



Celebrating God's Faithfulness

WEEK 1	5 OCTOBER – CULTIVATING A LIFE OF GRATITUDE.
Week 2	12 October – Remember, Rejoice, Rededicate.
Week 3	19 October – Recognizing grace through the years.
Week 4	26 October - Removing barriers and building bridges for the renewal



Psalms 100:4-5, "Enter His gates with praise...His goodness endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations".

Thessalonians 5:16-18, Always rejoice.... give thanks to God for all things"

Matthew 13:1-13, vv. "A farmer went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop..."

We begin this month of October in a celebration mood as we commemorate the 69th birthday of Bryanston Methodist Church. Generally, church birthdays hold a special place in the life of a congregation. They are opportunities to reflect on the faithfulness of God, celebrate milestones, and envision the future. With every passing year, we have a chance to share our stories of how God has worked in our lives.

Our church's birthday is a reminder of God's perfect guidance that leads us through the uncertain terrains of life. It points us to the power of God's Word, which illuminates our path, providing the direction and strength we need to continue our pilgrimage. We have seen God's faithfulness in our lives and in the life of the church. Our theme, therefore, for this month of October is: **"Celebrating God's faithfulness"**.

This theme honours our church's rich history, bringing to the fore the blessings and grace God has showered upon our community over the years. Over this month of October, we will be affirming the Lord's guidance over our church. He has led us through the pastures and along the waters, offering rest amidst turbulence and hope during the droughts. This month as a community we reflect on the works of God, reaffirming our commitment to faith and to the values that unite us as the church. This birthday is a celebration of God's enduring faithfulness and the loving community called BMC He has built. Life is a celebration. This birthdate is a reminder to celebrate the life as well as to update the life. Celebration is an active state, an act of expressing reverence or appreciation.

A church anniversary is much more than a celebration, it is a profound occasion to honour spiritual heritage, celebrate the unity of the present, and look with hope to the future. We celebrate BMC's witness, and recounting God's work. We celebrate BMC's missional calling through outward-focused worship that leads to action.

It is a privilege for the church to still be here after so many years. It is refreshing and speaks to the church's hospitality. BMC has weathered the seasons because its foundation is solid rock. On this anniversary, we stand on the foundation of God-self. We 've built our church upon Him in the past and we will continue to build upon Him in the future. We can know that He will sustain us and continue to build us. And so, whatsoever you do, don't do it as a duty, do it from your love, don't do it as a burden, do it as a celebration. Come let us celebrate together our victorious journey in Christ Jesus so far. Let us rejoice in the never-ending blessings He has poured out upon us. Let us make this anniversary a moment of spiritual reflection for our community.

An anniversary is vital signpost in the life of the church. Just as the Israelites would celebrate God's great faithfulness and deliverance, so should we commemorate and give thanks for the ways God has led us and blessed us. May this be a month filled with joy and celebration. May we be filled with gratitude and praise for all that God has done for us. May we rejoice in the faithfulness of God, knowing that He will continue to be faithful to us for many years to come. Be good; Be well, and my wish for you is joy! - Rev Zamani.

Home Groups and classes guide:

1. Open in Worship and Prayer: this is to invite God into the meeting. For example, you can light a candle, sing together, or use a YouTube Hymn or song.
2. Open your Bibles and read the Bible verses for this week (take turns?) see below.
3. Reflect on the Bible verses and the reflection written by a Minister or Lay Preacher.
4. Connect with each other and take the reflection deeper by answering the Questions.
5. Works out: What have we learned that we can apply in our lives in this session? Keep each other accountable for promises made or important steps taken. Pray for and over each other (after taking prayer requests).



Week 1: 5 October – Cultivating a life of gratitude

Learning to be grateful to God puts us in a constant awareness of the source of all good things in our lives, always reminding us of our need, which God met through Christ. Rather than God serve our wishes, gratitude puts us in our rightful place – eternally indebted to the one who gave us life. Gratitude slays self-sufficiency.

Most times we take for granted the blessings God bestows on us - health, friendships, job, car, home or apartment etc. That is why you'll hear a person ask, why bad things happen to them, but they rarely ask why good things happen to them. These attitudes reflect the false belief that we don't deserve bad, but we do deserve good. Gratitude kills pride and crushes the spirit of entitlement. When we place our discontented egos on the altar of gratitude, we develop contented alter egos filled with thanksgiving.

WORSHIP SONG: To God be the glory! Great things He hath done

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CeBoSQsBR0>

READINGS: Ezra 3: 7-13; Psalm 95:1-3, Philipians 4:4 - 9, Luke 17:11-19

REFLECTION WRITTEN BY: REV ZAMANI SIKUPELA

Ezra 3: 7-13 - The Israelites had been exiled from Israel for seventy years. They were finally allowed to return to their Promised Land and began to rebuild their temple. When the foundation was laid, they celebrated the significant milestone with great joy and praised the Lord. In the middle of the joyous moment, they wept unashamedly for what used to be. They wept for what they had lost. It doesn't mean they weren't excited about the new temple – they simply allowed themselves to express the grief that rang so loudly in their hearts. We've likely all been there. I know I have. I have felt excruciating grief while also being filled with immense joy.

Pixar's *Inside Out* demonstrates so well that joy and sadness can coexist. Some of our greatest joys come from – or even because of – our deepest pain. It's okay to mourn what used to be, but we have to continue moving forward. There is so much for which we can be thankful and there is still so much good happening all around us. Let us use this example from Ezra as an encouragement to continue to press on in joy. There is so much joy to be found, even in the middle of chaos.

Psalm 95:1-3 - *“Oh come, let us sing” and “let us make a joyful noise”*. This passage serves as an exhortation to express joyful adoration and recognition of God's supreme authority and protective might over all other beings. It begins with a strong call to action, a command to actively engage in joyful worship. In other words, this Psalm is a call to joyous, thankful worship, reminding believers of God's steadfast salvation and His supreme sovereignty over everything else. It urges both Jews and Christians to come into His presence with joyful songs of thanks, shouting for joy because of who He is.

Philippians 4:4 – 9 - Paul's instructions in this section are within the broader context of addressing disagreements and conflicts within the Philippian church, particularly between two women named Euodia and Syntyche. This passage provides practical guidance for Christian living, urging believers to rejoice in the Lord always, practice gentleness, and avoid anxiety by bringing requests to God in prayer with thanksgiving.

Christians are encouraged to focus their thoughts on what is true, honourable, and excellent, and to act on what they have learned from Paul's example. By focusing on God and His truth, and by acting in accordance with His will, Christians can experience a profound sense of peace and walk in His presence.

Luke 17:11-19 - Luke recounts Jesus' healing ten lepers on his way to Jerusalem, who are then cleansed on their way to the priests. Only one, a Samaritan, returns to give thanks, prompting Jesus to note that the others did not give glory to God and the Samaritan's faith made him well.

Jesus questions the absence of the other nine, noting that the only one who returned was a foreigner. The story contrasts the grateful act of the Samaritan with the unexpressed thankfulness of the other nine, who seemingly enjoyed their healing without acknowledging the Healer. This story highlights the importance of profound gratitude in our response to God's blessings. The story encourages believers to have an attitude of thankfulness for God's blessings and to recognize that true wholeness is found in a relationship with Jesus, not just in the reception of physical blessings. What if thanking God is the answer to much of our anxiety? What would change if we chose to actively seek out things to be grateful for? How would that change our perspective? How would it change our relationship with God?

GROUP/CLASS QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we find hope and express joy in God's enduring love even when facing the rubble of brokenness in our lives?
2. What practical steps can we take to ensure our worship is not just words, but also reflects a deep inner attitude of reverence and submission?

3. What are some of the things in your life that make rejoicing difficult? What are practical ways you can find joy even in hardships?
4. If we are not moved to give thanks and praise to God, what does this reveal about our souls?

MEMORY VERSES FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: Romans 5:3-5	<i>"We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character, and hope; and hope doesn't put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us".</i>
Tuesday: Isaiah 61:3	<i>"And provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair".</i>
Wednesday: Psalm 37:4	<i>"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart".</i>
Thursday: Nehemiah 8:10	<i>"Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength".</i>
Friday: 1 Thess 5:16-18	<i>"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus".</i>
Saturday: Proverbs 3:9-10	<i>"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops, then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim with new wine".</i>

FAMILY TIME: WRITTEN BY JENNY BLAKE (CHILDREN'S PASTOR)

Week 1 Theme: Cultivating a Life of Gratitude

Scripture Readings:

- **Ezra 3:7-13** – Rebuilding the temple and the people's mixed response
- **Psalms 95:1-3** – A joyful call to worship the Lord
- **Philippians 4:4-9** – Rejoice, give thanks, and trust God's peace
- **Luke 17:11-19** – The thankful leper who returned to Jesus

Opening Prayer: Lord, thank You for all the blessings You've poured into our lives, both the ones we see and the ones we miss. Help us to grow hearts that are thankful, humble, and always aware of Your goodness. Teach us to live with joy and contentment. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Short Summary of the Readings

- **Ezra 3:7-13:** After years in exile, the people begin rebuilding the temple. When the foundation is laid, some people shout for joy, while others weep. There's a mix of emotions — but through it all, they are grateful that God has brought them this far.
- **Psalms 95:1-3:** A psalm calling everyone to sing and shout joyfully to God, because He is the rock of our salvation — the great King over all.
- **Philippians 4:4-9:** Paul encourages us to rejoice always, be gentle, not worry, and bring everything to God with thanksgiving. When we do, God's peace will guard our hearts.
- **Luke 17:11-19:** Jesus heals ten men with leprosy, but only one comes back to say thank you. That one was a Samaritan — an outsider. Jesus notices his gratitude and blesses him.

Main Message: Why Gratitude Matters

Gratitude isn't just about saying thank you. It's about remembering where our blessings come from. When we're grateful, we stop believing we deserve all the good things in our lives. Instead, we recognize God as the generous giver.

We often complain when things go wrong. But do we celebrate and give thanks just as easily when things go well? Gratitude changes how we see the world. It softens our hearts, silences our pride, and reminds us that we need God, not the other way around.

Gratitude is a spiritual discipline. It keeps our focus on God's goodness rather than our own wants. It helps us fight selfishness, pride, and entitlement. When we say "thank you" to God often, we are choosing to live in joy and humility.

Discussion Questions

For Teenagers:

1. Why do you think only one leper came back to thank Jesus? (**Luke 17:11–19**)
2. Have you ever experienced a time when you were truly grateful? What was it for?
3. How do you think gratitude affects your mental health and relationships?
4. What are some small daily habits you can develop to grow a thankful heart?
5. How do you handle moments when life feels unfair? Does gratitude help in those times?

For Younger Children:

1. What's something you're really thankful for today?
2. How do you feel when someone says "thank you" to you?
3. Can you name three blessings from God that you use every day?
4. Why do you think God wants us to say, "thank you"?
5. What can you do to show you're thankful to God this week?

Family Activity Ideas (Optional)

1. **Gratitude Jar** – Place a jar in your kitchen or lounge. Each day, every family member writes one thing they're thankful for and drops it in. Read them aloud at the end of the week.
2. **Thank You Letters** – Write or draw a thank-you card to someone who has blessed your life (a teacher, a friend, a grandparent).
3. **Blessing Inventory** – As a family, walk through your home and name the things you're thankful for in each room.
4. **Music Time** – Play or sing Psalm 95:1–3 together with instruments, pots, pans, or handclaps.

Memory Verse

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" — *Philippians 4:4 (NIV)*

Closing Thought

Gratitude reminds us that we are not the centre of the universe. God is. Every good thing we have is a gift, not a reward. Let's keep our hearts soft, our minds focused, and our mouths filled with praise. God is always good- even when life is hard.

Closing Prayer

God, thank You for all You've done for us. Thank You for the blessings we notice and even those we forget to see. Help us to be like the one leper who came back to say thank You. Teach us to live with humble, grateful hearts. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Below is a prayer that will be added to each weeks devotional. This prayer is based on Gratitude and can help you and your family with learning prayers

GRATITUDE PRAYER POEM FOR CHILDREN

You can say it or sing it together like a gentle rhyme.

Dear God above, so kind and true, I want to say a BIG thank You!
For hands to hold and feet that run, for food to eat and time for fun.
For family love and friends who care, for sunny skies and answered prayer.
For every laugh and tear and song, you've been with me my whole life long.
Help me see with thankful eyes, the blessings YOU send in disguise.
And when I'm grumpy, sad, or mad, remind me still to be so glad.
Thank You, Jesus, for Your grace, for shining love in every place.
I give my heart, my thanks, my praise-to You, my God, for all my days. Amen.