

**New Creation Realities Series**

A pair of hands, one above the other, holding a glowing, textured sphere of light. The hands are rendered in a dark, almost black color, contrasting with the bright, golden-yellow light of the sphere. The background is a gradient of dark red and purple.

**Activate**  
the  
**POWER**  
of  
**Thanksgiving**

**Jan van Rooyen**



# **Activate the Power of Thanksgiving**

**Thanksgiving is an  
Act and Action of  
Covenantal Worship**

by  
**Jan van Rooyen**

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Take note that the name satan and related names are not capitalized. We choose not to acknowledge him, even to the point of violating grammatical rules.

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## DEDICATION

I lovingly dedicate this book to my beautiful and so loving wife, Annika. Your name is derived from your "baptismal" name Johanna, which means "Grace or Gift of God." And, you have certainly demonstrated God's Grace to me during the writing of this volume.

Thank you for your constant love, patience and encouragement... Even just to get me to sit down and write. God certainly knew what He was doing when He put the two of us together!

I love you more today than yesterday... but not as much as tomorrow...

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Pastor Thamo Naidoo, my spiritual father and friend, whose insights into the Word of God have propelled me towards knowing my Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in ways and depths I did not know were possible.

To my first spiritual father, Dr. Ron Kussmaul, whose example awakened and stirred in me a burning passion and hunger for the Word of God.

To my spiritual Household, the RAIN International Family. Thank you for your consistent prayers, encouragement and support in everything and every project I "plunge" myself into and embark upon.

To Leon and Riana Fouché for the honour and privilege they gave me to share some of my thoughts about thanksgiving to their family and friends on Thanksgiving Day, Sunday, the 26th of November, 2023.

To the Holy Spirit, my Teacher... You're the One Who enables me to "hear" the Voice of my Father...



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This book is based on a message I shared with a family of Believers on Sunday, the 26th of November, 2023.

We dedicated this day as a day of Thanksgiving, a Thanksgiving meal, and a time of sharing and fellowship. Gifts were also exchanged. The most wonderful part was everyone swapping their stories of thanks to the Lord. Testimonies of God's faithfulness abounded!

The importance of thanksgiving became apparent to all as I interpreted and explained the basics of Thanksgiving. Many Believers in the Body of Christ fail to adequately give thanks to the Lord and those around them. When we search the Scriptures, we find the importance of this act of our faith abundantly scattered throughout the pages of the Bible. ***Make Thanksgiving your Lifestyle today!***

### **A little History about my Thanksgiving Journey**

The 29th of July, 1978, stands out in my personal history. This is the day I rededicated my life to the Lord!

At the time I was doing my duty as an aviator in the South African Air Force. This environment dictated much of my lifestyle. To live a life pleasing to the Lord was not easy, to say the least! In fact, internally I was crashing, and much the same can be said of my external circumstances.

Originally, my Dad, Johan van Rooyen, led me to Christ when I was about three years old. This experience remains etched in my memory forever. The event left such an

impression on me, even during my "backslidden" years I could not shake it!

Coming back to the Lord made a similar "imprint" on my consciousness. It made me even more resolute in my quest to know Christ in all His fullness!

In December 1978 I was baptized in water after coming to grips with God and myself on the topic of the "*Sprinkling of Infants*" doctrine.

Furthermore, I had to renew my mind concerning the infilling (baptism) of the Holy Spirit. When I finally realized that it was for me, today, I was ready to receive. On the evening of the 31st May 1981 I was gloriously "endued with power from on high" (*Luke 24:49*).

### **Why share all this with You?**

Well, for the first time in my life I truly became thankful. When I realised the significance, range and scope of what Christ did for me, I was struck with awe! My heart overflowed and I immediately began my journey of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving became a part of my daily worship.

My scriptural knowledge about thanksgiving was very limited at that stage of my walk with Christ. So, I did the best which I thought was pleasing to God. However, nothing beats the integrity and truth of Scripture regarding any matter or issue we face in life. My next step was to study the Word of God and explore His thoughts about thanksgiving.

This eBook is a summary of the things the Spirit of God taught me over many years. Much can be said about the topic, however, my aim is to give you practical ways of expressing your thanks to the Lord.

### **Subject Matter I will discuss with You**

- How thanksgiving opens new depths in your relationship with your heavenly Father.
- You will learn the reality and truth of thanksgiving as a lifestyle and that thanksgiving is God's will for you.
- Obedience to God's clear instruction to give thanks to Him will change your internal spiritual configuration. As your internal formation aligns with Christ (*Galatians 4:19*), external environments and atmospheres will align with His eternal will.
- Once you set out in faith for your heart attitude to become one of thanksgiving, the Holy Spirit will transform it into a lasting state of heart.
- Thanksgiving is not just an act of verbalising words or the lifting of hands. When done in spirit and in truth, it reflects Christ's New Covenant and is a true act of worship. (*John 4:23-24*).
- Is thanksgiving in the Old Testament different from giving thanks in the New Testament? If these are different, how are they different?

## **Thanksgiving will change You and the World around you...**

We live in a world where it seems no one is grateful or thankful for the blessings they enjoy everyday. The present culture appears to be one of entitlement. Instead of showing thankfulness, people demand what they think should be "rightfully" theirs. Even when they've not earned the right to "own" something, they aggressively claim control and ownership.

Irrational and unwarranted demands are often placed on governments, educational institutions, businesses, private citizens, etc.. The list grows by the day! It appears people demand things simply for the sake of demanding things. Society has moved away from showing interest and taking care of others. Instead we see a selfishness, a lovelessness, and an appalling lack of care for others.

My opinion is that as we (the Church) become obedient to God's instruction to give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:18) in everything, our communities will change. The first community where change is needed is our church community. Once thanksgiving becomes part and parcel of our church culture, the secular communities around us will begin to shift!

My prayer for you is simple. I pray you will obey God's instruction to give Him thanks, and as you do so, your life will become a life-changing example to others!

**Jan van Rooyen**  
**December, 2023**

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This book won't take you longer than 90 minutes to read. And, it's yours to keep and read for free. Yet, there is a twist... My hope is that once you've read this book, its value to you will mean so much that you'll WANT to contribute towards it! You can do this in two ways:

*Firstly*, share it with someone else so they can enjoy the benefits too. *Secondly*, go to [RAINInternational.com/Give](http://RAINInternational.com/Give) where you can give what you believe this book is worth to you. This may be five Dollars, or it may be 500... It's your decision!

Enjoy your journey with me!

*Jan van Rooyen*

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## Chapter One

# There's more to Thanksgiving

*"And when ye will offer a sacrifice of  
thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at  
your own will..."*

Leviticus 22:29 (KJV)

**T**hanksgiving... Lately, everyone is talking about it!

"...We must give thanks more..."

"...Let's celebrate Thanksgiving more often..."

"...Oh, that Thanksgiving service was so anointed..."

"...We must live lives of increased thankfulness..."

It seems the word *thanksgiving* is pretty much another buzzword or catchline we use to start a conversation. I'm here to tell you *thanksgiving* is more profound than our initial thoughts about it may be!

So, what is it, really?

Well, it's definitely not just saying thanks to someone and then you go on your merry way. Neither is it about thoughtfulness or politeness because your Mom taught you good manners. It is much, much more than that!

Think about the last time someone really thanked you from the bottom of their heart. Your first reaction was probably one of astonishment... *"Wow! This person just said thank you to me and what I did for them wasn't such a big deal!"*

Now, think again. How did you feel after the initial "shock" of hearing a "thank you?" I'm sure you had a definite sense of joy and wellbeing.

***Such is the power of thanksgiving. And there's more!***

Here's another thought. This modern, everything must be done yesterday world we live in has forgotten the power of thanksgiving. In fact, I'd go so far as to say we've lost the "art" of thanksgiving!

The art of thanksgiving, you ask? Yes, there is an art to thanksgiving. This *knack* or *know-how* is demonstrated clearly and unmistakably in the Word of God. To fully grasp the application and attitude related to thanksgiving, the Word of God must be our Teacher. A desire for greater understanding of *any* specific topic can only be based on a ***Christocentric*** viewpoint.

The heading of this chapter quotes *Leviticus 22:29*.

*"And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at your own will..." (KJV)*

***Offer it at your own will!*** This means thanksgiving is a deliberate decision and act of our will. In itself this is no easy task, especially when we face difficult situations and circumstances.

As soon as the odds are stacked against us, the last thing we want to say is, "Thank you, Lord!" Yet, this is exactly what the Scriptures teach us. Although our hearts and minds may resist thanksgiving, the Scriptures command us to thank God anyway (*see Chapter Two*).

Resistance to thanksgiving can be rooted in pride. In my opinion *it is not possible to give thanks honourably with pride active in the heart*. I believe as we submit our will purposefully in order to give thanks, we are in fact humbling ourselves (*see Isaiah 29:19; Psalm 10:1-4; James 4:6*).

There is no doubt, giving thanks is an act of the submission of our will to God's will!

The word *will* as seen in Leviticus 22:29 above, is the Hebrew word, *râtsôn* - ***pronounced raw-tsoné!*** The meaning is quite telling. It includes: *to delight in, to give favour, to take good pleasure in, to be voluntary in action, to set one's affection upon, to reconcile oneself, to show goodwill, to be pleased with, to be determined, to make oneself acceptable or pleasing*.

That's quite a mouthful. Again, the underlying principle I wish to highlight is this. ***For thanksgiving to be true, it must be a thought-out intentional decision we make.*** We need to do so *in spite of the negative evidence* our eyes tend to feed us!

Humility is crucial when we give thanks and desire to experience the Grace of God.

*James 4:6, "But He gives us more and more grace (power of the Holy Spirit, to meet this evil tendency*

*and all others fully). That is why He says, **God** sets Himself against the proud and haughty, but **gives grace [continually] to the lowly (those who are humble enough to receive it).**" (also see Proverbs 3:34; 1 Peter 5:5-6) (AMPC)*

Paul the apostle writes the following in the second letter to his spiritual son, Timothy:

*2 Timothy 3:1, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, **proud**, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, **unthankful**, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, **highminded**, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (KJV)*

Take specific note of the term, **unthankful** towards the end of verse two. *Unthankfulness* is referred to in the same sentence as the word **proud**. It is voiced in the same context as all the other sinful "behaviours." Pride hinders and even prevents us from giving thanks to God!

*Isaiah 66:2, "...But **this is the man to whom I will look and have regard: he who is humble and of a broken or wounded spirit, and **who trembles at My word** and reveres My commands.**" (AMPC)*

Thanksgiving is a vast subject! It will take more than one book to cover this entire theme. With so many aspects to thanksgiving, this book only scratches the surface of how to move into a deeper dimension in our walk with God.

As our study progresses, our hearts will come to understand *the direct connection between thanksgiving, humility and the Grace of God.*

### ***A few more Introductory Thoughts...***

In the chapters following, we will discover the connection between prayer, thanksgiving and covenant. In fact, thanksgiving is both a form of prayer and evidence of God's Covenant with us. Here is a preview:

*Genesis 14:22, "But Abram said to the king of Sodom, **I have lifted up my hand and sworn to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor and Maker of heaven and earth...** (AMPC)*

*Philippians 4:6, "Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but **in every circumstance and in everything,** by prayer and petition (definite requests), **with thanksgiving,** continue to make your wants known to God." (AMPC)*

*Colossians 4:2, "Be earnest and unwearied and steadfast in your prayer [life], **being [both] alert and intent in [your praying] with thanksgiving.**" (AMPC)*

### **Bible Examples of People who gave Thanks**

Obviously, *the most prominent Person is Christ Himself!* He is the most accurate example we can follow. The Word tells us to imitate Him:

*Ephesians 5:1, "THEREFORE **BE imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example],** as well-beloved children [imitate their father]." (AMPC)*

*1 Thessalonians 1:6, "And you [set yourselves to] **become imitators of us and [through us] of the Lord Himself**, for you welcomed our message in [spite of] much persecution, with joy [inspired] by the Holy Spirit; 7 **So that you [thus] became a pattern to all the believers...**" (AMPC) (also see 1 Corinthians 11:1; 4:15)*

Here are a handful of instances where Jesus gives thanks:

*Matthew 11:25, "At that time Jesus began to say, **I thank You, Father**, Lord of heaven and earth [and I acknowledge openly and joyfully to Your honor]..." (AMPC)*

*Matthew 26:27, "And He took a cup, **and when He had given thanks...**" (AMPC)*

*John 6:11, "Jesus took the loaves, **and when He had given thanks...**" (AMPC)*

*John 11:41, "So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, **Father, I thank You** that You have heard Me..." (AMPC)*

## **A Number of other Bible Characters who gave Thanks:**

### **David:**

*1 Chronicles 29:13, "Now therefore, our God, **we thank You** and praise Your glorious name and those attributes which that name denotes..." (AMPC) (read from verse 9-13)*

*Psalms 18:49, "Therefore will I **give thanks** and extol You, O Lord, among the nations, and sing praises to Your name." (AMPC)*

## Daniel:

*Daniel 2:23, "I **thank You** and praise You, O God of my fathers, Who has given me wisdom and might and has made known to me now what we desired of You..." (AMPC) (read from verse 19-23)*

*Daniel 6:10, "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, **he got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.**" (AMPC)*

## Jonah:

*Jonah 2:9, "But as for me, I will sacrifice to You with **the voice of thanksgiving**; I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation and deliverance belong to the Lord!" (AMPC)*

## Simeon:

*Luke 2:27, "And prompted by the [Holy] Spirit, he came into the temple [enclosure]; and when the parents brought in the little child Jesus to do for Him what was customary according to the Law, 28 **[Simeon]** took Him up in his arms and **praised and thanked God...**" (AMPC)*

## Anna:

*Luke 2:38, "And she too came up at that same hour, and **she returned thanks to God** and talked of [Jesus] to all who were looking for the redemption (deliverance) of Jerusalem." (AMPC) (read from verse 36-39)*

## Paul:

*1 Corinthians 1:4, "I thank my God at all times for you because of the grace of God..." (AMPC)*

*Acts 28:15, "And the [Christian] brethren there, having had news of us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. **When Paul saw them, he thanked God and received new courage.**" (AMPC)*

*Ephesians 1:15, "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints (the people of God), 16 **I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.**" (AMPC)*

To study the life and conduct of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, must beyond question be at the top of our list! On the other hand, to explore the lives of "ordinary" believers in the Bible gives us insight into their "humanity." This almost *covert* observance of their successes and failures provides us with "inside" information about their relationship with God.

To reflect and ponder the lives of *all* the "heroes" of faith (*also see Hebrews 11*) brings understanding of the ways of God. Like Moses, ***we learn God's ways and not just His acts in our lives*** (*Psalms 103:7*).

## The next Step...

So, let us move on to Chapter Two where the Word will show how ***Thanksgiving is the Will of God.***

**Pray with me:**

*"Heavenly Father, I thank you for the Truth of Your Word about **thanksgiving**. I believe as I learn and know the Truth, You set me free from everything which holds me back from moving deeper with You. In the Name of Jesus. Amen!*

## Chapter Two

# This is the Will of God for You

*“Thank [God] in everything [no matter what the circumstances may be, be thankful and give thanks], for this is the will of God for you [who are] in Christ Jesus... ”*

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (AMPC)

The title of this book is "**Activate the Power of Thanksgiving.**" This sounds like a stereotypical phrase from the thousands of selfhelp and motivational books available on the Internet.

Countless of those resources are written by both religious and secular people. Whether by "chance" or personal experience, they learned the meaning and value of thanksgiving and gratitude.

In the "Author's Note" at the beginning of this book, I mention, *"This eBook is a summary of the things the Spirit of God taught me over many years."* My aim is not to "rewrite" all there is to know about thanksgiving. Yet, since thanksgiving is God's will, I share with you my journey of becoming obedient to His instruction.

On page three of Chapter one the first paragraph, I state, *"Although our hearts and minds may resist thanksgiving,*

*the Scriptures command us to thank God...*" He commands us! We'll explore this further as the chapter progresses.

***I was a child once...***

Looking back at my childhood, certain events stand out. Memorable occasions include those when my parents "commanded" or instructed me to do or not to do certain things. My mind recollects and reminds me of the definite "consequences" to disobedience! Sometimes my lack of obedience stemmed from an insufficient understanding of why I needed to obey. In the end I learned the benefits of obedience outweighed the consequences of disobedience. Yet, my obedience was not always from the heart. *Like many of us, I obeyed to avoid negative outcomes.*

Later in my life, as a military aviator, it was a necessity for me to obey instructions and orders. My life literally depended on it! The difference between my childhood and my aviation career was the fact that I was taught the necessary information. The initial aviation training and instruction took the better part of three and a half years! I came to understand the why and how of operating a military jet.

Luke 7 tells us about the centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant. The centurion was an officer in the Roman army. Personally I understand his thinking and how he placed complete faith in the words and instructions of his superiors - my background as a military aviator testifies to this. The centurion received and gave orders and instructions in the same way I used to.

Let us read Luke 7:

*"7 ...but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.  
8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." (KJV) (you can read the entire event - Luke 7:2-10)*

**Why do I share this with you?**

Obedience in faith to the practise of thanksgiving is part of "learning" Christ and His teaching. ***Christ is our authority and we are submitted to His Lordship over our lives.*** This means His Word is "law" for us and ***when He speaks, we obey!*** Obedience is an important and much needed aspect with respect to building our relationship with Him.

***"You did not so learn Christ!"*** This phrase comes from Ephesians 4:

*"15 Rather, let our lives lovingly express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. **Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him Who is the Head,** [even] Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One). 16 For because of Him the whole body (the church, in all its various parts), closely joined and firmly knit together by the joints and ligaments with which it is supplied, when each part [with power adapted to its need] is working properly [in all its functions], grows to full maturity, building itself up in love. 17 So this I say and solemnly testify in [the name of] the Lord [as in His presence], that you must no longer live as the heathen (the Gentiles) do..."*

*"20 **But you did not so learn Christ!** 21 Assuming that you have really heard Him and been **taught by Him**, as [all] Truth is in Jesus [embodied and personified in Him]..." (AMPC)*

Submission to God's Word and His commands cannot purely be out of "duty." Obedience needs to grow by way of our relationship with and our love for Christ. We cannot only learn from Him "didactically" or in a "preachy" way. We must "learn" Him (see Matthew 11:28-30; John 6:44-45). If not, "literal legalism" will grip our hearts and minds causing us to "miss" the Grace of God (see Galatians 3; Ephesians 2:8-10). This is why I share with you my journey of growth in obedience to Him. Together, our corporate journey is one where we, as the Church, "learn" Christ and bow to His Grace.

Clearly, when Scripture speaks to us to do something, it is the will of God. This is a crucial building block in our quest to "learn" Christ. Accordingly, ***thanksgiving is a Word from God which we ought to embrace and live out every day!***

Up to now we have not looked at every verse in the Bible about thanksgiving. We can read the Bible to do that. However, the frequency with which it is mentioned is evidence of how important it is. Note that the word "gratitude" appears approximately 157 times. In fact, it occurs more than "thanks" or "thanksgiving" (mentioned about 72 times). Here are just two verses:

*Psalm 50:14, "Offer to God the sacrifice of **thanksgiving**, and pay your vows to the Most High, 15 And call on Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall honor and glorify Me." (AMPC)*

*Philippians 4:6 Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but **in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God.** 7 And God's peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (AMPC)*

*(There are many more matching verses in the Bible)*

## **Special days of Corporate Thanksgiving**

As seen from our study so far, individual thanksgiving is an important and integral part of our worship. I will go so far and say that a substantial portion of our relationship with our heavenly Father should be devoted to thanksgiving.

Regarding corporate thanksgiving, "modern" history teaches that it plays a major role in the life of the Church. The actual practise of the Church giving thanks corporately goes back as far as the 1500's.

We can credit the important role and influence of the English Reformation (late 1500's to early 1600's) for the restoration of thanksgiving days. This Reformation occurred during the reign of Henry VIII. Days of thanksgiving and religious thanksgiving holidays were established during this time.

As a matter of interest, the starting point of the Reformation began with "Renaissance humanists." Although a large percentage of these people had a secular worldview aimed at the nature and importance of humanity, ***many of them were senior church figures. These placed great import on Scripture as the foremost foundation and resource for the Christian faith.*** They also disapproved of certain religious practises which they considered and regarded as based on superstition.

In the early days of thanksgiving, public celebrations were focussed on God's goodness and His release of extraordinary mercies, bounties and good harvests. Special gratitude was also shown for God delivering the people from calamities, droughts, military threats and other dangers.

Today we find many nations setting aside official thanksgiving days. Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Liberia, Netherlands, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, United Kingdom, and the United States, all celebrate a day of thanksgiving. These thanksgiving celebrations may or may not be centred on religious activities. At the same time, Christian believers in these nations usually place their focus on giving thanks to God.

Even though we allocate special days for thanksgiving on our calendars, ***Scripture requires we mature into thanksgiving as a constant attitude of the heart.*** This spiritual growth aligns with God's will, desire and intent for us (*1 Thessalonians 5:18*). He longs that we cultivate heart attitudes of gratefulness and thankfulness. Getting this right will propel the Church into manifesting a "living"

and Christlike lifestyle of thanksgiving and worship. ***For us as sons of God, every day is a day of thanksgiving!***

### **Why is thanksgiving so Important?**

Why does God place such significance on thanksgiving? Why does He say thanksgiving is His will for us? Are there benefits for both us and for Him? Let me qualify this.

God is self-sufficient within Himself. He does not have needs. Yet, His instruction is clear for us to thank Him. So, what does thanksgiving "do" for God?

Thanksgiving declares His greatness and gives Him the glory He deserves. Think about the magnitude and grandeur of all He has done and continues to do for us. This alone should provoke and inspire us to pour out our hearts in thanksgiving!

Our lifestyle of thanksgiving exalts Him as the centre and Source of every good thing we receive and enjoy:

*Ecclesiastes 3:13, "...every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor - it is the gift of God." (AMPC)*

*James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect (free, large, full) gift is from above; it comes down from the Father..." (AMPC)*

*1 Peter 4:10, "As each of you has received a gift (a particular spiritual talent, a gracious divine endowment), employ it for one another as [befits] good trustees of God's many-sided grace..." (AMPC)*

Chapter three will bring greater clarity, depth and insight into the importance of thanksgiving.

## Chapter Three

# The Meaning of Thanksgiving

*"But if one loves God truly [with affectionate reverence, prompt obedience, and **grateful recognition** of His blessing], he is known by God [recognized as worthy of His intimacy and love, and he is owned by Him]."*

1 Corinthians 8:3 (AMPC)

To get to the true meaning of thanksgiving, we must ponder God's love for us and our love for Him.

*Love, love, love...*

True love for God and a grateful heart go hand in hand. Without a deep authentic love for God (which ultimately springs from Him loving us first – *1 John 4:19*), there cannot be pure and genuine gratefulness or thankfulness.

*Luke 10:27, "And he replied, **You must love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." (AMPC) (also see Deuteronomy 6:5; 30:6; Matthew 22:37-40)*

*(Notice how loving ourselves comes last in the list!)*

*Psalm 107:1, "O GIVE thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for **His** mercy and **\*loving-kindness endure forever!**" (AMPC) **\*[Hebrew: "for forever [is] his loyal love"]***

The Holy Spirit plays an important role when it comes to God's love. The Word reminds us that God's love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Whom He gave to us. God is Love and He has given us His ability to love (*Romans 5:5 - also see Jude 1:20-21; Colossians 3:14-15; Psalms 26:6-8*).

The apostle Paul writes in the first chapter of Philippians:

*"8 For God is my witness how **I long for and pursue you all with love**, in the tender mercy of Christ Jesus [Himself]! 9 And **this I pray: that your love may abound** yet more and more and extend to its fullest development in knowledge and all keen insight [**that your love may display itself** in greater depth of acquaintance and more comprehensive discernment], 10 So that you may surely learn to sense what is vital..." (AMPC)*

Paul also writes to the Ephesians in chapter three:

*"17 May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! **May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love**, 18 **That you may have the power** and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints [God's devoted people, **the experience of that love**] what is **the breadth and length and height and depth [of it]**..." (AMPC)*

To the Corinthians Paul writes:

*1 Corinthians 13:13, "And so faith, hope, love abide [faith - conviction and belief respecting man's relation to God and divine things; hope - joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation; love - true affection for God and man, growing out of God's love for and in us], these three; but **the greatest of these is love.**" (AMPC)*

*"...the greatest of these is love..."* Everything in our lives must revolve around the love of God. As we exercise God's love practically in thanksgiving, we will grow in our relationship with the Father. This is part of God's maturation process in our lives as His sons (*Hebrews 5; 6:1-3; Ephesians 4:14-15; Psalm 8:2; Matthew 21:16; Colossians 2:6-7*).

As God's sons we are able to give thanks well since we're able to love Him with the same love He loves us with. Our heartfelt gratitude and thankfulness flow from hearts filled with love for Him. It is essential for us to make the love of God the centre of our focus at all times.

*(1 Corinthians 14:15-17; 1 John 4; John 15:9-13; 17:23-26).*

Much more can be said about God's love. Suffice it to say, the most important aspect of our walk and relationship with God is His love. His love for us and His love manifested in and through us. The love of God became "flesh" with the arrival of Jesus on earth (*John 1:14*). God's love must now become "flesh" in us and through us!

### **Grateful or Thankful... Is there a Difference?**

**Grateful:** To be warmly or deeply appreciative of kindness or benefits received; To declare and demonstrate

thanks, motivated by a deep sense of gratitude; To have a due sense of benefits; A kindly disposition towards someone from whom a favour was received; Willingness to acknowledge and even repay benefits.

**Thankful:** A feeling or expression of gratitude; a sense of appreciation, awareness or regard (*gratitude*) for something someone does for us and our response to it; our acknowledgment expressed as thanksgiving flowing from gratitude.

When we compare the modern intent of these words with their equivalents in the Bible, they say much the same. They do not, however, convey the same spiritual depth as in the Word. Even so, they do maintain and communicate a certain state of feeling or emotion. Again, what is the difference between the two words?

As close synonyms, both are alike and used interchangeably to express the heartfelt thoughts and feelings of a person. I believe we can safely accept and agree that thankfulness and gratefulness resonate well together. Here is an example:

*"I deeply appreciate you for reading this book about Thanksgiving. With a grateful heart I give thanks to God for you!"*

*Psalm 92:1, "...IT IS a good and delightful thing to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises [with musical accompaniment] to Your name, O Most High, 2 To show forth Your loving-kindness in the morning and Your faithfulness by night..." (AMPC)*

Thankfulness is our definite, positive, loving and grateful response to the Love and Grace of God.

### Spoiler Alert!

Before we take a further look at the blessings of gratefulness and thankfulness, let us see what happens when we fail to apply them:

*Romans 1:20, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that **they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools... 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts..." (KJV) (also see 2 Timothy 3:1-3)***

On its own, Romans 1:20-24 lends itself to a proper study of the negative outcomes of thanklessness. However, for our present purposes and consideration, only an overview is referenced here.

In verse 21 the words *"they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful"* are followed by *"vain, imaginations, foolish and heart."* These contain hidden references and meanings. They suggest concepts such as *idolatry, carnality, souliness, foolishness, a lack of wisdom and the loss of discernment.*

These passages from Romans 1 clearly illustrate how thanklessness dishonours Almighty God and places the

focus on self - the abilities, skills and qualifications of man! Trust and confidence in these alone can and will eventually lead to counteractive outcomes. As an example, let us consider one of the many occurrences in Scripture, the Assyrian captivity.

In biblical history the Assyrian captivity of Israel and Judah describes the results of their thankless attitude and standpoint towards God. God was always good to them and blessed them! Yet, *they preferred to lean on their own strengths and abilities*. Jeremiah prophesies about this in chapter 1 verse 16:

*"And I will utter My judgments against them for all the wickedness of those who have forsaken Me, burned incense to other gods, and **worshiped the works of their own hands [idols]**." (AMPC) (for further study read 1 Chronicles 5:26; 1 Kings 12; 2 Kings 15:29; 17:3-6; 21:9-15; 23:27; Isaiah 10:5-6)*

*2 Kings 18:11, "The king of Assyria carried Israel away to Assyria, and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, 12 Because **they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed His covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear it or do it.**" (AMPC)*

## What is Thanklessness?

Thanklessness is opposite to thankfulness. It is an arrogant, conceited and loveless posture and response to the Grace of God. As explained in Chapter One (page 3 - 4), a thankless attitude is embedded in pride and refuses to acknowledge receiving something good and valuable from

God. Pride cultivates a self-absorbed and self-seeking attitude in the heart of man and hinders or even blocks our thanksgiving.

2 Timothy 3:2-7 gives an in-depth explanation of what the heart attitudes of people on earth will be in the "last" days. Some of the terminologies include: *"lovers of their own selves, proud, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unthankful, self-centred, lovers of money and aroused by an inordinate [greedy] desire for wealth, proud, arrogant, contemptuous boasters, haters of good, They will be treacherous [betrayers], rash and inflated with self-conceit."*

So, in plain English, thanklessness will do the following:

- \* Develop in us an unhealthy egotistical and self-absorbed heart reliant on the abilities and talents of self.
- \* This will lay the foundation for discontentment, anger & frustration.
- \* Discontentment will evolve into criticism of the status quo with regards to God, those in authority over us, and humanity in general.
- \* The flow of God's grace is then interrupted, since grace flows towards humility out of our relationship with Him and our fellow believers - *James 4:6*.
- \* In turn, this will cause our blessings to decrease and decline - *Malachi 2:2-3*.

- \* Then, instead of us searching our own hearts for the cause, we will look around at the blessings of others. This inaccurate focus creates an envious and covetous attitude of entitlement. We want what they've got!
- \* This opens the door for us to be attracted to and fellowship with the wrong kinds of "friends." People with the same attitude as us.
- \* Our decisions and choices will then be influenced into being flawed due to false and defective counsel.
- \* In the end, our lives and future will be put at risk and into serious jeopardy - *Psalm 28:3-5*.

### Now, for the Good Stuff about Thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving is a positive response to the Love and Grace of God. It has everything to do with our sincere humility before the Lord:

*James 4:6, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, **God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.** 7 **Submit yourselves therefore to God.** Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." (KJV)*

*1 Peter 5:5, "Likewise, ye younger, **submit yourselves unto the elder.** Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and **be clothed with humility:** for **God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.** 6 **Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time...**" (KJV)*

*Proverbs 3:34, "He has no use for conceited people, but shows favor to those who are humble." (GNT)*

Thanksgiving moves our focus away from ourselves and self-delusions of grandeur towards God as the Lord and complete Source of our lives. We will come to the conclusion that **we are not self-made**... Everything we are and all we're blessed with comes from our heavenly Father. (also see Deuteronomy 8:11-18)

*Psalm 100:3, "Know (perceive, recognize, and understand with approval) that the Lord is God! It is He Who has made us, not we ourselves [and we are His]! We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. [Ephesians 2:10.] 4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and a thank offering..." (AMPC) (read the whole of Psalm 100, it's only five verses)*

*Colossians 2:6, "As you have therefore received Christ, [even] Jesus the Lord, [so] walk (regulate your lives and conduct yourselves) in union with and conformity to Him. 7 Have the roots [of your being] firmly and deeply planted [in Him, fixed and founded in Him], being continually built up in Him, becoming increasingly more confirmed and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and abounding and overflowing in it with thanksgiving." (AMPC)*

Problems with negative communication and speech? Thanksgiving will change a complaining and bitter heart into a grateful one. Then, what the mouth utters on a regular basis will begin to change and conform to the will and Word of God (Ephesians 4:29; 5:4).

## Thanksgiving leads to Joy!

*The overflow of thanksgiving and gratitude is joy.* Giving thanks for God's abundant goodness, even during hard times, is our gateway for joy! *Psalms 126* clearly shows how the Hebrew exiles gave thanks to God for their return to Israel. This Psalm also unmistakably reveals the joy with which the Hebrews gave thanks.

Even though the primary focus of thanksgiving is to glorify God, joy is a clear-cut and distinct benefit we receive. Thanksgiving also produces God's peace in our hearts; it brings about contentment, draws us closer to our heavenly Father, and leads to deeper faith and trust in Him. The list is actually endless (*Jeremiah 9:23; Matthew 5:8; Colossians 2:7; 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:8*).

In the King James Version of the Bible, the word "joy" appears approximately 51 times in the New Testament. The Greek word used here is "*chara*" (*Strong's #G5479*). This word is also translated as *gladness (3), greatly (1), joyful (1), joyfully (1), joyfulness (1), and joyous (1)*.

*Chara* is derived from "*chairo*" (*Strong's #G5463*). Some of the words used and their meanings are: *rejoice (26), glad (14), rejoiced (8), hail - as in a greeting (6), rejoicing (5), greeting (3), joy (3), rejoiceth (3), speed - as in God speed (2), farewell (1), joyed (1), joyfully (1), joying (1)*.

In turn, *chairo* is derived from "*charis*" (*Strong's #G5485*). This is the main word for grace in the New Testament. It is also rendered and interpreted as: *grace (130), favour (6), thank (6), thanks (4), pleasure (2), acceptable (1), benefit*

*(1), gift (1), gracious (1), joy (1), liberality (1), thanked (1), thankworthy (1).*

In essence *charis* can be summarized as: *graciousness or a gratifying manner or act (abstract or concrete; literal, figurative or spiritual). This is especially true of the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in life. This includes gratitude, acceptance, benefit, favour, gift, graciousness, joy and liberality, pleasure, thanks and thankworthiness.*

When we examine all these words and their definitions, the harmony and relationship between them is clear. Thanksgiving and joy both have one common denominator, Grace. ***Both are rooted in the grace of God!***

*Psalm 119:7, "I will praise and **give thanks** to You with uprightness of heart when I learn [by sanctified experiences] Your righteous judgments [Your decisions against and punishments for particular lines of thought and conduct]." (AMPC)*

***So, let us dig even "deeper" into the meaning of Thanksgiving and God's Grace...***

### **Old Testament:**

In the King James Version of the Bible, the first mention of thanksgiving is found in *Leviticus 7:12*:

*"If he offer it for a **thanksgiving**, then he shall offer with **the sacrifice of thanksgiving...**"*

Here the word "thanksgiving" is: (Hebrew) **tôdâh** = (pronounced) *to-daw'* = *to give thanks in songs, praise,*

worship, to march in line, sacrifice, give thank-offerings, to speak and declare thanks, to confess thanks with the mouth.

The word "**tôdâh**" is derived from the root word "**yâdâh**" (not to be confused with "yâda'," which means intimacy as in a covenantal marriage relationship).

(Hebrew) **yâdâh** = (pronounced) yaw-daw from **yâd** (yawd) = **open hand**.

In the Gematria (the study of the numerical values of letters), **yâd** equals a total value of **405**:

**y = 400 = Hebrew: Tav** - meaning: Truth

**â = 1 = Hebrew: Aleph** -  $1 \times 1 = 1$  - the oneness of God, father, master or a chief, teacher, unity, primacy, first, beginning, prince, leader.

**d = 4 = Hebrew: Dalet** - meaning: door, authority, government, rule, dominion, kingdom, path, way, portal to heaven.

**h = 5 = Hebrew: Heh** - grace, ministry, service, gospel, fruitfulness, going forth, fast movement, anointed, prayers, and protection.

The "**â**" and "**d**" put together come to the value of five, which is **the number for God's Grace**. The "**h**" at the end of **yâdâh** also has a value of 5. Again, this means **the Grace of God**. In its simplest form this word **yâd-âh** communicates and speaks of the Truth, authority, rule and Grace of God. This is especially noteworthy when we consider lifting our hand(s) in thanksgiving (**yâd** (yawd) = **open hand**). (also see Zechariah 4:7; John 1:16)

## New Testament:

The last mention of thanksgiving in the KJV is found in *Revelation 7:12*:

*"Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and **thanksgiving**, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."*

In this verse "thanksgiving" is: *Greek: eucharistia = (pronounced) yoo-khar-is-tee'-ah = thankfulness, giving of thanks, gratitude, grateful speech, act of worship, to be liberal, beneficent, well-favoured, to prosper, to be well off, benevolent, to give freely, to restore to one another, to preserve in times of peril.*

*Eucharistia* contains the root word "**charis**" = (pronounced) khar'-ece = Grace = that which brings joy & pleasure, graceful speech, favour, loving-kindness = God's very substance and enabling influence in our lives. God's divine government in our lives. It also means to **salute!** Hence the lifting of especially the right hand (salute) towards the Lord.

## To conclude, I summarize as follows:

In our study so far, the importance of the "Grace" thread in our giving of thanks became very clear!

Love, humility, submission and grace all form part of our thanksgiving. Obviously, our main expression of thanks is uttered from our lips. Our words must flow out of a truly thankful heart. If not so, we're simply "wasting" our breath. Furthermore, our words ought to be followed by practical actions which display thankfulness.

*James 2:14, "My friends, what good is it for one of you to say that you have faith if your actions do not prove it? Can that faith save you? 17 **So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead.** 18 But someone will say, "One person has faith, another has actions." My answer is, "**Show me how anyone can have faith without actions. I will show you my faith by my actions.**" (GNT)*

The giving of thanks is a multifaceted and practical action of our faith. It includes many things. Giving honour to others, giving gifts, ministering to the spiritual or physical needs of someone, serving in your local church or community, loving your husband or wife, loving your family, and so on. However, as legitimate as these topics are, they are not the main focus of the principles taught within these pages.

As presented at the beginning of this writing, the main theme in review considers the context of our personal interaction with and worship of our heavenly Father.

With this perspective in mind, Chapter Four will allow us to discover the value of the lifting of our hand(s) in thanksgiving and worship. The lifting of hands confirms our submission, faith and reliance on our covenantal relationship with God through Christ.

## Chapter Four

# Thanksgiving is Covenantal

*"...Abram said to the king of Sodom, **I have lifted up my hand and sworn to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor and Maker of heaven and earth...**"*

**Genesis 14:22 (AMPC)**

**T**he Bible in its entirety is a record of the eternal Covenant between God and His people. This Covenant already existed in Christ from before the foundation of the world (*Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8*).

Christ Himself is eternal, and all God's plans and purposes endure and continue to exist in and through Him. John 1:1-3 states that "in the beginning" Christ (the Word) created everything (*Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:3*). He is the Beginning and the End. Everything in existence has its origin, substance and "being" in Christ. Nothing exists outside of Him.

*Revelation 1:11, "...**I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last...**" (AMPC)*

*John 1:1, "**IN THE beginning** [before all time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the*

*Word was God Himself. 2 He was present originally with God. 3 All things were made and came into existence through Him; and without Him was not even one thing made that has come into being." (AMPC)*

*1 John 1:1, "[WE ARE writing] about the Word of Life [in] Him Who existed from the beginning..." (AMPC)*

*Hebrews 11:3, "By faith we understand that **the worlds** [during the successive ages] **were framed** (fashioned, put in order, and equipped for their intended purpose) **by the word of God**, so that what we see was not made out of things which are visible." (AMPC)*

*Ephesians 1:4, "Even as [in His love] **He chose us** [actually picked us out for Himself as His own] **in Christ before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy (consecrated and set apart for Him) and blameless in His sight, even above reproach, before Him in love." (AMPC)*

These verses tell us that God's plan of Redemption was already in place before the creation came into being. For our redemption to exist before time began means God's Covenant with us, in and through Christ, also existed. The entirety of the scriptures, as recorded in the Bible, is about Christ. ***From the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation, the Scriptures are a revelation to us, of Christ!***

*1 Peter 1:19, "But [you were purchased] with the precious blood of Christ (the Messiah), like that of a [sacrificial] lamb without blemish or spot. 20 It is true that **He was chosen and foreordained (destined and foreknown for it) before the foundation of the world, but He was brought out to public view (made manifest) in these last days (at the end of the times) for the sake***

*of you. 21 Through Him you believe in (adhere to, rely on) God, Who raised Him up from the dead and gave Him honor and glory, so that your faith and hope are [centered and rest] in God." (AMPC)*

## **Abram was a Covenant Man**

Let us revisit Genesis 14:22 as quoted at the beginning of this chapter:

*"...Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand and **sworn** to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor and Maker of heaven and earth..." (AMPC)*

The word "**sworn**" indicates the declaration of an oath. In scripture, an oath is usually used to testify of and confirm a covenant or covenants. "**Sworn**" is also translated as; ***oath, vow, swear, promise.***" The Strong's Concordance explains it this way:

*Strong's #H7650 (Heb) **shâba'** = (pronounced) shaw-bah' = to seven oneself, that is, **swear** (as if by repeating a declaration seven times): - **adjure, charge by an oath, with an oath, take an oath, cause to or make to swear.***

During the early history of mankind, *oaths and covenants were made to pledge allegiance to sovereigns. These were binding* with regards to the performance of sacred duties or particular acts. ***In ancient Israel, oaths or covenants were only to be made in God's Name.*** In fact, they were forbidden to be taken in the name of idols or the name of any created thing. God was called upon to ensure a record was kept and to have Him present as a witness.

Therefore, when Abram declares to the king of Sodom how *he lifted his hand and swore to the Lord, he verifies and affirms his **covenantal posture** before God.* On this particular occasion he refers to an oath or covenant previously made or even one done right there and then with God. He had sworn to the Lord that:

*"...I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich..."*  
*Genesis 14:23 (KJV)*

In this verse, **Abram states very clearly that he will take nothing from Sodom's king. Why? I believe he did not want to violate his covenant with God!** Another question we must also ask here is, "Was Abram rich or poor?" Was this offer from the king of Sodom really temptation enough for him to break covenant?

I present this to you; **Abram was already rich!** God prospered him and he did not need the wealth of the king of Sodom. Had Abram taken the so-called "wealth" of the king, this *wealth* would have been tainted with the loss of the souls of men (*vv21*). Check out the wealth of Abram in these scriptures: *Genesis: 12:2, 16; 13:2; 20:14-16; 24:35; 25:25; 26:12-14.*

Much more can be said about Abram's wealth. I close the subject with these thoughts.

Genesis 26:1 records an instance of a severe famine in the land. Verses 12 to 14 describe how Isaac prospered during this famine and that he was wealthy. His success and great achievements caused the Philistines to envy him!

Where did his wealth come from? Verse 5 of Genesis 25 clearly describes his source:

***"And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac."*** (AMPC)

This action of Abraham is both covenantal and generational!

### **A little more about the king of Sodom**

*Genesis 14, "17 After his [Abram's] return from the defeat and slaying of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, **the king of Sodom** went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh, that is, the King's Valley. 21 And the king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the persons and keep the goods for yourself."* (AMPC)

Firstly, **the king of Sodom** is a type and shadow of satan. Interestingly, the king meets Abram in the "*Valley of Kings*" after Abram's victory over Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. At this point I remind you that in Christ, we are all kings and priests (*Revelation 5:10*). Therefore, it is not surprising that when we obtain victories, every so often the enemy may try to "test" us. In reality, these tests are simply deliberate actions from the enemy to "detect" the depth and genuineness of our sonship in Christ (*Luke 4:1-14*).

Regarding our sonship, our position as God's sons is guaranteed since we are in Christ. However, the practical outworking of our sonship is only as valid as the experiential knowledge and depth of our relationship with the Father. Jesus came to reveal the Father to us so we can know Him just as He (Christ) does (*John 14:6-11; 17:1-26; 20:17*). Luke 4 also teaches us to be spiritually vigilant and

aware at all times. We must do this so we don't "miss" our encounter with the Spirit of God during our time of "testing."

Secondly, *the king of Sodom pictures the spirit of mammon*. We know the devil uses this spirit to enslave the souls of men to the system of this world. In verse 21 the word "persons" can also mean "souls" in the original language (*Strong's #H5315 BDB*). Notice how this *comment* from Sodom's king follows directly after ***Abram gave Tithes to Melchizedek!***

### **Enter Melchizedek, the King of Salem!**

*Genesis 14, "18 Melchizedek king of Salem [later called Jerusalem] brought out bread and wine [for their nourishment]; he was the priest of God Most High... 20 And blessed, praised, and glorified be God Most High, Who has given your foes into your hand! And [Abram] gave him a tenth of all [he had taken]. 21 And the king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the persons and keep the goods for yourself." (AMPC)*

**Melchizedek** is a prophetic type of Christ (*Hebrews 5, 6 & 7*). What we find at this crucial point of Abram's interaction with the king of Sodom, is how *suddenly* Melchizedek intervenes! Is this not precisely the same pattern as with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ? His intervention into our lives through the cross and His Blood stayed the advances of our common archenemy, the devil!

The lesson illustrated to us is clear. When the enemy tries to waylay us, *God will immediately intervene!* Christ our Redeemer, as our Melchizedek, has already defeated the enemy. It is up to us to take a hold of and receive His

victory into our lives, by faith. Once we've done this, we **must** again, by faith, commandeer this victory into manifestation! ***This is our "in faith" position of rest (Hebrews 3 & 4).***

Furthermore, ***the bread and wine*** presented to Abram by Melchizedek is ***a snapshot of the New Covenant in Christ***. This serving of bread and wine pre-dates Christ's offering of ***Himself on the cross as our bread and wine***. It indicates how we, from the time of Abram, were in Abram's "spiritual loins" and through him already "married" to Christ! (*Song of Solomon; Revelation 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17*)

### **Melchizedek invokes God's Divine Favour upon Abram**

*Genesis 14, "19 And he blessed him and said, Blessed (favored with blessings, made blissful, joyful) be Abram by God Most High, Possessor and Maker of heaven and earth, 20 And blessed, praised, and glorified be God Most High, Who has given your foes into your hand! And [Abram] gave him a tenth of all [he had taken]. 21 And **the king of Sodom** said to Abram, Give me the persons and **keep the goods for yourself.**" (AMPC)*

As cited before, ***the king of Sodom*** typifies the spirit of ***mammon***. In this confrontation, Abram is not fooled by the "clever" rhetoric of this "king" who promises him ***"the goods for yourself."*** In verse 22 and 23 Abram says to the king:

***"...I have lifted up my hand and sworn to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor and Maker of heaven and earth, That I would not take a thread or a shoelace or***

***anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich... " (AMPC)***

Wow! What a display of sonship, righteousness and integrity. The heart and character of Abram came shining through brilliantly. He saw straight through the scheme of the enemy! ***Abram knew his sonship position with God, and he was not prepared to compromise his relationship with his heavenly Father.*** He chose his *position* over the *possessions* offered to him by the king of Sodom.

Without any hesitation, Abram confronts the king of Sodom and informs him how he had *"lifted up my hand and sworn to the Lord."* In the days of Abram, men used to make covenant with one another by cutting the palms of their right hands and then clasping them together in a handshake. The symbolism was the becoming one with the other person through the mixing of their blood. This is called a blood covenant. It meant their lives belonged to one another forever and they would defend each other until the last drop of blood!

### **Abram encounters God in a Vision**

*Genesis 15:1, "After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying... 4 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying..." (AMPC)*

Directly after he encountered the king of Sodom and withstood his "wealth" offer, God meets with Abram. There is a powerful example and principle hidden here.

*When we, like Abram, take a bold faith stand in the face of potential defeat and resistance from the enemy, God will engage with us! He will confirm our victory and impart*

***fresh direction and vision into our hearts.*** Remember, Christ has already won the victory on our behalf (*John 16:33; 1 John 4:4; Revelation 12:11*).

*Genesis 15:1, "...Fear not, Abram, I am your Shield, your abundant compensation, and your reward shall be exceedingly great." (AMPC)*

The terms, ***"I am your Shield, your abundant compensation, and your reward"*** literally mean ***"reimbursement or paycheck!"*** In the natural Abram was already rich through God's abundant blessing. *Yet, he had no offspring, which in a sense made him "poor."* It appears Abram undoubtedly understood the principle of generational blessings. Without descendants, Abram's wealth and blessings would not be passed on. So, his encounter with God gave him the opportunity to make a request for offspring.

*Genesis 15:2, "And Abram said, Lord God, what can You give me, since I am going on [from this world] childless..?" (AMPC)*

Verse 4 onwards informs us how *God promised Abram descendants as numerous as the stars in the heavens.* Verse 6 reads, ***"And he [Abram] believed in (trusted in, relied on, remained steadfast to) the Lord.."*** Then, verse 18 informs us that God made a covenant with Abram:

***"On the same day the Lord made a covenant (promise, pledge) with Abram, saying, To your descendants I have given this land..." (AMPC)***

The extensive and far-reaching effect of this covenant into the future is clarified by Paul in Romans 4 and 5.

Today, you and I live in that "future" and we are the beneficiaries of Abram's faith and faithfulness.

*Even more significantly though, is the faithfulness of God in honouring this covenant and bringing the Word He gave to Abram into manifestation.*

**In conclusion...**

With everything said, we now know without a doubt that *thanksgiving is covenantal*. Through our heartfelt thanksgiving in faith, we will encounter God. From this position and posture, we can request from Him the Grace, Anointing and Wisdom to bring forth spiritual "offspring" in and through our lives.

Our thanksgiving is not just for what we personally have received and will receive in the future. To a very large degree it's about what He will give to us so He can release His generational blessings through us to them who come after us!

No matter how you or I approach this subject of thanksgiving, it certainly is worthy of our deeper investigation. Thanksgiving is much more than the casual "thank-yous" we offer most of the time!

And, what about the lifting of our hands in thanksgiving? It is abundantly clear that the lifting of our hand(s) is not only an act of thanksgiving and worship, it is also a covenantal statement. Every time we lift our hands in praise, worship and thanksgiving to the Lord, we also confirm the New Covenant we have with our Father through the shed Blood of Christ!

However, whether we lift our hands or not, the most important aspect of our thanksgiving is the posture of our hearts. When we give thanks, are our hearts truly **"lifted up"** unto the Lord? The Lord is the discerner of our hearts:

*Hebrews 4:12, "For the **word of God** is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a **discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**" (KJV)*

*2 Chronicles 17:3, "**And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; 4 But sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. 5 Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance. 6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD...**" (KJV)*

*Psalm 24:3, "**Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? 4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD...**" (KJV)*

*Lamentations 3:41 **Let us lift up our hearts and our hands [and then with them mount up in prayer] to God in heaven...** (AMPC)*

## Chapter Five

# The City Church and Thanksgiving

*"And I John saw **the holy city**, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven... ..I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, **the tabernacle of God** is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."*

### Revelation 21:2-3 (KJV)

**T**he City Church... The mere mention of the words, "**The City Church**," brings about a sense and presence of distinction, esteem and prominence. When seen in the context of Revelation 21:2-3, it carries a *weightiness* and an ambiance of the magnitude of this Holy City. A city "*coming down from God out of heaven...*" This is no ordinary City. It is indeed, **the Holy City!**

The concept and notion of the City Church is not new. From the perspective of how God planned things from before the foundation of the world, this principle and standpoint has existed from the "beginning." Without a doubt, the pattern and master template of the City Church

has its origins in the heart of God. Yet, to most of us the idea and reality of a fully functioning "church in the city", is fairly new. No matter how long any of us have known and served the Lord, the theory, picture or theme of a City Church is still a fresh or even novel proposition.

My intent and end goal with this chapter is for it to be a *brief preamble or introduction* into the subject of the City Church. I believe deeply that the desire of God's heart is to establish an awareness of the existence and manifestation of the City Church.

(Within the foreseeable future I will write a book specifically covering the theme of the reality of the City Church. There I will delve fully into the significance and role of the Church at this juncture in the history of God's creation.)

## **What is the "City Church?"**

Well, I'll answer as briefly and thoroughly as I can. For now, this definition should sufficiently describe the basic concepts and principles of the City Church.

In essence, the City Church is the totality of all the "Christian" churches, ministries, congregations and house churches in a city in any given location. I live in Kempton Park, South Africa, so the City Church in this region is comprised of all the entities as described above. Take a look at these verses:

*Revelation 2:1, "Unto the angel of the **church of Ephesus** write... 8 And unto the angel of the **church in Smyrna** write... 12 And to the angel of the **church in***

***Pergamos*** write... 18 And unto the angel of the **church in Thyatira** write..." (KJV)

Revelation 3:1, "And unto the angel of the **church in Sardis** write... 7 And to the angel of the **church in Philadelphia** write... 14 And unto the angel of the **church of the Laodiceans** write..." (KJV)

(Also see Acts 2:47; 5:11; 7:38; 8:1 & 3; 11:2 & 26; 12:5; 13:1; 15:22; 18:22; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2 and many more...)

These verses incontestably remove any doubts about the way God looks at His Church. The churches named in the verses above are the sum of all the different congregations and house churches in existence in the day.

**Why is this important?** The City Church is central to how God deals with His Church in a region and a nation. He works with the Church as a corporeal or "bodily" entity. And, in the end, all of the "city churches" in the world form the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, the Tabernacle of God in the earth (*Revelation 21:2-3*).

Furthermore, when the City Church comes into manifestation within any physical city, it creates and provides a "dome" of God's Grace over that specific city. This "dome of Grace" brings with it many of God's blessings, provisions and protection inside the limits of cities and their regions.

In his book, "The House of the Lord," Francis Frangipane states, "**...it takes a citywide church to win a citywide war...**" Francis released this book in 1991, and reading it stirred a desire in me to know more about the "citywide church." It is only during recent years that more

clarity about this came through men like Pastor Thamo Naidoo, Dr. Sagie Govender, Apostle John Alley, and others (*their details provided in the Endnotes on page 50.*)

Francis Frangipane states that during a specific time period of petitioning God in prayer, the crime rate in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, USA, dropped by 17%. *This reduction in crime was even confirmed by the FBI.* What is significant is that Francis did not pray alone. He met together with the City Church elders in Cedar Rapids. In his book he also explains that before this happened, the city pastors confessed their sins and released forgiveness towards one another. This was the flashpoint which initiated God's process of becoming "one." This posture of being "one" is where God wants us (*Psalms 133; John 17*).

One of the best Bible examples of apostles and city fathers gathering together is found in Acts 2:42. This verse also describes "The Four Pillars" upon which this "apostolic community" was built.

*"And they steadfastly persevered, devoting themselves constantly to (1) the instruction and (2) fellowship of the apostles, to (3) the breaking of bread [including the Lord's Supper] and (4) prayers." (AMPC) (also see Acts 6:1 - 4)*

Notice that "prayers" come last in this verse. Prayers are preceded first by the instruction of apostles (*doctrine*), fellowship and breaking of bread (*discussing the Word with one another, and Communion*). The point I make here is that once the fathers of the City Church agree upon what they've heard from God, they can teach it to God's people. Since their teaching will undoubtedly be based in and on

the **Doctrine of Christ**, those who hear and receive the Word, will pray and make declarations with great accuracy and authority (*Acts 6:1-7; 1 John 5:14-15*).

Prayers in any city will only reach optimal effectiveness when the *proper* Biblical environment for God's *oneness* is created by the spiritual fathers. Once the correct environment is built and established, the Spirit of God will manifest His "**oneness**" in and through us.

Now, when prayer becomes this effective, how much more will we experience the manifestation of God in our cities when we come into true oneness and submission to God's Grace? And, by the way, *oneness* is a far higher dimension in Christ than the "unity" which leaders have spared no effort to achieve over many decades and even centuries.

Psalm 133 is clear about God *commanding* His blessing where there is oneness. This word "*command*" includes these meanings: "*coming, appearing, evidence, sign and token.*" This is very powerful when we think in terms of God *coming* and *appearing* in our cities. Obviously I am not referring to the literal appearing of the Lord. My point is that He will "appear" in and through the City Church (*John 14:7-12*).

This "appearing" of Christ in the City Church will be *recognised* by both the spiritual and natural environments. Since Christ is the Word, the environments will begin to align with their original design as God had it in His heart from the beginning. Christ will be seen in and expressed through His corporate Body, the City Church. (*see Mark 4:37-41; Luke 4:33-36; John 6:16-21; 21:4-14; Acts 16:5-34*)

Look what Jesus says in Matthew 12:25:

*"...Any kingdom that is divided against itself is being brought to desolation and laid waste, and **no city or house divided against itself will last** or continue to stand." (AMPC)*

Is this not what we're seeing and encountering in our cities and nations, today? Who is responsible for the *desolation* and *division* we're all "patiently enduring" as communities and cities? ***Do you know what we call this "patient endurance?" "We're suffering for the Lord until He returns to snatch us away!"***

Let me put it to you as plainly as I can. It is the responsibility of the Church to *"invade"* the cities and manifest the Kingdom of God! This has to take place first before there will be any kind of "snatching away" or physical return of the Lord!

As the "church" we complain and judge politicians for not doing their jobs properly. We accuse them of neglect and dereliction of duty when in fact many of these "duties" are the responsibility of the Church (*Isaiah 58; Acts 6:1-7*). We are outraged when they make declarations contrary to our beliefs. And, we are especially indignant when their decrees and predictions come to pass and into manifestation!

Are their words more powerful than the Words of the Most High God? Surely not? So, what is the problem? The answer is that the Word of the Lord is not proceeding from the mouth of the City Church! (*see Deuteronomy 8:3; Luke 4:4*). When the City Church gathers and declares the Word of the Lord, His Word will supercede and overrun the

words of the prophets (politicians) of Babylon! (*also see 1 Kings 18*).

The scriptures teach that we are to pray for two cities, Jerusalem and the physical city we live in. Prayer for Jerusalem will ostensibly include Jerusalem in the Middle-East. More critically, though, is that ***our main prayer focus must be for the Heavenly Jerusalem, which is us, the Church*** (*Psalm 122; Revelation 3:12; 21:2, 10*).

Jeremiah outlines God's prayer for our physical city:

*Jeremiah 29:4, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the captives whom I have caused to be carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build yourselves houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat the fruit of them. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not be diminished. 7 And seek (inquire for, require, and request) the peace and welfare of the city to which I have caused you to be carried away captive; and pray to the Lord for it, for in the welfare of [the city in which you live] you will have welfare." (AMPC)*

*Proverbs 11:10 - 11 reads; "When it goes well with the [uncompromisingly] righteous, the city rejoices, but when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy. By the blessing of the influence of the upright and God's favor [because of them] the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. (AMPC)*

## The City Church Radiates God's Grace

The first four chapters of this book give detailed insights and knowledge of how thanksgiving releases the Grace of God into our lives. **For the City Church to come into existence and into its full manifestation, it will need the Grace of God.** God will not *sovereignly* just "*manifest*" the City Church on one sunny Sunday afternoon. He requires us, His sons, who are the carriers of His Grace and Presence, to cooperate with Him in "giving birth" to the City Church (*Isaiah 66:5-14; Galatians 4:19*).

The introduction to this final chapter (5) specifies it as being a prelude or curtain-raiser to the basic principles and directives governing the "architecture" of the City Church. According to scripture, ***five is the number of God's Grace.*** I know that if you are still reading this, the Holy Spirit has begun the process of imparting His Grace into your spirit man. Without this Grace impartation, neither you nor I will be able to be part of the development and construction of the City Church!

Furthermore, I believe that the sincere application and practise of our thanksgiving to God, within the borders of the cities God has placed us in, will accelerate the construction and manifestation of the City Church. Thanksgiving will release a powerful *download* of God's Grace into our midst.

Are we prepared to sacrifice and build today so others can reap the benefits tomorrow?

As I write this paragraph, it is the 6th of June, 2024. I've been watching the news channels as they cover the 80th

commemoration of the D-Day landings in Normandy, Northern France. This invasion began the death knell of the Nazi occupation of most of Europe, and was instrumental in bringing an end to the Second World War.

What impressed me the most about the coverage is the thanksgiving expressed by many world leaders present at these ceremonies. They gave thanks for those young soldiers who were prepared to lay their lives down so others could be free. As one of the war veterans so beautifully stated, ***"We gave our yesterday so you could have your tomorrow."*** This statement brought tears to my eyes.

Hearing what this war veteran said also triggered something deep within my own heart! It's almost as if God was asking me, *"How far are you prepared to go today so those who come after you may enjoy the reality of the blessings of My Kingdom?"* Indeed, I asked myself, *"To what extent are you prepared to lay down your own agendas so God's House, the City Church can be built in your city?"* (Haggai 1 & 2)

This is a question we all ought to ask ourselves. Are we prepared to break down and let go of the religious "fences" and walls we've constructed to keep ourselves and our congregations "safe?" ***Safe from what? Safe from the "influence" of the other churches in our cities!***

Sons of God, there is no longer a "mandate" or place for our "fences" of spiritual racism and segregation to exist! In this New Season God is breaking down all dividing walls. Why is He doing this? To bring about ONENESS! God is not interested in our efforts to bring about "unity" in His

Church. History shows how time and time again our efforts to create unity have failed miserably. ***From God's viewpoint unity is not enough, He demands oneness!*** (*Psalm 133; 127; John 17; Ephesians 4; 1 Peter 2:5-10*)

## **The Role of the City Church in God's End-time Agenda**

Writing the closing chapter of this book is intended and meant to bring an awareness of a crucial and key dimension of God's *last days* agenda to you. I am convinced that at least one primary and predominant "key" is the City Church. The City Church will play an overriding and central role in the fulfilment of God's end-time motive and intent. As conditions on the world stage continue to degenerate into chaos, the City Church will become more and more prominent (*Romans 5:20-21; James 2:13*). The question is, are we prepared to be part of this incredible end-time strategy God is releasing into the earth?

In the paragraph above it reads, "*...to bring an awareness of a crucial and key dimension of God's 'last days' agenda...*" The terms *end-times* or *last days* must also be revisited. There are multiple mentions of end-times or last days in Scripture. This is true both of the Old and New Testaments. Although the subject of this book is not about the end-times, it is nonetheless worthy of a short mention.

*Acts 2:17, "And it shall come to pass in the **last days**, God declares, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all mankind... 18 Yes, and on My menservants also and on My maidservants in **those days** I will pour out of My Spirit..." (AMPC) (also reference Joel 2:28-29).*

This verse is but one example where the *last days* are mentioned. When a deeper study of the last days is done, the Scriptures reveal that they do not always and necessarily refer to the days we live in now. When some of these words were penned, the writers referred to the end or last days of the Old Covenant. Yet, this does not mean that we do not find ourselves in the last days.

Delving even further into history reveals that many *epochs* and *kairoses* have come and gone. We know that some of these past seasons have stretched over decades, centuries or even longer. Presently, we find ourselves in yet another season or *kairos* ordained by God, and this too will end. So, when one of God's seasons comes to its finish, we can say we are in the "last days" or the "end-times" of such a season.

For your edification, do some of your own research. You will be amazed at what the Spirit of God reveals to you. Here are some verses you can start with:

*2 Timothy 3:1; Hebrews 1:2; 1 Peter 1:5; 1 Peter 1:20; 2 Peter 3:3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 1:18.*

## **We are in a New Season Now!**

Why another new season, you ask? Well, let me "quiz" you a little. Are you happy with the existing status quo of the Church and the city you live in? Are you happy and excited about the world your children and grandchildren will grow up in? I certainly am not "rejoicing" about the way things are now! Something has to change... There simply must be more to God than what we're experiencing now. I'm looking out and longing for that triumphant

Church the scriptures speak about. Yet, when I see what's going on in my city, I am not sure that I see the fruits of triumph and victory!

Here are some seed thoughts about why I think we find ourselves in a new season. Firstly, for a new season to exist there has to be a previous or older timeline or time span. At our specific "chronos" moment in time, I believe it is permissible to say that the *shutdown* by God of the *former season* is all about done. I believe the Lord began to gradually and systematically deconstruct and "finish" the old season in the early 1990's. So, we are now, in 2024, into quite an advanced stage of this new season.

Some of the *signs* of the closure of an old season may include: increased lawlessness, wars and conflicts exacerbated by widespread political instability, the spread of disease and pandemics (ie. Covid 19), the decline in spiritual and religious fervency, economic upheavals, and much more. **Noticeably and of greater significance though, is the emergence of the voices of a remnant of mature leaders announcing and declaring the arrival of a new season in God!**

The Spirit of God brings about new seasons in and to the Church because the Church is in constant need of an "upgrade!" Why do we need upgrades? The revelation of Christ is progressive in its nature and essence. It is an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit within the deepest recesses of our hearts (*Matthew 6:1-6; Mark 7:1-23; Galatians 4:19; James 3:11*). Since God wants to reveal Himself completely in and through His Church, we need Him to upgrade us continually (*1 Corinthians 13:10-13; Philippians 2:12-13; 3:10-15; Colossians 1:22-29; Hebrews 5; 6:1-3*).

When God initiates a new season, He *injects* the awareness of the new by releasing His proceeding Word into the hearts and minds of mature and seasoned spiritual fathers (*Malachi 4:6; Luke 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2*). These are "hand-picked" by God Himself in order that the new "Word" accompanying the new season will not be polluted by old paradigms and mindsets. Personally, I classify many of these spiritual fathers as genuine apostles of Christ. God keeps many of them "hidden" from public view for decades. He only releases them when the "fullness of time" has come (*Galatians 4:4*). They are released as His special messengers with discernment and insight into the "seals" of the scriptures (*Daniel 12; Revelation 5:1-9; 6:1*).

Lamentably though, these distinct and clear clarion calls from seasoned leaders are often ignored and dismissed. The accurate declaration of the "now" and "proceeding" Word of God is frequently denounced by those captured in the "glory" of the old dispensation. The "veterans of the faith" from the "old" seasons often feel threatened and uncomfortable since what they're hearing is outside of their doctrinal paradigm. What they hear will also demand from them a "painful" exit and migration out of their comfort zones. For many this is too high a price to pay. They frequently become the greatest critics and persecutors of the new move of God.

### **Is it possible to Build this City Church?**

**Yes, it is!** Regrettably though, there are church leaders who tell me that the reality of a living, thriving and dynamically expanding City Church is an impossible pipe

dream. They emphatically state how they've *tried* it and that it definitely does not work!

In addition, some leaders have shied away from teaching on the topic of the City Church. This has resulted in many Christians not being specifically aware that there even is such an entity as the City Church. Those who are may have an attitude where they classify the subject as the responsibility of pastors and theologians. They will also tell you, *"I have my church and I'm happy there..."* However well-meaning and good-hearted these statements may be, they do not negate the existence of the City Church.

The corporeality, substantiality and expression of the City Church is certainly not specifically or exclusively the burden or domain of spiritual leaders. The obligation to accurately express and manifest the City Church belongs to each and every person who calls themselves a son of God!

***Caveat:*** Let me state it clearly! God's intent for the City Church is not to remove or invalidate the character and *flavour* of each individual church or ministry. It is also not the nature or objective of the City Church to replace the God-given anointing and grace upon congregations. When the true City Church comes into being, it will enhance and bolster the anointings and graces upon all churches and ministries in a particular city. Congregations will be dynamically empowered like never before so they can fulfil the mandate God entrusted to them (*Leviticus 26:7-8; Joshua 23:9-10*).

How and why am I able to say this? I can do so, given the fact that there are cities in the nation of South Africa

where the City Church is already coming into manifestation! My wife Annika and I personally attend some of the City Church gatherings in our region. And, City Church gatherings are not only taking place in our region alone. There are similar assemblies in other provinces of South Africa who do so on a regular basis. I won't go into specifics, but the evidence and effect of the presence of the City Church in these areas is simply astounding.

### **Let us start Building!**

So, I encourage you to fully embrace the truth and authenticity of God being the Author of the construction and existence of the City Church! Let us accept and welcome the reality and truth of the City Church being part and parcel of God's powerful *end-time* strategy. This strategy is there to bring us to the place of **"the end and culmination of all things"** (1 Peter 4:7 - AMPC).

When we look at the Church and the world we live in today, building the City Church looks impossible. Yet, I am persuaded and agree with those leaders who also see the City Church vision that this is feasible and achievable. Under the Leadership of the Holy Spirit we can assemble and establish the City Church! ***Therefore, in order to get things off the ground, we must, in faith, begin to thank God for the full manifestation of the City Church.*** My sincere and heartfelt persuasion is that ***He will begin the release of His sufficient and great Grace enabling us to build the City Church*** as we practice genuine thanksgiving.

As His Grace begins to descend and permeate the lives of spiritual leaders and their congregations, the Spirit of

Grace will infuse a definite desire to cooperate with Him. The result will be the willingness of leaders to come together in a spirit and attitude of love, grace and synergy (*Psalm 127; Acts 4:23-35; 2 Corinthians 9:8; 12:9*).

As city leaders respond to God's call, He will assemble and fit together a "City Church presbytery" of mature apostles, prophets and spiritual fathers (*Acts 6:1-7; Ephesians 4:11-16*). These apostles and fathers will be of such spiritual stature that nothing they say or do will be without the permission of our Heavenly Father (*John 5:19, 30; Matthew 16:18-19; 18:18-19*). They will be utterly submitted to the Spirit of Christ and to one another. Of paramount importance is the fact that they will not delineate or label themselves by denomination or any other *manmade* dividing lines. They will also not insist on being "titular." This simply means they won't actually like being addressed by their specific titles, eg., pastor, prophet, apostle, bishop, etc..

This humility and surrender will attract an even greater measure and dimension of God's Grace into our cities. The resultant effect will be the birthing and initiation of positive shifts and changes in spiritual and physical atmospheres and environments (*Acts 16:5-34; 20:25-32; 1 Peter 5:5-6*).

### **How do we Do This?**

Well, let us begin by initiating the process of sincere thanksgiving for the manifestation of the City Church in our regions. Make a start by setting aside specific times where we wait on God to show us the specific leaders He wants to use in our city. As we pray more specifically for

these leaders, God will show us His strategy for bringing them together.

We all know the expression, "timing is everything!" This is extremely true when it comes to obtaining and applying God's strategy for the City Church. **Without a doubt, the season for establishing the City Church is a definite and present reality.** So, no time like right now to begin the work! However, we must ask the Lord for His timing relative to whom we approach and when to speak to them about the City Church.

Methods and strategies will vary. A phone call or email may be a start. A cup of coffee or an informal meal to *break the ice* might trigger the purposes of God in a city. Keep in mind the simplicity of two people meeting together regularly to pray and thank God for the City Church.

*Matthew 18, "18 Truly I tell you, whatever you forbid and declare to be improper and unlawful on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit and declare proper and lawful on earth must be what is already permitted in heaven. 19 **Again I tell you, if two of you on earth agree (harmonize together, make a symphony together) about whatever [anything and everything] they may ask, it will come to pass and be done for them by My Father in heaven.** 20 For wherever two or three are gathered (drawn together as My followers) in (into) My name, there I AM in the midst of them." (AMPC) (also see Deuteronomy 32:30; Joshua 23:10)*

## **My Prayer for You**

*Heavenly Father, I thank you for my brother or sister in Christ. I know you have endued them with Power from on High through the Holy Spirit. Because of Your Spirit within, they are able and empowered to perform Your Will in their city.*

*Your Spirit is called the Spirit of Grace and so, as we draw near to Your throne of Grace, we thank You and we receive Your sufficient and great Grace for our city.*

*Father, we request for your intervention in our city. By faith we receive the welfare and peace of the city where we live. And, by faith we will do what you require from us to make the welfare of our city a reality.*

*Spirit of God, we thank you for beginning a new work in the hearts and minds of our leaders. We thank you for open eyes and open ears to hear what the Lord is saying to our City Church. We thank You that You cause a fresh wind of Your New Season to blow upon the hearts of Your people in our city.*

*Father, we declare that Your Spirit rests upon the leaders of our city. The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge. As Your Spirit rests upon our city leaders, He makes them of quick understanding, because You have anointed and qualified them to preach the arrival of the Kingdom of God to every citizen.*

*We commit to pray for and support our leaders as they step out daily to do Your Will in our city. We refuse to*

*judge them and commit to only speak life and that which will edify and build them up.*

*We bless our leaders as they come together in Your Love and Oneness to build the City Church. In the Name of Jesus!*



## Endnotes & Tributes

This page contains a short list of tributes and references to ministers of God whose teachings and input have contributed to the writing of this book. To find out more about their ministries, click on the titles of the websites listed below each author:

### Pastor Francis Frangipane

Francis Frangipane on Facebook ↗  
The Frangipane Chronicles ↗

### Pastor Thamo Naidoo

ThamoNaidoo.com ↗  
GATE Ministries, Sandton, South Africa ↗  
GATE Global Family ↗  
Thamo Naidoo on Facebook ↗  
Thamo Naidoo on YouTube ↗

### Dr. Sagie Govender

ABC Ministries ↗  
Dr. Sagie Govender on YouTube ↗

### Dr. Ben Kleynhans

Shiloh Ministries ↗  
Shiloh Ministries on Subsplash ↗  
Shiloh Ministries on YouTube ↗

### Prophet Shaun Blignaut

Father's Heart Ministries ↗  
Shaun Blignaut on Facebook ↗  
Heart Leadership Institute ↗

## **Dr. Kelley Varner**

Dr. Kelley Varner's website [↗](#)

## **Menlyn Apostolic Forum (Pretoria City Church)**

Menlyn AF [↗](#)

## **Apostle John Alley**

Peace Apostolic Ministries [↗](#)

Peace Apostolic Ministries on YouTube [↗](#)

## **Bishop Joseph Mattera**

Mattera Ministries International [↗](#)

Mattera Ministries International on YouTube [↗](#)

## Other Resources

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*Jan van Rooyen*





*New Creation Realities*

## "ACTIVATE THE POWER OF THANKSGIVING" IS ABOUT:

- \* Opening up a New Depth in Your Relationship with God
- \* The Fact that Thanksgiving is God's Will for You
- \* God's clear Instruction for us to give Thanks to Him!
- \* A Thanksgiving Attitude being a Lasting State of Heart
- \* Thanksgiving as an Act and Action of Covenantal Worship
- \* The Meaning of Thanksgiving in the Old & New Testaments
- \* The Importance of Lifting your Hands in Thanksgiving

This book is based on a message I shared with a family of Believers on Sunday, the 26th of November, 2023. We dedicated this day as a day of Thanksgiving, a Thanksgiving meal, and a time of sharing and fellowship. Gifts were also exchanged. The most wonderful part was everyone trading their stories of thanks to the Lord. Testimonies of God's faithfulness abounded. The importance of thanksgiving became apparent to all as I interpreted and explained the basics of Thanksgiving. Many Believers fail to adequately give thanks to the Lord and those around them. When we search the Scriptures, we find the importance of this act of our faith abundantly scattered on almost every page of the Bible. *Make Thanksgiving your Lifestyle!*



**Jan van Rooyen** is senior elder of RAIN International SA. He teaches, instructs, counsels and trains the Body of Christ to come into accurate alignment with the purposes and heart of God in this Apostolic Season. Since entering the ministry in 1980, Jan has sought to impart a hunger into the hearts of God's people to seek out the revelation of Christ in Scripture. His main vision is to see Christ formed in the Church and coming to maturity in the Nature of Christ. Jan lives with his wife, Annika, in Johannesburg, South Africa.



**"Facilitating Conformity  
to the Image of Christ"**

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