

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

It Starts with the Heart – Blessed

January 4th, 2021

During the weekend service, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder stepped into our new series titled, *Blessed*. We could all use some blessings in 2021, and he believes that God wants to bless our lives. After an unusually difficult 2020, the idiom “hindsight is 20/20” now seems like an oxymoron!

Jeremiah 17:7

But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence.

This is the theme verse for the *Blessed* series. The challenge for us is knowing what *blessed* really means. We all have different ideas and images of its significance—money, success, health, beauty, friends, family, etc. The dictionary defines blessed as “made holy; given divine protection; bring pleasure or relief.” In the Bible, Jeremiah gives us this wonderful illustration.

Jeremiah 17:8

They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.

No matter what happens in 2021, be it drought or prosperity, God wants us to experience a blessed life, and we can experience his blessings no matter the circumstance. Over the next few weeks of this new series, Pastor Ben will be sharing how that’s possible. This weekend, we started the conversation with a principle that comes from Jesus.

Luke 6:37-38

³⁷ *“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven.”*³⁸ *Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”*

Verse 37 sounds like karma, or you reap (receive/gather) what you sow (give/plant), and verse 38’s subject matter has often been mistaken for money. These verses go much deeper—the principle Jesus is discussing is our hearts. Whatever your heart is full of, it gives, and what you give, you will receive. If your

heart is judging others, you will be judged. If your heart is condemning others, you will be condemned. If your heart is full of forgiveness, you will be forgiven. If your heart is full of blessings, you will be blessed.

This brings us to our Bottom Line: ***A blessed life STARTS with the HEART.***

So, how do we develop a blessed heart? That is exactly what Ben shared with us this weekend and what we will be looking at for the next four days in the LivingItOut. As we start this new year, take a look at your heart and see what it is full of, what it is giving, and what steps you need to take to develop a blessed heart.

Questions:

What does *blessed* mean to you? Does it involve physical looks, success, material things, or quality time with family and friends?

What fills your heart? Judgement? Condemnation? Forgiveness? Giving?

Next Steps:

Reread Luke 6:37-38, and apply these verses to your own heart. Consider the principle of sowing and reaping—expect whatever fills your heart back in return. What are you sowing in your marriage ... with your children ... at your job? Take steps to remove the negativity from your heart so that you can begin experiencing a blessed life.

21 Days of Prayer:

Day 1 Focus - To Come Close to God ([James 4:8](#))

Dear God, you have promised if I draw near to you, you will draw near to me. I need more of your presence today. I am drawing near to you through prayer, worship, and your Word. I open my heart to you and ask you to be near to me, growing me to be more like you.

This post was written by Jennifer Macke, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Know the Giver – Blessed

January 5th, 2021

Happy Tuesday! If you're new to LivingItOut this week, WELCOME! We're so glad you're here.

This week in our series *Blessed*, we heard that there is an *uncommon path* to a blessed life. Many people seek different paths to be *blessed*, such as climbing the corporate ladder, gaining more education, or growing a family. While all of those paths do typically lead to some blessings, they do not lead to a fulfilled or *blessed life*. A truly blessed life is one that is filled with hope. This uncommon path filled with hope is through knowing Jesus. Our theme verse for this series is from Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 17:7 (emphasis added)

*“But blessed are those who **trust in the Lord** and have **made the Lord their hope and confidence.**”*

When we trust in the Lord, trust Jesus with our lives, and make him the center of our hope and confidence in this world, we are truly *blessed*.

We also looked this week at [Deuteronomy 15:4](#) (NIV): “However, there need be no poor people among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you.” Knowing Jesus fills believers with hope—and God the father is the *giver*—is the beginning of a blessed life.

Whether you are new to this journey of trusting Jesus or have been following him for a long time, there is a spiritual discipline mapped out in the Bible called “prayer and fasting.” At CedarCreek, we start every year with 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting. If you're new to this concept, don't worry, we have it all mapped out for you if you'd like to participate with us. This is an intentional and impactful step in knowing God more. Check out our website cedarcreek.tv/21days for more information. Each day there is a [daily prayer focus](#) (we started yesterday, but it's not too late to catch up :)). There's also a [daily prayer focus for parents](#). If you're new to the idea or practice of fasting, check out these [resources](#) to learn more and choose a fast that you feel led to.

Questions:

What blessings have you been pursuing in life? Have you trusted in Jesus as the hope and confidence of your life?

Next Steps:

If you don't already, maybe it's time to trust Jesus. Surrender yourself and your life to him. It's as easy as saying, "God, I surrender my way, and I want to follow your way. I'm sorry for trying to be in control of my own life, and I'm turning from my own way to your ways." If today, you made the decision to surrender your life to Jesus, let someone know. You can even tell us by texting "connect" to 419-419-0707. If you're ready to know God in a deeper way, join us on our journey of 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting.

21 Days of Prayer:

Day 2 Focus - For My Love for God and Others to Grow ([Matthew 22:36-39](#))

Dear God, you said the greatest commandment that I can follow is to love you with all of my heart, soul, and mind. Equally important is to love my neighbors as much as I love myself. As I connect with you over these 21 Days of Prayer, grow my heart so that I will love you more. Then, as my love grows for you, help me to love those around me more and more each day.

This post was written by Kendra Grubinski, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Deal with GREED and Release the GRUDGE - Blessed

January 6th, 2021

Yesterday we looked at the importance of knowing the giver—GOD—the giver of everything. Today we will talk about how this helps us to deal with greed and holding a grudge.

Last weekend, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder asked, “Why do you think God created giving?” The truth is God did not create giving for his sake. He created it for our hearts. You see, giving is a way to work selfishness and greed out of our lives.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8

⁷ But if there are any poor Israelites in your towns when you arrive in the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard hearted or tight fisted toward them.

⁸ Instead, be generous and lend them whatever they need.

God wants us to give because he knows a blessed life starts in the heart, and a selfish heart can't handle more blessing. A selfish heart just wants to keep all the blessings for itself.

So, when does greed and grudge-holding show up in our lives? Greed rears its ugly head before we give the gift, casting doubt on whether we should even follow through. And grudging comes after giving the gift, as we grieve its loss.

For example, I have a rather expensive model railroading hobby that I'm able to primarily finance through an incentive program at work. We earn points from perfect attendance and standout performance in our jobs, which can then be redeemed for all sorts of items, including Visa gift cards. Well, I worked hard and earned two of these gift cards before Christmas. I had planned on using them toward my hobby, but then as a last-minute thought before Christmas, I decided to give them as gifts to family members.

Greed could have set in and said, “No, those are mine!” I worked hard for them, and admittedly, that thought briefly crossed my mind. Or, I could have given the gift cards only to be filled with loss and regret, and then develop a grudge because I gave away a precious opportunity to further expand my model railroad. But, thankfully, God's love in my heart won out.

I knew in my heart that these gift cards were not truly mine in the first place. They were a blessing from God. I'm blessed to have a job right now—when so many do not. I'm blessed to be healthy enough to work—when so many are not. And I'm blessed that my employer offers such great benefits—when so many do not. All blessings come from him, and knowing all this enabled me to be joyful in my gift.

It's important to realize that the greed/grudge scenario doesn't only apply to monetary gifts. It applies to all aspects of the heart. We may be called to give our precious time to serve others. Greed may say, "But that's during the big game." Or perhaps you chose to serve during the game but didn't receive the recognition you were expecting. Your grudge starts to set in and says, "I missed a really good game, and they didn't even appreciate it."

These are the times when we need to remember that God wants to give us a blessed life, but it starts with our own hearts and blessing others. When greed starts to creep in, take a moment and count your blessings. Say a prayer of thanks and give cheerfully. Remember that what you gave was not truly yours in the first place. It was given to you by God, so release the grudge.

Questions:

What are your first thoughts when you have an opportunity to give? Does greed rear its ugly head in your heart? When you give, is it cheerful? Do you release the grudge?

Next Steps:

Learn God's guideline for developing a blessed life by reading Deuteronomy 15:4-11. Remember all that you have been given the next time you have the opportunity to give.

21 Days of Prayer:

Day 3 Focus - Search My Heart ([Psalm 139:23-24](#))

Heavenly Father, search my heart. Find anything in me that is offensive, and help me remove it from my life. Lead me to live a life that draws people to you. Help me live my life on earth in a way that impacts eternity.

This post was written by Ned Miller, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

All for Arleena - Blessed

January 7th, 2021

A few days before Christmas, I was getting ready to go out to do some last-minute shopping with my 16-year-old daughter, Arleena. My boys, ages 10 and 7, were left with a room full of craft items and a list of people that they might want to make gifts for. I told them that they could only make gifts while we were gone and explained how it is better to give than to receive. A few hours later, we returned home and I examined the progress they had made. My oldest son, Bowen, followed the list, doing exactly what was asked and leaving no one out. His homemade gifts had already been placed neatly under the tree.

Then I asked my youngest, Chase, if he had made gifts for everyone on the list. To which he replied, "I did them all for Arleena." While I tried to reason with him that all five of the gifts he made (including an elf with his face on it) did not have to go to his sister, he insisted, "Yes, they do." I reminded him that we had already made her gift the day before, so these new gifts could go to others. Again, he insisted, "No, they are for Arleena." At that point, I quit arguing and let it go.

On Christmas morning, he delivered his *many* gifts to Arleena. The look on her face was priceless! Tangible joy filled the room, and it was clear that his generosity had resulted in a little miracle that morning in our family.

Only God knows how many little miracles we could be a part of when we have the freedom to be generous. Just like Chase, we should give even when others don't understand our logic. I have learned in my life that a closed fist creates fear, and life is not found there. When I open up my life and willingly and generously pour out, God is always faithful to take care of me and bless me. And through me, he blesses so many people around me. To develop a blessed heart, it is important to develop generosity in our lives.

Questions:

Is there someone in your life that has a need you can meet? Is there someone who you know is at home alone because of COVID that would love to hear from you?

Next Steps:

Ask God who you can bless today with your time or money and act on it. Make the time to call someone who is on your heart.

21 Days of Prayer:

Day 4 Focus - To Place My Trust in God (Psalm 62:8)

God, in your Word you invite me to pour out my heart to you. You are my refuge. I know that anything I think, feel, or do is okay to bring to you. Knowing you are a safe place for me, I come to you and give you everything (talk to God about the specific things that are on your heart today). From what worries me to what delights me, to what I hope for, to what I'm afraid of, I bring it all to you because I can trust you. Help me and guide me in every area, in Jesus' name.

The Blessing of Reflection - Blessed

January 8th, 2021

As 2018 drew to a close, an impulse to creatively commemorate the year took hold of me. I dug out a sketchbook, and smudging graphite on the page, I drew images representing the important events of the past year—the good, the bad, the hard-won victories, and the painful moments. I still have that sketch, and a quick glance at it reminds me of many cherished memories, some of the most powerful being those that felt raw and challenging in the thick of it. When we intentionally pause to remember our best and worst times, we glimpse God's blessings running through our lives.

God, in his wisdom, invites us to reflect on instances of hardship and heartache in our lives. It's not for the intention of stewing on our unpleasant feelings, but rather, so we can see God's redemption and, ultimately, find joy—even at our lowest points. God's command to the Israelites displays this.

Deuteronomy 15:15

"Remember that you were once slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you! That is why I am giving you this command."

God called them to remember their slavery—an experience undoubtedly filled with sorrow—so that they could dwell on their miraculous redemption. When we look back on some of our hardest times, we see that God is always with us, that he can redeem all things, and that he has a plan for our lives. The realization of these truths is a huge reason for gratitude.

James 1:17

Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God, our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.

Every blessing, each good moment along with the redemption of the bad ones, is a gift from God. For most people, 2020 proved to be a mixture of disappointments and silver linings. But God allows us to look at both sides and see his powerful, gracious hands at work in our lives. We can delight in the happy times, but we're also freed from the fear of hard circumstances, because we

often find God's power woven through those moments in marvelous ways. That, dear friends, seems like a blessed life to me.

Questions:

Do you tend to see blessings only in the comfortable times? As you think back on 2020, what were some of the unexpected blessings? What challenges were the hardest? How did God show up in the midst of those trials?

Next Steps:

Take a moment to thank God for the gifts that he has given you. Make a list of three to five blessings in your life, even if it's something as simple as a cup of morning coffee. Take time to reflect on the ways you've witnessed God working in your life, and preserve them through journaling, drawing, or some other medium so that you can look back on those moments in the future.

21 Days of Prayer:

Day 5 Focus - To Connect with God Relationally ([Romans 8:15](#))

Father, I come to you in prayer today thankful that I am your child. You have forgiven me and adopted me as your own. You have made me righteous and restored our relationship. I am so grateful that you are my Father. Thank you for loving me. I love you.

Day 6 Focus - To Express My Faith in God's Ability ([Jeremiah 32:17](#))

Dear God, nothing is too hard for you! Through your great power, all things are possible. All authority is yours, all might is yours, and I know that your victory will be complete. You are amazing, and I worship you. I praise you for your power and presence in my life. You are my God, and you are worthy of all praise.

Day 7 Focus - To Worship God's Great Name ([Proverbs 18:10](#))

God, I am in awe of you. Your name is a strong tower, a place of protection and safety for me. I praise you as my healer, my shepherd, and my hope. You are my peace, my provider, my righteousness, and my joy. Your name is great, and I worship you.

This post was written by Sarah Pagel, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.