

TRUE GRATITUDE

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and the Biblical Commentary to prepare to share the truths of this passage with learners. Encourage learners to take notes on their copies of the Learner Worksheet as you teach. The underlined words in the Master Teacher Outline correspond to the blanks on the worksheet.

Introduction: Some have said that thankfulness is a feeling and that gratitude is the action expressing that feeling. In other words, feeling thankful is a good thing, but it means little without actions to back it up. Today's study relates the story of ten men who were healed by Jesus. While all ten were likely thankful that they had been healed, only one responded with true gratitude, and Jesus commended him for it.

1. True gratitude recognizes our desperate situation (Luke 17:11-13).

- To be a leper in biblical times was a truly desperate situation because lepers were cut off from the community, forced to live outside the city, and had little hope of being healed (vv. 11-12).
- These ten lepers realized that they were all but helpless without a merciful gift of healing from Jesus (v.13).

Illustration: Josephus, the first-century A.D. historian, said that a leper was "no different from a corpse" (France, p. 91). The disease was thought to be incurable, so most lepers died in their condition without medical attention or a place in society.

2. True gratitude often requires an act of faith (Luke 17:14).

- Even though He had not actually healed them yet, Jesus commanded the lepers to do exactly what was required in the Law for lepers who had been healed (v. 14).
- To go to the priests before they had actually been healed was an enormous act of faith for these ten men (v. 14).

Illustration: Think about the phrase "consider it done." This means that an action is so sure of being done in the future that the person requesting it should think of it as already having happened. When the lepers requested healing from Jesus, they went to the priests still lepers, considering what they had requested done.

3. True gratitude expresses joy and praise when blessings are received (Luke 17:15-19).

- The other nine former lepers were most likely thankful to be healed; but they simply did not take the time to show it as they went on their way to the priests (v. 15).
- Though the Samaritan would have been scorned by most Jews, He was the only one who returned to Jesus to express his overwhelming gratitude (v. 16).
- Jesus commended the one man who came back because true gratitude goes beyond simply feeling thankful. It involves expressing that thankfulness to God (vv. 17-18).
- Jesus said that the man's faith had made him well—we can assume that his healing was physical as well as spiritual (v. 19).

Illustration: Lewis B. Smedes once said, "I have never met a grateful person who was an unhappy person" (France, p. 277). True thankfulness manifests itself in actions and in a sense of joy.

Conclusion: We are all helpless without God's work in our lives, and every good thing we have comes down to us as a gift from Him (James 1:17). When we let this truth sink in, our petty complaints, selfishness, and bitterness will fade and we will be left with thankfulness and true gratitude to God.