad things**. And Paul provides a great place to start:

The god of this age has *blinded the minds* of unbelievers, so that they *cannot* see the light of the Gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the *image* of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. [Careful not to confuse the *human* container for the Spirit it contains.] For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay **humans** to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. – 2 Corinthians 4:4-7 NIV

God put His Spirit into the flesh to demonstrate their differences and highlight His ability. It's like giving a concert pianist a Casio keyboard; the fact that they can make something so *crummy* sound so *good* just *emphasizes* how incredible *they* are and how inhibiting their *instrument* is! Likewise, God deliberately designed things to pound a profoundly important point into our heads: **good happens in spite of us not because of us!** He put such a great treasure in such weak vessels so when anything awesome happens in our lives we would be wowed by the work of the power of God, knowing it's far beyond the power of us jars made of clay! Problem is, **when we see His work fill our lives, our pride prompts us to take credit as if we were just full of ourselves!**

You turn things upside down, as if the *potter* were thought to be like the *clay*! Shall what is *formed* say to the one who formed it, "You did not make me"? – Isaiah 29:16 NIV

No! Of course not. But *that's* how crazy we're willing to be to feed our *pride*. Even though that means *missing* the whole *humbling* point in God playing with us *crummy* instruments. So careful, **it's a deadly mistake to take the credit we need to give in God's plan for us to live.**

For it is by *grace* you have been saved, through *faith*—and this is *not* from *yourselves*, it is the gift of God— *not* by works, so that *no one* can *boast*. – Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV

And taking credit is boasting about our actions to give ourselves God's glory. And it's stealing,



For *from* [God] and *through* Him and *for* Him are *all* things. To *Him* be the glory forever! – Romans 11:36 NIV



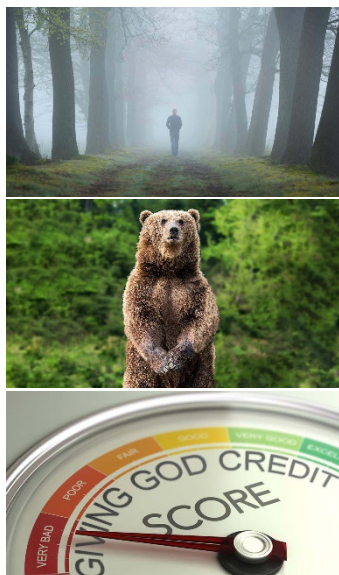
All glory belongs to God because as the Creator of the universe, He gets credit for everything in it! And if we're *honest*, we all already knew that every good thing in *our* lives – and *everywhere else* – was caused something *other* than *us*. And personally, that terrified me from a young age! Because I've *always* felt like a *fraud*. As far back as I can remember, people told me I was *smart*, but *I ain't*. I'm *tricky*. All I ever did was copy the *character* of people who *seemed* smart to pass it off as my own. But that's *plagiarism*! And as a fake member of the intellectual elite, I knew that was the cardinal sin! And we take it so seriously because **by neglecting to give correct credit, we become both a liar and a thief!** However, here's the truth that set me free; there's a way to be *praised* instead of *punished* for copying...

Tell people where you got your ideas! They'll *still* think you're smart – they'll just think your *source* is smarter. And your *source* feels good about it *too*, because **the only difference between plagiarizing and glorifying is giving credit where it's due.** *Stealing* from God becomes *submitting* to God, by simply giving Him *credit*. It draws the line between the *frauds* and the *faithful*. Because **God's name is what makes the change from full of ourselves to full of God's glory.** Peter explains:

If anyone *speaks*, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of *God*. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength *God* provides, so that in *all* things *God* may be praised through Jesus Christ. To *Him* be the glory and the power for ever and ever. – 1 Peter 4:11 NIV

[So, adds Jesus,] Let *your* light shine before others, that they may see *your* good deeds and *glorify* your *Father* in heaven. – Matthew 5:16 NIV

We not only have permission from the Author of creation to copy His character, but a command to do it non-stop! So why on earth wouldn't we *all* live an awesome life *filled* with glory if all it costs is a little *footnote* that says *where* we learned how to live? Like a label that says... oh, I dunno, *Christian*? What *stops* us from sharing our source? Well, **we'll pick plagiarizing if we think glory comes from earning instead of learning.** So we gotta work to let go of our instinct to think that giving credit to *another*, takes away *our* power or authority; because *it's quite the opposite!*



Reminds me of the story of a life-long atheist who was on a hike when suddenly, a grizzly bear appeared and charged him. And as he ran – heart pounding from fear – he tripped and fell. And just as the bear raised its paw to strike, the atheist cried out, **“Oh my God!”** And time froze – as a voice from heaven said, **“Steven – after all these years, are you telling me you’re willing to acknowledge Me?! Have you become a believer?!”** And the atheist said, **“Well... I wouldn’t say that – But, I’ll tell you what – if You could make this bear a Christian, that would really help Your case!”** **“Very well.”** replied God. And as time began again, the bear immediately dropped its right paw, brought both together, and bowed its head as it *spoke*: **“Lord, for this food I am about to receive, I am truly thankful.”**

Turns out **when you’re full of yourself, you’re on your own – but good things come to those who give thanks!**

So if we want to keep the good *things* in our life as the godly *reminders* we *need*, it’s going to mean *learning* where we’re still *living* like a life of glory means *earning*. And there’s two ways we behave so subtly in this style that we miss how it’s lowering our credit score: **In our speech and in our silence.**

First, think about how you frame what you say. Simple statements like, *“I worked really hard for this,”* or *“I finally figured it out”* absolutely assert *ourselves* as the source of our blessing – but in a *nonchalant* way that doesn’t *alert* anyone to *pride*. And there are loads of secretly self-empowering phrases like *‘let me show you’*, and *‘it’s the only way’* along with little words like *‘improve’* and *‘invent’*, that go with *‘I’*, *‘my’*, *‘me’*, and *‘mine’*. And although we *need* these words to share the power of *God* at work in *our* life, **they can take on a life of their own and start confusing God’s role as our sole instigator.** So be sure to take time everyday and add *this* to *whatever* is said regarding *your* beliefs and behavior:

Such confidence we have through *Christ* before *God*. *Not* that we are competent in *ourselves* to claim *anything* for ourselves, but *our* competence *comes* from *God*. – 2 Corinthians 3:4-5 NIV



But even if we get good at catching *ourselves* stealing credit, we gotta watch our words to make sure we’re not setting *others* up take some *themselves*. And that’s extra hard because giving *others* glory sure *sounds* selfless and righteous. But in *fact*, **you’re tempting them with the second way we gain glory at the expense or our credit score: silence.** And since *I* recognized this little trap, I’ve never felt so sorry for pretty people; like my wife. Because I’ve heard a hundred people compliment her *looks* as though *she* had something to do with it! And each time, she has to either *take* the compliment as though she *deserves* the credit or *awkwardly* point out that *she’s* not the one responsible. You poor pretty people...



I wish you *all* could've been blessed with the averageness that keeps the compliments away from the *rest* of us! But then again, we're *all* given opportunities to take credit by our silence every day. Whether you're promoted at work, get an A on a test, or drop the buzzer-beater for the win; **accepting praise without any effort to pass it on to God is a way to hold onto it ourself.**

So then, just as *you* received Christ Jesus as *Lord*, continue to live your lives *in Him*, rooted and built up *in Him*, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. [Because if it's really Him filling your life, it'll be *Him* spilling out in your speech] See to it that no one takes *you* captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, [like the *praise of others* or the *pride in yourself*] which depends on ... *this world* rather than on *Christ*. – Colossians 2:6-8 NIV



Author A.J. Jacobs has written many amusing books aimed at giving readers the reality of some specific *ideal* actually *lived* out. From reading the entire Encyclopedia Britannica to be the smartest man alive to living a year governed by *every* rule in the Bible – he throws himself into his work. And *after* his biblical year, he was inspired to write **Thanks A Thousand**, wherein he sought to *personally* thank every person responsible for getting a cup of coffee into his hand. So after the *barista*, he traveled the world to thank the *farmers*, *chemists*, *artists*, *presidents*, *truckers*, *mechanics*, *biologists*, *miners*, *smugglers*, and *goatherders* who each played a part in his coffee.

And although I *love* the motivation *behind* the book, I can't help but think God is chuckling a little at the *irony*. Because as a non-believer, even after all the *effort*, Jacobs missed the *single* thanks that every other thanks was *leading* to. A focus on gratitude *alone* brought him so close, but **there's only one thanks that transforms all our examples of good into experiences of God.** Thanking *Jesus*.

Salvation is found in no one *else*, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. – Acts 4:12 NIV

So, remember even if you're going through the motions and you *got* some good that you're grateful *for*, if it *isn't* producing peace in your life, you might need to look closer because I'll say it again: **Confusing the human container for the Spirit it contains leads to a dead end!** So,

Receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of *God*. – Romans 15:7 NKJV

And that means **we gotta verify what we glorify with a quick credit check** by asking ourselves: are we thanking God for the good that He gave, or are we thanking *ourselves* by conveniently confusing the *Creator* with His *creation*? If you make *that* the food for thought that *you* share this Thanksgiving, *God'll* surely share His glory with *you*! Because as *He's* explained – *through the pen of Mark Twain* – **to get full value of a joy, you must have somebody to divide it with!**

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.