

praise due him. But choosing to thank the Lord in all seasons and circumstances is a thanks offering pleasing to the Lord.

CULTIVATING A THANKFUL HEART

So what must we do to cultivate a thankful heart? Though it is simple, it is in no way easy. It requires intentional effort on our part, taking every thought captive and making it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). This means we must examine our thoughts about our bodies. What do you think and feel when you think about your body? Are you frustrated and despising of it? Are you obsessed with caring for it? Wherever we find our thoughts wandering during the day, we would be wise to heed Paul's encouragement to the Philippians: "*Fix your thoughts* on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. *Think about things* that are excellent and worthy of praise" (Philippians 4:8 NLT).

Cultivating a thankful heart means focusing our minds, our thoughts on things that are excellent and worthy of praise. A woman who desires to cultivate a thankful heart will **reflect on God's past faithfulness and provision**. Dale Ralph Davis, author of many biblical commentaries, says that "memory . . . keeps gratitude fresh and . . . gratitude keeps faith fruitful."⁷ As one body of Christ, we look all the way back to Genesis 3 when the Lord promised to send one who would conquer sin and death once and for all, making a way for his people to be restored to him for all eternity. That promise was fully and finally fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The body of Christ has many reasons to praise God for his past faithfulness and provision.

But we can also look back over our own personal lives and see how God has been faithful. Whether it is drawing you into a personal relationship with Him, protecting you from the illness that threatened your life and vitality, or helping you persevere in the face of adversity, God has been faithful. If you are going to cultivate a thankful heart, you must daily reflect on God's past faithfulness and provision, lest you forget and be tempted to fear and despair. Whether through journaling or creating gratitude lists, we should strive to be like Samuel, who looked back over God's faithfulness and provision and declared, "Thus far the Lord has helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12 NIV).

Cultivating a thankful heart also means we **acknowledge God's present provision**. Corporately, God's Spirit is with us—growing and sustaining the church as the body of Christ. But personally, his Spirit is also present with us. If we draw breath, it is from him. If our heart continues to beat, it is because he causes it to do so. All things are from him, through him, and for him (Romans 11:36). If you survey the landscape of your life, what do you see that God has provided? If you are able to see, hear, taste, smell, and feel, those are reasons to thank him. Are you relatively healthy? Are your basic needs met? Thank him. It may be that we have grown so accustomed to the blessings of our life that we have begun to take them for granted, treating them as rights instead of the good, gracious gifts they are. Acknowledging God's present provision requires faith and eyes to see. If you struggle to see how God is active and present in your life, pray that he would open your eyes to the ways in which he daily provides for you. He has

not promised to give us everything we want. But he does give us what we need, and that is sufficient.

Cultivating a thankful heart also means that we **look forward with assurance** to the fulfillment of God's promises to us. While we look back at God's past faithfulness in providing Christ as a sacrifice for our sin, and his current faithfulness in his commitment to Christ's bride—the church—we also look forward to the day that Christ returns for his bride and ushers in his kingdom. We look forward with great anticipation to the Lord fulfilling his promise that he will one day make everything in heaven and on earth new. Personally, we look forward to a day when we will stand before God, whole and complete. Your body will no longer be subject to death, disease, decay, or suffering. The body we now inhabit will die and be buried, but it will be raised to live forever. It will be buried in brokenness but raised in glory. It will be buried in weakness but raised in strength (1 Corinthians 15:42–43). This is the day we look forward to—the day when God fulfills his promise to make all things new.

Questions for Reflection

1. When do you last remember “grumbling” or complaining about your body? When was the last time you heard another woman “grumble” about her body? How did you respond to her grumbling?
2. If Jesus were still walking the earth and you encountered him, what would you say to him regarding the way he made you? Is your first thought thankfulness or discontent?
3. Read James 4:1–10 aloud in your group. When you think