Bob: When it comes right down to it you and I both take a lot for granted don’t we? Here’s Nancy Leigh DeMoss.

Nancy: I have a friend who talked about one day as he was brushing his teeth just meditating on this verse, “in everything give thanks.” He realized that he had never stopped to thank the Lord for healthy teeth and then he said this. He said, “If we would only have tomorrow that which we thanked the Lord for today how much would we have tomorrow?” If tomorrow’s supply depended on today’s thanksgiving how much would I have tomorrow?

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Tuesday, November 17. Our host is the President of FamilyLife, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. And I’m guessing that all of sudden you can think of a lot of things for which you are thankful, right?

Welcome to FamilyLife Today; thanks for joining us. I’ve been reflecting on what we are talking about this week on the subject of gratitude and I’ve been thinking…

Dennis: Are you grateful? In fact I want to start today’s broadcast asking everybody a question. Where do you struggle with ingratitude?

Bob: Okay.

Dennis: Just to let everybody know my wife, Barbara joins us. Sweetie welcome back.

Barbara: Thank you.

Dennis: Our dear friend Nancy Leigh DeMoss joins us. Nancy glad to have you here.

Nancy: Well, I’m glad to be here to talk about my personal ingratitude. Is that what we are going to be talking about?

Dennis: We are going to begin by talking about where you struggle with a heart that is ungrateful. What do you gripe and complain about or putting it more graphically what do you whine about? Okay. I’ll start.
Bob: Alright.

Dennis: Circumstances that don’t go my way and the interruptions of life when I’ve already got a full schedule and I don’t want to go with the flow. I like controlling my schedule.

Bob: (laughter)

Dennis: Whether it is big stuff or small stuff. I’ve actually had some friends who gratefully in my life have spoken to me. They didn’t put it this bluntly but I heard it this bluntly. Dennis, quit your whining. Quit your griping and complaining. Roll up your sleeves and decide how you are going to respond. Okay, that feels better. Who is next?

Bob: I’ll go next. First of all I want to say how grateful I am that you’ve given us this opportunity to do this.

(laughter)

Dennis: I knew you’d be grateful Bob.

Bob: As I was thinking about this subject of gratitude and thinking what is the opposite? Is it whining and grumbling and complaining? I think one manifestation of the opposite of it. I’m not really much of a whiner, grumbler or complainer. I don’t think, am I?

Dennis: Bob’s wife is out listening to us here.

Bob: I’m not trying to drag her into this here. I need a reality check. Do I grumble and complain?

Dennis: So which is it?

Mary Ann: What is the question?

Bob: In general am I a whiner, grumbler, and complainer?

Dennis: Her head is shaking sideways.

Bob: Can you think of an area where I am a whiner, grumbler and complainer? She shook her head sideways again. So my wife has just validated that that is not generally true about me.

Dennis: And I want to make a comment here because I think you have just given us an illustration of it. I think certain families don’t necessarily experience this like others do. I think some families have as a part of the DNA I do think they gripe, grumble, and
complain. That is one of the chief things they need to deal with. That may not be where you struggle.

**Bob:** Here’s how I would express ingratitude. I just kind of blow on past the things that I ought to stop and reflect and be thankful about. You don’t have to be grumbler to be ungrateful. You can be ungrateful simply by your silence. By not acknowledging what others have done.

**Dennis:** Are you talking about people you work with?

**Bob:** I’m thinking of going to a little retirement celebration we had a number of years ago for a colleague. At this particular event everybody stepped forward and they were reflecting on this man and his impact in their lives as we worked side by side in the ministry. All of the people who worked for him talked about how he would often come in and say how are you doing? How can I pray for you? He cared about these folks. And I thought it isn’t going to sound like this at my retirement party?

(laughter)

Nobody is going to come in and say Bob came by and said how are you doing and how can we pray for you? I think what I do in terms of ingratitude is just the assumption that …

**Dennis:** That everybody knows?

**Bob:** No, it’s not the assumption that everybody knows but it is the assumption of you’ve done what you ought to do and I don’t necessarily express thanks for what you have done. We just move on and life is going on. So I’m not a grumbler. I’m just not an acknowledger. Is that making sense?

**Nancy:** Yes, gratitude really has to do with a heart of recognizing the benefits that we have received from God and others but also expressing those benefits. Being intentional about saying to the Lord and to others thank you.

**Dennis:** That is not going to get you off the hook from answering the question Nancy.

**Nancy:** I’ll be glad to.

**Dennis:** That was a great answer.

**Bob:** Let me find out from my wife. Would you agree with that appraisal? Yes, she’s going yes.

**Dennis:** So Nancy where do you struggle?
**Nancy:** I think for me it comes most often in dealing with the pressures and challenges of ministry and work load and demands on my time. When I feel stretched and stressed like there is more to do in the day than there are hours. Or there are changes taking place that put me under pressure I find myself more focused on the challenges, the problems and the negatives rather than my first reaction being one of faith, gratitude, humility.

Lord, you are big enough to handle this and it's a privilege for me to have meaningful work. Yes, there is a lot of it but I think as a result sometimes people who know me best would or could conclude that knowing the Lord and walking with him as serving with him is burdensome. That is one of the things that was convicting to me as I worked on this book because I do love the Lord. I do love serving him and it is a great privilege. I realize the people who spend a lot of time with me may think I don’t think I'd want her job. I don’t think I would want to be sold out the Lord if that is what it is like. I’m not sure I want that. I don’t want people to feel that way.

**Dennis:** No, that is a good word.

**Bob:** Barbara, how about you?

**Barbara:** I would agree with what Dennis said about inconveniences and interruptions but I would also say and this was particularly true of me when I was raising kids. I had a really hard time being grateful when I felt unappreciated. I think because being a servant is not my natural bent but that was what I had to do so much as a mother. I was constantly serving seven people in the household.

There were times when I didn’t get much in the way of thanks or appreciation and my well would run dry and instead of doing it as unto the Lord even though in the back of my mind I would have said that was what I was doing I was really looking for some thanks. Good job. We really appreciate you, mom. There wasn’t a lot of that and children aren’t prone to do that anyway so I knew I was expecting something that was pretty unlikely.

**Bob:** I think what you are describing is something probably every mom of young kids is going to wrestle with.

**Barbara:** I think so.

**Bob:** So what does she do as she’s raising two or three toddlers? Or two or three young kids who aren’t saying thank you mommy? Rather they are sometimes whining about stuff they shouldn’t whine about and you go this is for the birds. How do you get from there to gratitude?

**Barbara:** It reminds me of a story, Bob, that I heard years ago when I was raising kids. It’s a story that one of the granddaughters tells about her mother. It was back before e-mail days and she was writing her mother a letter about all the loads of laundry she had...
to do and how hard life was. Ruth Graham wrote her back and said, be thankful you have a washing machine.

I remember when I read that story because I was in the thick of it too. I was overwhelmed with how much laundry I had to do and how little thanks I got if any for doing the laundry and cooking the meals and going to the grocery store and cleaning up the apple juice on the floor and on and on and on. It was a good reminder to me that even in the midst of that burden and it is a burden to care for children there were still things for which I could give thanks. It was a reminder to me and I didn’t do it very well.

It was a reminder to me that in the midst of hard things there are still things that I could find to give thanks for if I would just look for them. By doing so it takes my eyes off of myself which is really the whole problem for me. I was feeling sorry for myself a lot but I could choose to give thanks for the fact that I had a washing machine and we had hot and cold running water and we had air conditioning and heat and beds and on and on and on. It took my eyes off of myself and put them back where they belonged on God. It helped bring some balance to that stress of raising children.

Nancy: I think that spirit then affects others because ingratitude, grumbling, murmuring, and complaining is toxic. Who wants to be around that kind of person? So if we have the self pity and the whining people are going to distance themselves from us and we aren’t going to get any more thanks that way.

Dennis: Yes.

Barbara: Yes.

Nancy: When we have a grateful spirit and I think about some people I know who against all odds in some cases are really grateful people even with tough circumstances. You are drawn to them and they are life giving springs…

Barbara: Yes.

Nancy: …rather than contaminating or polluting the atmosphere they bring joy and life. I think that’s the kind of person I want to be.

Dennis: Bill Bright was that way.

Nancy: Yes.

Dennis: When Bill Bright heard that Campus Crusades’ headquarters was on fire what did he do? He broke out in prayer, giving thanks to God and praising God. Now that is real natural.

(laughter)
**Dennis:** It really was his style. He said if praise is the language of heaven then I want to practice it here and now so that when I get there I’ll know how to do it. I learned a lot of things from him that were not natural to me that I’m trying to practice as I live life. In fact that is really the question I have for you Nancy because we’ve gone around in a circle here and confessed where we struggle all except Bob…

(laughter)

**Bob:** I confessed it.

**Dennis:** Yes, I’m kidding Bob. If we have a habit of being whiners, grippers and complainers where do we start to break the habit pattern? Because it really is a habit and it’s a way of thinking.

**Nancy:** For me the starting place repeatedly because I fall into that default pattern to easily is to just acknowledge it for what it is. It’s sin. I’ll say this is a weakness or I’m just carrying this burden or I blame my circumstances but to confess it to the Lord as sin. And to have people in my life who will love me enough to get in my face and say you are whining. Or you are not expressing gratitude. I thank the Lord for those people. So just to acknowledge it for starters.

And then I think to develop a mind set of starting to notice and express positive gratitude for the little things and the big things. One of the things we do in this book which I felt would be helpful for others if they are like myself and need transformation in this area is the back part of the book is a 30 day devotional guide to growing in gratitude over 30 days. You don’t just read a book like this. Writing or reading a book on gratitude doesn’t make you grateful. But taking the time over a period of days or weeks or months to consciously focus on what I have to be grateful for and saying thank you that discipline can become a way of life for us.

**Dennis:** You quote Charles Haddon Spurgeon who said let us daily praise God for common mercies and then you make a list of a bunch of them. It was back to Barbara’s statement about a washing machine. After we’ve worked in the yard, Nancy, one of my prayers when we’ll be lying in bed I’ll say to God, “Thank you that you have given Barbara and me healthy bodies to be able to work in the yard.” We enjoy that together and we may not be able to always do that. It’s important to express a heart of gratitude to God for the common mercies. The simple things he gives us day in and day out. That is a beginning place, right?

**Nancy:** I have a friend who talked about one day as he was brushing his teeth just meditating on this verse, “in everything give thanks.” He realized that he had never stopped to thank the Lord for healthy teeth and then he said this. He said, if tomorrow’s supply depending on today’s thanksgiving, if we would only have tomorrow that which we thanked the Lord for today how much would we have tomorrow.

**Dennis:** Wow.
Nancy: It got me started thinking about the little things. The little things you listed are common mercies as Spurgeon called them but there are uncommon mercies too those unseen but very real mercies of God. The fact that not only has he saved me but he’s keeping me saved by his grace and his power. All that we have waiting for us in heaven and in eternity and all of God’s blessings, the spiritual blessings in heavenly places that Ephesians 1 tells us that we have in Christ. If I didn’t have any more of that then when I stop to thank God for I would be a pauper but by God’s mercy I am rich in Christ. I want to be the kind of person who notices those things and says to him thank you.

Dennis: So we break the habit by beginning to give thanks about the little things in our lives that God brings us and the big things like salvation. Also, I think we need to give thanks for friends, family members, and our spouse. I think it is really easy to take one another for granted. Barbara and I have talked about this. So many couples allow their love for one another to grow stale because they don’t express a heart of gratitude for the gift the other one is to them and in their lives.

Bob: We can think of this as kind of a social grace and something that we need to cultivate because it is proper. It’s right to say thank you and to cultivate a heart that expresses gratitude but I want to reflect back on what you said earlier when you said we need to acknowledge ingratitude as a sin. Why do you think it is that God is offended by an ungrateful spirit? If I don’t say thank you or if I grumble towards somebody else how is that an offense before God?

Nancy: On the last program Barbara said that unbelief is the root of ingratitude and I think that is true. But I think another root of ingratitude is just simply pride. It is self focus, self centeredness, expectations and a sense of entitlement. We are the most affluent generation in the history of the world in this country and yet I was reading today that statistics say Americans today are no happier than they were 50 years ago. We have more and we have so many privileges that most of the rest of the world will never experience but we are miserable. We are depressed and angry and bitter and I think that is because we are ungrateful people. I think we are ungrateful because we are proud, self centered. We are focused on what we think we deserve rather than being humble hearted.

I read an illustration about the members of the Masai tribe in West Africa who understand this connection between humility and gratitude. When they want to say thank you they bow down and they literally put their forehead on the ground and then they say, “My head is in the dirt.” That is their way of saying thank you. There is a humility that is demonstrated when we say thank you. I think as a way of life we need to have that heart attitude toward the Lord that says my head is in the dirt. Not because I am dirt but because I recognize that you are God and you are good and you are great and before you and in comparison to you I am as nothing.

Barbara: I think, too, that God is offended by our ingratitude because he is our father. In the same way we who are parents feel an offense when our children have an attitude
of ingratitude for what we do for them. We would have nothing were it not for what God has done for us. Just as our children would have nothing if the parents who brought them into this world didn’t care for them and love them and provide for them those children would have nothing.

The analogy is that same. We as people would have nothing if it weren't for what God has done for us. I think he is offended because he deserves our gratitude as his children and we are so reluctant to give it.

Bob: Even if your kids are grateful to you but you watch them whine and complain with one another you're still offended by the fact that they can't get along with one another as your kids. I’m thinking again we may express gratitude toward God but if we can’t get along with one another God looks at that and goes …

Barbara: You don’t get it.

Bob: Yes. Grow up.

Dennis: You say you love me with your lips but you don’t love one another.

Bob: Your heart is far from me.

Dennis: Yes, exactly. I have an action point for our listeners today. Here is your action point. I want you to make two lists. A list of 10 things you are thankful for and maybe have your kids do it. Secondly, make a list of 10 people you are thankful for and then pick one of those 10 and write them a thank you letter. For no reason other than just their friendship and faithfulness to you and what they have meant to you. I’m talking about a hand written letter. Not an e-mail.

Bob: Oh, man.

(laughter)

Barbara: That is real constraining isn’t it Bob? I was tracking with him until he said it has to be hand written.

(laughter)

Dennis: I’m concerned the federal government is going to go broke because we no longer use the post office. I’m going to tell you some of our listeners are saying thanks. I have two thank you letters.

Here is one from Becky in Kokomo, Indiana who heard a broadcast and said it was the best program that we have ever aired. She has enjoyed many great broadcasts over the years on FamilyLife Today. She ordered two sets of the broadcast and it blessed her day beyond description and she said to call and give Dennis and Bob a kudo.
Barbara: And that is nice to hear isn’t it?

Dennis: It is good to hear. I always read those e-mails and letters.

Bob: Yes, sometimes you read them three or four times, don’t you?

Dennis: I have.

(laughter)

Here’s one from Sylvia. She said, “I don’t have a question. I have a comment that I wanted to get to Dennis. I have been so blessed by your ministry these past two years. Thank you for the diversity that you offered on the air. I especially enjoyed the broadcast with R.V. Brown. I’m an African American female and have been married for 24 years to a godly man who is strong and loving. R.V.’s testimony and advice was such a blessing. His attitude reminds me of my husband in a lot of ways. My man is a great man also and I’m proud of what he has brought to my life and to our family.”

She goes on to talk about this and she just wrote to say thank you. I appreciate Sylvia writing because Barbara and I have a heart for African American families. We care about all families but for some reason God has called us uniquely to really care about them. I love this e-mail. I really do. We want to be an encouragement to your family and one of the ways you can pass this on is by having an attitude of gratitude toward others. Make your top 10 list of things you are grateful for and your top 10 list of people and then write one person in the next 24 hours.

Bob: So we have our assignment if folks need help in reflecting on things for which they are thankful we have a card we’d be happy to send them. Our team has also put together a laminated prayer card that you can put in your Bible or you can put it up on the refrigerator in the kitchen. It’s called A Family Prayer of Thankfulness. We’ve taken Psalm 103 and found all of the blessings of God that are addressed in that Psalm and we’ve put them in a format where we can cultivate a heart of gratefulness and thanksgiving.

If you are interested in getting one of these cards just call us toll free at 1-800-FL-TODAY and say I’d like that thankfulness card. We’d be happy to send it out to you. Again the number is 1-800-358-6329. That’s 1-800- F as in “family,” L as in “life,” and then the word TODAY.

Let me also point you to our web site FamilyLife Today.com where you’ll find information about Nancy Leigh DeMoss’ book, Choosing Gratitude. This is a book that will help you think more deeply about something that I’m guessing you’ve not spent a whole lot of time thinking about before the whole issue of gratitude and gratefulness and thanksgiving.
We have copies of the book again in our FamilyLife Resource Center and we would encourage you to get a copy of this book and use it to counsel your own heart and to counsel your thinking on the subject of gratitude. Again the book by Nancy Leigh DeMoss is called *Choosing Gratitude*.

Also, don’t forget we have Barbara Rainey’s seven day devotional guide for families called *Growing Together in Gratitude*. You can get more information about both Nancy’s book, *Choosing Gratitude* and Barbara Rainey’s devotional book for families *Growing Together in Gratitude* at our web site FamilyLife Today.com.

Or you can call 1-800-FLTODAY, that’s 1-800- F as in “family,” L as in “life” and then the word TODAY. Give us a call and someone on the team can make arrangements to have the resources that you need sent to you.

Tomorrow we’re going to talk more about how we counsel our own heart and counsel our own soul to cultivate a heart of gratitude. Nancy Leigh DeMoss is going to back with us. Barbara Rainey will be here as well. I hope you can be back tomorrow.

I want to thank our engineer today Keith Lynch and our entire broadcast production team on behalf of our host Dennis Rainey I’m Bob Lepine. Here is Billy Crocket with a reminder of all the things we can be grateful for. We will see you tomorrow for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

**Song lyrics:** Let us be thankful Lord when hope is not enough that death won’t bury love. Let us be thankful boys and girls for wine and bread and hymns and reminding again following the beat of amazing grace. Oh, let us be thankful boys and girls.

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