



A THANKFUL HEART

by Shannon Dardaman

"Thanks," I said to the waiter as he set my plate of pasta in front of me. I went out to lunch with a friend at an Italian restaurant last week. Each time the waiter brought us more bread or a refill of our drinks, we both smiled and said "Thanks!" often without making direct eye contact with our waiter. We were deep in our personal conversation, updating one another about the current details of our busy lives. The service was great and the food was even better. We thanked our waiter, again, and paid our bill. Leaving quickly, so we could stop by a few stores before heading home. I'll bet that you, too, have had restaurant encounters that may have mirrored my recent experience. Many of us grew up being taught to say "Please!" and "Thank you!" when we want something and we receive it. This is how polite conversations are supposed to go, right? We teach these words to our children so that they will not seem to be demanding and rude. For a lot of us, our thanks has become automatic, a positive habit that reaps both benefits and rewards.

How can this translate to our spiritual lives? Have our expressions of thanks to God become automatic? Habitually thanking God at mealtime or when we receive exactly what we've asked for in prayer. Do our thanks to Him reflect a heart of deep gratitude? As we approach the Thanksgiving holidays, drawing near the end of a busy, fruitful, year or maybe you've had a desolate, desperate year, it may be time to reflect upon what God's word says about giving thanks. In scripture, we see both of these types of expressions of thanksgiving described.

Thankfulness in the everyday, the trivial and the mundane places are all appropriate in the life of the believer. 1 Thess. 5:18 says, *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."* You certainly don't have to have a relationship with Christ to express thankfulness. However, for those of us who love and serve Christ, God wants us to give thanks in all circumstances: at the restaurant, in line at the bank, in our daily prayers and in our homes and workplaces. Our daily expressions of thanks to others and to God reflect our standing with God, through his son, Jesus. Our habit of thanking others or thanking him are disciplines that honor God. Colossians 3:17 says *"And whatever you do in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*

But let's not stop there, at good habits and disciplines. What about gratitude or thankfulness in the deep places of our heart? As we live daily in forgiveness and in the power of the Holy Spirit, our lives can daily overflow with a heart of gratitude. Colossians 3:16 *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."* As we study the word and meet together, singing in worship, what is going on deep in our hearts? Are we letting the truth of our need for God and his amazing grace sink in? Do we meditate and reflect on where we would be without the gift of forgiveness? Does your heart soar with gratitude as you sing to

our Father, the Maker of Heaven and Earth? Oh, let it be so in your life! If this is not your reality and you sense a real lack of gratitude in your heart, don't ignore it. Spend some time alone with God and let him search your heart. Ps. 139:23 *"Search me and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"* Issues like unforgiveness, disappointment, or fear are just some of what may be preventing you from having a thankful heart. Jesus said in John 16:33, *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* Take heart. Really... take his words to heart. Through prayer, we can release those attitudes or issues that steal our gratitude and replace them in our hearts with the promises found in God's word.

Will you spend some time this month examining your heart? Pray according to Psalm 51:10 *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me."*

Join us. . . on Tuesday,
November 9 at 6:00 pm



Pot-luck supper (bring your favorite dish). . . after which we will assemble 100 hygiene kits for the homeless to be distributed by We Care Outreach. Most of the assembly has been completed, we'll put the finishing touches on the kits and insert a verse of scripture into each kit.

WOMEN ON WEDNESDAYS AND BIBLE STUDIES



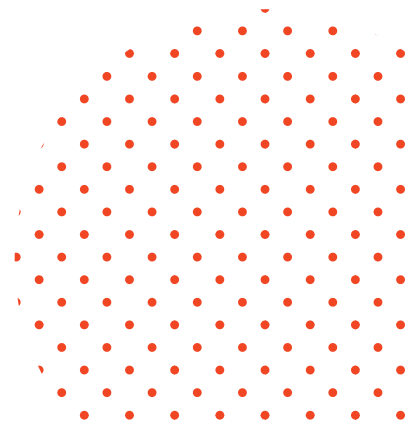
Our fall session of Bible studies has ended, and we thank all of the small group leaders and the participants. We heard many nice comments about the study topics and also that many of you liked the option to select a study based on its intensity.



The winter session of studies will begin the first part of January, and we intend to follow the same format as we did this past fall. Watch your email and future newsletters for the schedule.

Our monthly fellowship circles are in full swing and open to new attendees. You'll find a brochure about our Circles on the countertop in Room 210, or contact K.C. Grosse.

CIRCLES OF FELLOWSHIP



On a Mission to Serve

Meet Tanya Johnsen and We Care Outreach Ministry

by Signe Pagel

"Allow me to decrease, Lord, so you can increase," is Tanya Johnsen's personal mission statement, and her commitment to this is evident when you spend even a few minutes with this humble, godly woman. She runs We Care Outreach from a small building just off Palm Beach Avenue where she and her staff of three provide a variety of services to those who live in the neighborhood as well as to those who reside at We Care's home for women, for men, transitional housing, and a campground for the homeless in North Fort Myers. But We Care doesn't just address the physical needs of others, they also provide case management services and spiritual guidance. A relationship with Jesus is at the center of every interaction with recipients.

We Care Outreach is one of New Hope's local mission partners. You've heard the frequent call for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches? All those sandwiches get

delivered to We Care Outreach, as well as many other items donated periodically from New Hope groups such as Circles of Fellowship, MOPS, The Well, and others. And two years ago, New Hope provided a van to We Care so care receivers could be transported to appointments with physicians, counselors, etc. Tanya says this was one of their biggest blessings!

I learned that We Care Outreach does not receive any funds from the government or from organizations like the United Way; they are totally funded by contributions from individuals and churches. Food comes from the Midwest Food Pantry, retail/food stores such as Olive Garden and Pizza Hut, which sometimes donate when they have an excess, and from New Hope ladies who make home-cooked meals for the homeless at the campground.

Their need is great. The women's house alone currently has a deficit of \$57,000. We Care distributes 30,000 pounds of food in 14 days to people in the community who stop by their pantry, and 75 - 180 meals to the homeless four days a week, plus food for the 55 people in housing. They provide beds to families without furniture, Bibles and blankets to the homeless, and so much more.

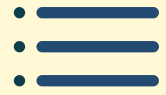
I encourage you to read the list below of items currently on Tanya's "wish list" and support We Care Outreach whenever you can.

www.wecarefortmyers.org



Tanya and Mary, one of
We Care's residents

Wish List for We Care Outreach



Office supplies, copy paper
Educational laptops for
 life skills training
Bed linens (single)
Towels and washcloths
Clothing (men and women)
Children's diapers (newborn - 6T)
Adult diapers (large)
36" "Lifetime" tables and chairs
Cleaning supplies
Clothes detergent (liquid)

Laptop
Computer Printer
Single beds and mattresses
Shed - 10' x 20'
Mini Van
Food truck
Cargo van for food transport
Mobile trailer's for families
10-man tents
\$ to save the house for women
Financial sponsors

*"Sing and make music from your heart to
the Lord, always giving thanks to God the
Father for everything, in the name of
our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Ephesians 5:20

