



John Wesley (1703 – 1791)

A Man of GRATITUDE

John's Story

Eleven-year-old Hetty Wesley woke up about midnight. Pieces of the roof of her house were falling on her bed! And the pieces were on fire!

Hetty ran to find her parents. The family hurried out of the burning house to safety — everyone except 5-year-old John. The children's father, Samuel, tried to reach John several times, but the flames were too hot. The family knelt to pray.

Suddenly John's face popped up in an upstairs window. One neighbor stood on the shoulders of another, and they snatched John out of the house just before the roof collapsed. "Come, neighbors!" Samuel called out. "Let us give thanks to God. He has given me all my children. Let the house go; I am rich enough!" Susanna, the children's mother, called John "a brand plucked from the burning" (Zechariah 3:2).

John grew up to be a minister. He traveled to America to work with Native Americans. However, he was not very successful in his ministry. As a young minister, he made many mistakes. When he was 39, he attended a Christian meeting at which the Holy Spirit helped him understand that he could not earn his salvation. He understood that good habits are the result of God's grace and mercy, not the cause. He later wrote, "I felt my heart strangely warmed; I felt I did trust in Christ, in Christ alone, for salvation." John was grateful for God's goodness.

John became a strong leader. God used him to help in a great revival in England. Throughout the rest of his life, he traveled 250,000 miles on horseback sharing the gospel, and he preached 40,000 sermons. He is considered the founder of the Methodist and Wesleyan denominations.

When John encountered problems, he did not pray, "Lord, take this plague away from me," but "Let me be purified, not consumed." The "brand plucked from the fire" was not consumed, but lived for the glory of God.

Key Bible Verses:

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."
(Colossians 3:15-17)

Key Word: GRATITUDE

Gratitude: Thankfulness

Brand:

A burned or partly burned piece of wood



John's Siblings

John's parents, Susanna and Samuel, had 19 children in 20 years, but only 10 survived.



Family Life

Susanna Wesley, John's mother, was a minister's daughter, and her husband, Samuel, was also a minister. She had 24 siblings, so she knew how to manage a large family well. Every day, one of Samuel and Susanna's older children took a younger one aside for Bible reading and prayer time together. Every week Susanna spent 15 minutes alone with each child talking about the child's spiritual life.



Birthday Tradition

On the day of each Wesley child's fifth birthday, Susanna spent all day with the birthday child. The child had to learn the letters of the alphabet and a prayer on that day. Most of the Wesley children, including John, did this in six hours or less.



Child Training

Samuel, John's father, once asked Susanna how she could endure telling the children something she wanted them to learn 20 times. She said if she only told them 19 times, she would have "lost all my labor; for it was the twentieth time that crowned the whole."



The Holy Club

In college, John and his brother Charles organized the "Holy Club" to encourage Bible study, prayer, fasting, and service. Some students made fun of the group and tried to insult them by calling them "Methodists" because they had a method for all their activities.



Deeply Grateful

John learned about true gratitude while talking one evening with a maintenance worker at his college. The man had few clothes, nothing to eat, and no bed to sleep on. However, he was deeply grateful to God for his life and for the opportunity to serve the Lord.



Famous Hymn Writer

John's brother, Charles, wrote more than 7,000 hymns.



Farewell

John was often heard expressing his gratitude to God during his final days when he was bedridden. His final words were, **"The best of all is, God is with us. Farewell!"**

What Are You Grateful For?



John Wesley was most grateful for God's free gift of salvation through faith in His Son, Jesus.

Challenge

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

To begin to "give thanks in all circumstances," write down five things you are thankful for each day for the next 10 days. Use the suggestions below or create your own categories. (If you have to miss a day, start again where you left off.)

Day 1: Five people who bring thoughts of gratitude to your heart (past or present):

Day 2: Five places in God's creation that have been a blessing to you:

Day 3: Five Bible truths or instructions that have impacted your life:

Day 4: Five experiences or events you recall with delight and thankfulness:

Day 5: Five things God created among all His creation for which you are grateful:

Day 6: Five Christian songs that make your heart rejoice and encourage you:

Day 7: Five challenging circumstances God used for good in your life:

Day 8: Five Christian books or movies that have encouraged and blessed you:

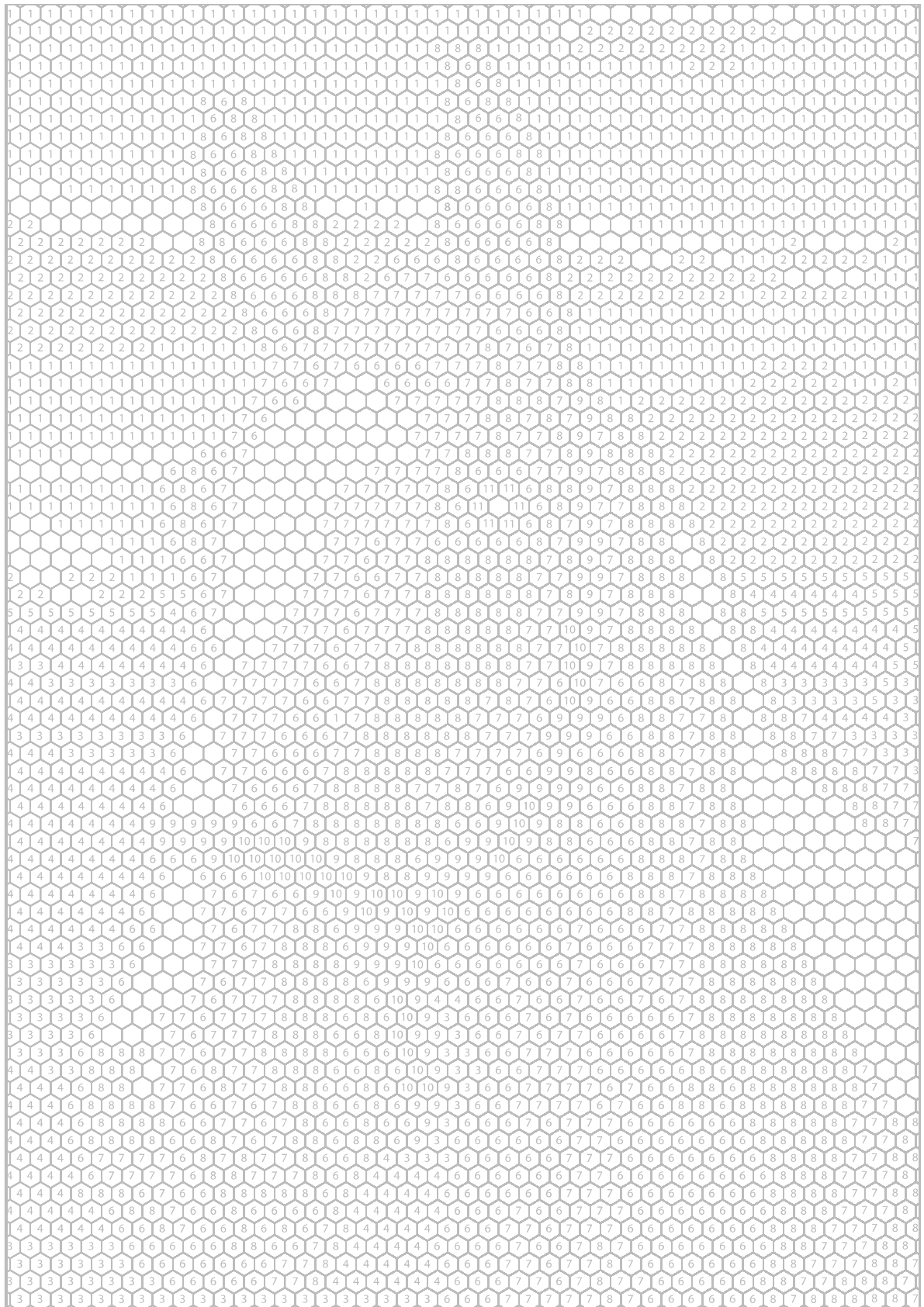
Day 9: Five special gifts you have received that have enriched your life:

Day 10: Five specific ways your needs have been provided for each day:

Think through your list each day, remembering why you are thankful. For example, if you listed a friend's name on Day 1, think about reasons you are thankful for him or her. Remember to thank God in prayer for His goodness to you!



As a child, John was rescued from his burning house as he fell into the safety of his father's arms. Later, as an adult, John learned that he could rest peacefully in the arms of his Heavenly Father, depending on Him alone for salvation.



Color each numbered shape with the color corresponding to that particular number. What image is revealed? Hint: John Wesley rode one of these more than 250,000 miles during his lifetime. The earth at the equator is 24,901 miles. How many times did Wesley travel the distance around the earth?

Do All the Good You Can



“Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the souls you can, in every place you can, with all the zeal you can.” — John Wesley

John Wesley took seriously Jesus’ instruction to show our gratitude to Him by feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, and welcoming strangers. (See Matthew 25:35–36.)

Set aside some time each day to “do all the good you can.” Read the suggestions below, and add ideas of your own in the spaces provided. Select several ideas you can accomplish in a morning or afternoon. Then discuss your ideas with your parents to create a plan of action!

1. When you are out with your parents, be aware of anyone you could help by, for example, opening a door, returning a grocery cart to the entrance of the store, retrieving something someone dropped, helping a lost child find his or her parent, etc.).
2. Do a chore at home without being asked.
3. Offer to help your parents, siblings, and/or grandparents accomplish a project or task.
4. Ask for permission to clean your mom’s or dad’s vehicle.
5. Ask for ways you could serve the younger children in your family, church, or neighborhood.
6. Write a thank-you note to your parents, grandparents, pastor, teacher, mail carrier, fireman — anyone who serves you or your family.
7. Volunteer for a local ministry or outreach.
8. Participate in outreach to needy children.
9. Offer to do yard work for a sick or elderly person or assist in other ways. (For example, families can volunteer to deliver weekly meals to sick or elderly people through community outreach.)
10. Bake cookies or homemade bread for someone who needs encouragement.
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

What Do You Think?



John Wesley tried to help those who heard him preach grow as Christians and become what God wanted them to be. In his sermons, he preached about growing and maturing as a follower of Christ. What do you think about his suggestions for those who desire to grow in their faith? Write your thoughts on the lines below the following questions.

1. John Wesley said, “We should be continually laboring to cut off all the useless things that surround us.” Are there objects or activities in your life that are useless to your growth as a Christian? What are some things that might be useful to your growth?

2. John Wesley said we should be thankful for difficult things that happen to us because they help us grow in grace. Do you think it’s possible to be thankful for such things? Read James 1:2–4. Why does James say we should “consider it all joy” when we experience trials?

3. John Wesley said, “proceed with much prayer” if you want God to guide your life as a Christian. Jesus said, “apart from Me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5, ESV). Besides meals, what situations in life do you begin with prayer? What are some other common situations in your day-to-day life where you need to ask for God to lead you and show you the way He wants you to “proceed”?

4. What are some other things that you think help people grow as Christians?



John Wesley was grateful to God for His grace, and no doubt he thanked God often for His mercy. Gratitude is an important part of prayer. But it's not the only part.

Jesus taught His disciples where to start when they talk to God. He said, *"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' (Matthew 6:9–13)*

When Jesus said this is how we should pray, He did not mean we have to pray those exact words every time we pray. Instead, He gave us a guide for how to talk to God.

So how should we pray? Remember the acronym A-C-T-S.

A = Adoration, which means praising God for who He is

C = Confession, or telling God how you have sinned and asking for forgiveness

T = Thanksgiving/Gratitude, or thanking God for what He has done in your life

S = Supplication, which is asking God for help with your needs and the needs of others

Answer the questions below to further guide you in praying. Your answers may change from day to day. You probably don't say the same words to human friends every day when you talk to them!

A: What can I praise God for?

C: How have I sinned against God?

T: What am I grateful to God for?

S: What do I want to ask God for?
