

1 Thessalonians chapter five verse 18. We are going to take these three things in reverse order, or actually, the bottom one, then the top one, then the middle one.

“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

I want you to notice that all three of these things are universal and absolute things and they are all imperatives. That is, they are commandments. They are like the 10 Commandments.

“Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:13-15).

This is a commandment from God. It is a positive commandment, but I want you to notice this is not a sometimes commandment. These three commandments are “all times” commandments, “always,” he says.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Now I want to reflect with you for a moment. He says:

“...For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

I think that can be taken two ways and I am going to take it in two ways. The first thing I want to say is this. That is God’s will. God’s will for your life is that in absolutely everything, including bad news about cancer, you are to come to God in thanksgiving. That is God’s will. Why? Because if we don’t give thanks—not because of everything, but because God is in control of the world—if we don’t give thanks, we are liable to get cancer ourselves.

Do you know the book of Proverbs draws a connection between bitterness in the heart and rottenness in the bones? Now I don’t say that to threaten anyone. I am just trying to declare biblical truth. There is a correlation between a bitter heart and a sick body (Proverbs 3:7-8; 12:4; 14:30; 17:22; cf. Proverbs 15:30; 16:24).

The soul and the body are not radically distinct things. There is an interconnectedness between them. And so in everything give thanks. He says: "...For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

It is God's will. What is God's will for your life? I will tell you: "In everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

There is a second way to read this, and I think that while it is probably not what he intends here, it certainly fits in with the whole of biblical truth and makes our ability to give thanks in everything a reality, and that is nothing in this world that happens to us, happens outside of God's good, sovereign purpose for you and me. The Bible says in Romans: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28).

Several things we have to note with that verse, Romans 8:28, which is my favorite verse.

One, it doesn't say that everything is good. Bad stuff happens. It happens all the time, and it happens to people who love God. Bad stuff happens, but what he says is that God is working in all those things. He is working in the bad stuff for his good purpose.

The second thing we notice is it is not for everybody. It is for those that love God:

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28).

So we are able to give thanks in the midst of terrible things because we know that God is working his purpose out. As an old hymn says, "As year succeeds to year." God is working his purpose out.

As Cowper said in his wonderful song, "God moves in a mysterious way":

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust him for his grace.  
Behind a frowning providence,  
He hides a smiling face."

Think of it: “Behind a frowning providence...” Listen: cancer, that is a frowning providence, isn’t it? Losing your job, that is a frowning providence. Your finances plummeting. That is a frowning providence. Trouble in your marriage, trouble with your children. That is a frowning providence.

But Cowper understood so well, behind a frowning providence, he hides a smiling face. He says, “His purposes are ripening fast.” And then he says, “The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.”

We praise God and give thanks to God, even in the midst of bad news, not because of the bad news and not because of July the 15th, 2012, but because of God’s tomorrow, because “God is his own interpreter and he will make it plain” (Cowper’s hymn).

Now I am struck why so many people get hung up and can’t give thanks and why so many people (in verse 16) are not able to rejoice always. And I think it has to do with our failure to understand the basics of life.

I have never loved Sandy with my whole heart. I have never done that, and I don’t ever want to do that. Let me tell you something.

During the time that I was courting Sandy, I took a course on Colonial American History in New England, called the History of Puritanism. I was courting her, and I deliberately took that course so I could be there with her in summer school. I called my parents and said, “I would like to take this course.” And that was true, but it was also true that I wanted to move in where other people were in competition, because I wanted that woman for myself. And I prayed, and I acted on my prayers.

So I discovered this course, and I said, “Boy, this is a great course. I want to take it, but it also will give me one-on-one opportunities at lunch and supper during that brief period.”

But let me tell you what God did to me in that course. I had to read a book by a man named Perry Miller, who was a professor at Harvard University—he is now dead—on the American Puritans. And it was an anthology of their writings and, by the way, Miller has been called “the father of American intellectual history.” But as I read his comments, I was struck with something. I underscored it and then later wrote it down, and I have quoted

it many times. You have heard it. This is what John Cotton, who was an early American leader, wrote:

“There is another combination of virtues strangely mixed in every lively, holy Christian.”

There are a lot of Christians. There are not a lot of lively, holy Christians. (That is my comment.)

“And that is diligence in worldly business, and yet deadness to the world.”

Hear what Cotton said. John Cotton said that in Christians who are really living and acting and believing and walking the way they are supposed to do, there is this strange contradiction. Diligence in worldly business and yet deadness to the world. And then he says, “Such a mystery as none can read, but they that know it.”

This is what Perry Miller says about that mindset. He says:

‘Recently this complex mentality has been scientifically analyzed by the great sociologist, Max Weber, and after him it is called, for shorthand purposes, “the Protestant ethic.” Actually, it is a logical consequence of Puritan theology: man is put into this world, not to spend his life in profitless singing of hymns or in unfruitful monastic contemplation, but to do what the world requires, according to its terms. He must raise children; he must work at his calling. No activity is outside the holy purpose of the overarching covenant. Yet the Christian works not for the gain that may (or may not) result from his labor, but for the glory of God. He remains an ascetic in the world, as much as any hermit outside it. He displays unprecedented energy in wrestling the land . . . trading in the seven seas, speculating in lands: “Yet,” says Cotton, “his heart is not set upon these things, he can tell what to do with his estate when he hath got it.” In New England the phrase to describe this attitude soon became: loving the world with “weaned affections.” It was applied not only to one’s love of his property, but also to his love for wife, children, parents and country’ (Perry Miller (1956), *The American Puritans* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books), 171-172).

Before I ever married Sandy, in the year before we married, in the summer when I asked her to marry me, I determined I would never love her with all my heart. And I am so glad that I have not. I have to live every day of my

life giving God in a sense—he doesn't need it, of course—"permission" to take her from me. In other words, I have never allowed myself fully to let go to love my wife. Nor should we ever do that with anyone: not our husband, not our wife, not our children, not our parents, not our job, not our country, not even our local church. The only one we are ever to love with an unbridled heart, the only one we are ever to love with a whole heart, with a full heart, is the Lord our God, because God will take whatever and whomever in your life is more important to you than him.

I will say it again a different way. It is often the case that people put other people and other things on an equal par with God. When you do that, you invite God to remove that person or that thing from your life. Never love another person fully. Only love God fully. And that is the secret of loving a person in a healthy way rather than an unhealthy way.

Fully loving someone, being devoted to someone, putting someone on a pedestal, worshipping someone, saying to yourself, "Well, if I don't have this person in my life I can never be happy," is idolatry. And it leads to a sick, neurotic kind of love. It leads to an obsession as over against love. It leads to jealousy, always thinking, I wonder if she looking at somebody else. I wonder if he is looking at somebody else. What is going on? I am going to lose her. I am going to lose him.

You see, biblical love is a love that frees a person rather than traps a person. And biblical love demands of us a willingness, nay, I will say it, a commitment ahead of time to say, "God, if you take her life . . . God, if you remove her from me in some way or another, I will still love you. I will still praise you, and I will still work to be a happy man."

You see, that sounds so strange to us because America—not in my lifetime, not in my parents' lifetime, but in the lifetime of my grandparents—and that takes us back to the 1800s—lost its true understanding of Christianity. We have only lost the moral manifestation of Christianity in my lifetime. We lost the theological moorings of that and the psychology of that over 100 years ago. And, therefore, we replace God with people and things.

So you have got to enter into life with a willingness to let life go. You have got to love other people, but love them with "weaned affections." You have got to hold on to people, but hold on to them loosely. That is the way, and the only way, that when you bury a child, bury a mother, bury a father, bury

a husband, bury a wife, lose your job, lose your freedom, become imprisoned—it is the only way that you can fulfill two of these three commands: “To rejoice always,” verse 16, and “In everything to give thanks.” And the trouble is, Dear Ones, if we lose our joy, we have lost everything. That is what I want you to understand. When you lose your joy, you have lost your strength, because the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

How do you get joy back? I think he tells us: “In everything give thanks.”

I have told this story many times. I will tell it one more time. I don't mind repeating an illustration. In the fall of 1974, I became convicted that I had sinned against God when I took a particular vow in order to be ordained in a particular denomination. I became convicted on an afternoon, as I was listening to a sermon on tape by a man named John R. DeWitt, who baptized you, Ginny, by the way. As I was listening to Dr. DeWitt's sermon on the Law of God, I became convicted that I had bound my conscience with an unbiblical oath and that I was living in bondage to a man-made oath rather than in the freedom to which Christ has called us (Galatians 5:1; Colossians 2:20-23).

So what did I do? What I hope I will always do. I acted impulsively in obedience to God. May I commend to you that? Act impulsively in obedience to God. I sat down that afternoon at my typewriter, and I wrote a letter to the body in which I held my ordination, and I told them that I repented to God for having sworn not to do something that the Bible did not enjoin on me. Months passed. And then in the summer of 1975, I was suspended from the exercise of the office of the gospel ministry. It wasn't full defrocking. I guess you could say I was semi-frocked, defrocked, well, both.

I tried to find a job. It was Wichita, Kansas, in the middle of one of America's many recessions. Nothing as deep as what we are still in. But in the middle of America's many recessions, Wichita was a booming economy. Lear Jet, Beach Aircraft, Boeing Aircraft, as well as tractor manufacturers are all in the Wichita area. And I would get up in the morning, and I would put on my coat and tie. I would hang my coat by the backseat, and I would have fresh-pressed shirt on and a tie—brushed my teeth, clean-shaven, no mustache because people sometimes hate people who have facial hair—and hair nicely cut—same style I still have except just a little different color

then. And nicely groomed, checking everything to make sure that I didn't do the mistake that my dear friend, Brother Tisdale, did years ago of sneezing before I went in to see people. I checked everything carefully.

I went in to see them, and I thought, you know, I have got eight years of higher education. That is 12 years of public school, plus two years of kindergarten, plus eight more years. Wow. That is 22 years of education. Boy, this... I am going to... you know, the world is my oyster. Well, it was, but I didn't have an oyster knife, and nothing would open for me. I remember the guy at Lear Jet. He said, "You know, you would be perfect for a particular job I have got, but I hate to put a preacher in that job."

I said, "What are you talking about?"

He said, "Well, you have got the kind of personality and the kind of education and your ability to talk to people that you could do what we need done."

"And what is that?" I said.

"Well, we have clients come in from all around the world, maybe the Middle East. And while they are here picking out the leather and the carpet and the fabrics they want in their custom jet, they need to be entertained."

I said, "Well, what do you mean entertained? I like good restaurants, too."

He said, "Well, sometimes it is a little more than that."

And I was pretty desperate, but God in his grace and mercy kept me back from that job. The man said, "If you don't get another job in the next two weeks, you come back to see me."

Well, I found a job. It was a part-time job. It was being a janitor at a Methodist church, and I thought it is all about brawn. And I didn't realize in modern chemistry, it is a little bit of brain as well, and I ruined stuff. Everything that could go wrong, went wrong in that job, and I was only being paid for part-time work.

In fact I told my wife when I had the job offered to me, "I am not going to take this job."

And she said, “Why not?” You have got to appreciate Sandy. “Why not?”

I said, “Well, it is not enough to pay our bills.” I said, “The amount of money I am going to make will only cover our groceries.” And she said, “Well, at least it will cover our groceries.”

So I went to work. And in the middle of all that I got a letter from a friend named Dana Stoddard. Dana wrote me. He was living in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area and he wrote me and said, “Have you given thanks to God for what has happened to you?”

And I had the same reaction some of you are having right now. “In everything give thanks.” Are you kidding me? 1 Thessalonians 5:18. I mean, it stung me. I am telling you, it stung me.

Do you know, preachers can step on your toes, but letters can step on your toes even worse because the trouble with a letter is, unless you ball it up and throw it away, it keeps coming back.

It took about a week for me to do it, and it started sort of like this. “Thanks, God, thanks a lot.”

I learned something about life that summer with a terrible floor that I had to hand scrape with steel wool and a paint scraper—every single brick tile in that entire entrance way, which was about the size of from that wall or that doorway, to that wall and going back to about where the Hoges are. And then there was a double wide circular stairwell, also brick tile, another double-wide that went down, and a single wide that went down. Every single tile, every piece of mortar between them—hand scraped. It took me, full-time, a whole week for half-time pay. And I found this out about people: people deal with you according to your uniform.

When I was a preacher in Wichita, I wore always a coat and tie and people dealt with me respectfully. But when I was a janitor, particularly with wet dungarees, and sweat and stink, and having messed up the entrance, they treated me like a dog. I don’t know what is wrong with Methodists. They are just like Presbyterians and Baptists. That is what is wrong with them.



I decided, by the way, as a preacher, since I am not a businessman and I am not out here trying to hustle your money, I won't dress like a businessman anymore. And then there is the other style, the kind of Rick Warren style that looks like a bartender in a Caribbean bar. I am not going to dress that way either. I am just going to wear a uniform that says, "Hey, I am a pastor. Do you need someone to talk to or pray for you?"

So I began to give thanks to God. And I was mopping and stripping another floor. This time I was stripping the floor the right way, and all of the sudden as grace always so amazingly happens because grace is always amazing, I found myself praising God. I found myself actually able to thank God. I actually was able to rejoice in the Lord for the first time in about a month.

I was actually able to say to God from my heart what I had only said with my lips. "Thank you, Lord." And then I learned something amazing. I learned about a week and a half after that, that I had an airplane ticket to Alexandria, Louisiana, a place I had traveled through one time, but it never even registered on my mind, the name of the town, because it was late at night, as my brother-in-law was teaching at the university down there in Lafayette, and we went to see him before Christmas. So I had only been through here one time. And I got an airplane ticket about a week and a half later.

You see, all God wanted to do in my life was to teach me how to say, "Thank you, Lord."

And once I was able to say, "Thank you, Lord," even in the middle of a disaster—let me say that that for women: there are a lot of things we guys do not understand about you women. But I want you to understand there is one difficulty you have in understanding men and that is a man's job is directly related to his sense of self-hood. And when a man has lost his job, it guts him. It really guts him.

So for me to give thanks to God, having been gutted, was a profound thing. I had to deal with all kinds of bitterness. I had to deal with all kinds of pride, because pride keeps you from thanksgiving.

I kept thinking, "I have got all this education." I knew that the educational requirements of that denomination, where I was working as a janitor and of their pastor, was not up to academic snuff. "I can read Latin. I can read

Greek. I can read Hebrew. I can read Aramaic. What can that bum read, and why is he up there as preacher, and I am down here where everybody is mistreating me? ‘Why is everybody always picking on me?’”

Then I was finally able to thank God. The chain snapped. The clouds dissipated. You see, the key is in thanksgiving. “In everything,” he says, “give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). And it is only as you give thanks to God, realizing that God has a plan and a purpose in everything, that you are able to rejoice always.

Oh, I have to tell you. One of the things—there were many things God was doing in my life that summer—but one of the things was this. When this church was seeking to find a pastor, having been without a pastor since I think around January or February of 75, and a friend of a friend of a friend of mine passed my name on to them because he decided not to accept their inquiry to be called—as they began to look at me, one of the deciding factors in making the phone call to talk to me was this: I was a janitor.

Does that sound weird? I was a janitor.

They saw that I was willing to get off my rear end and quit my moping and work. And I am going to tell you: I believe that if I had not taken that job that I only had for about a month, if I had not taken that job, I wouldn’t be pastor here today. You see: God blessed it.

“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Now I want you to look at another passage very quickly. Turn with me, if you will, to Deuteronomy 28.

When God says along with, “In everything give thanks,” “rejoice always,” I want you to realize how important that is to God. It is a commandment, I said. It is a commandment, just like: “Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:13-15).

It is a commandment.

Listen to what he says, Deuteronomy 28, and I preached on this about two years ago. Deuteronomy 28 verses 47 and 48.

“Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you” (Deuteronomy 28:47-48).

Are you serious?!? Do you mean that one reason why Israel got kicked out of the Holy Land is because they weren't happy? You know, that is what it says.

Are you kidding me?!? Do you mean that God punished them for being unhappy? Yes, that is what it says. I read it in Hebrew today and yesterday and a long time before.

You have got to be happy. Well, how do you “be happy”? What does it mean to be happy? Here is what it means. It doesn't mean that you never weep. As we were praying for Randall's mom and Becky's husband this morning, I had tears welling up in my eyes. I felt grief. I felt pain, the kind of happiness that is talked about there has nothing to do with the fact that you are not going to get sad at points and grieve. Something is wrong with you if you never feel the urge to cry with people who are crying. Even Jesus wept (John 11:35).

But it means that you don't allow it to take hold of you. It means that you rebuke it in the name of Jesus, if it sits too long in you. It means you are not going to go on wallowing in grief. Why? Look. If God has taken your child, you are going to see him again. If God has taken your spouse, you are going to see her or him again. I am telling you.

The reason that people live in depression is they are living for this world and this life. If your focus is heaven and the confidence that even in the here and now, all things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28), you get a hold of your emotions, and you begin to act like you are happy, even if you are sad. It is in acting like you are happy that you will become happy.

What do I mean by that? He says, “Rejoice always.” And he warns the Israelites that they were going to get to a point where they would lose their joy, and they would lose their gladness.

So what does it mean? It means that when you find yourself getting down... Do I find myself getting down? Listen. Having worked on this sermon yesterday, I decided after doing some things in town, I was going to mow my lawn. And I figured this is a great window of opportunity. If the sun is beginning to peak out, and I have got my grass grown too high, and I am going to have to—I don't know what next week is going—so I am out there mowing. And I got about a third of the way through, and it is almost three acres. And I was happy. I was meditating on Scripture. I was running all these words through my brain. I was outlining in my mind, because I work on sermons when I drive. (That is why my wife doesn't like me to drive.) And I work on them when I mow. And all of a sudden, I smelled something, and all of a sudden, the mower stopped moving. It was still going, but it stopped moving.

I thought, what is going on here? And so I realized it did what it has done before. One of those cheap plastic pulleys... I found out there is a 1000 dollar difference in my mower and the next one, and the difference is they put plastic pulleys. How much does it cost them to use metal pulleys? Why plastic? Because they keep you coming in again and again and again, and they make preachers cuss.

And I had to just leave the mower. It wouldn't move, and it is too big and heavy to push. I had to just leave it in the side yard. I went and tried to call the place and, of course, they were closed. That wouldn't have done any good. They wouldn't put me on the list until Tuesday anyhow.

Did I get down? Of course.

Am I up here because I always practice what I preach? Are you kidding me? Of course, not.

I am up here, and I preach because I preach the Word of God. And I can tell you this, that when I practice what I preach, I discover it is true. It always works. And so I began to practice what I am preaching today. I chose to give thanks. I chose to rejoice. You do it with your lips first. There is a curious expression in the book of Lamentations chapter three. In Hebrew it uses a particular Hebrew word as a preposition or a letter as a preposition. It is the L sound, and he says literally this. And no other translation picks up

on it. They simply say, “Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven” (Lamentations 3:41).

But in Hebrew what it literally says is, “Let us lift up our hearts TO our hands to God who is in heaven” (Lamentations 3:41).

What that means is this. You lift your hands in praise to God, whether you feel like it or not. You open your mouth and sing the hymns, whether you feel like it or not. You open your mouth and say, “I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth,” whether you feel like it or not.

Ritual always begins the cure. But it is humble ritual. It is ritual that is honest. It is not the politician making the rounds of all the churches so they can steal the votes. It is the humble worshipper who says, “God, my heart is not in this. God, I feel dead. God, I am depressed. God, I am down in the dumps. But help me. Help me, God. I am going to act as if you have acted, God. And I am going to trust you to act.”

That is the key. And so whatever it is in your life—even in the wake of your spouse sleeping with your former best friend, even in the standing at the grave of a child, even getting a pink slip and a foreclosure notice, even getting the phone call from the police department that your child has been arrested—you know what you have got to do. You have got to stop. You have got to lift your hands. You have got to open your mouth, and you have got to say, “Thank you, God. Thank you that you have a plan. Thank you, God, you are working your plan out. Thank you, Lord, that though the bud has a bitter taste right now, and I don’t know how I am going to get through this, I know, and I confess with my mouth because the Word of God says it: “Sweet will be the flower.”

“Blind unbelief is sure to err  
And scan his work in vain.  
God is his own interpreter.  
He will make it plain” (Cowper’s hymn).

“Always rejoice.” It is a commandment. Always. And what happens? In the middle of going for the Oscar—because it is all a big act, but it is a humble act that is honest with yourself and honest with God. It is not living in denial. In going for the Oscar, you discover you are not acting. That is life over and over again.

What is the last thing he says? We only turn back there for a moment because I simply want to tell you how to pray without ceasing, because you can do it. You can do all three of these things.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

How do you pray without ceasing? I will tell you how. One of my two favorite times of the day, you have heard me say it before. I love to get up in the morning and be by myself. I like that first cup of black coffee. I don't ruin it with milk or cream or some kind of other weird stuff and sugar. I just like it black. I cultivated the taste for it and I love it. I like to blow on the cup and let the steam come up into my face. I like to sit in the quietness and hear a dove coo.

And the other favorite time of the day is when I finished my work, and I get in bed with my wife. And I especially like it when we have music on the television rather than that inane cacophony of confusion—quiet music, and she reads and I read. That is my favorite thing of all. It really is. She is on my left side, and I am on the right. She has got her book, and I have got my book. I don't touch her, and she doesn't touch me. We are just sitting there reading with a nice stack of pillows, and the music is playing.

And sometimes she will read something and she will share it with me, and sometimes I will read something and I will share it with her. The point is, why I love that time so much is because I am in her presence. I don't have to say anything to her. She doesn't have to say anything to me. But I am practicing the presence of my wife. If we are watching a movie, we will sometimes lean over and make a comment to each other.

The point is, I am living in her presence, and that is a happy place—most of the time. Hey, I am just being honest. We don't have a perfect marriage. Neither do you. Neither does anybody who has ever written on marriage, but we have got a good marriage—and I love being in her presence. Praying without ceasing is practicing the presence of God. It means that when you are watching a movie or reading a book, you feel the freedom simply to say, “Wow, Lord, that is so beautifully said.” When you are watching a movie and you see some tragedy unfolding, you feel the freedom simply to close

your eyes for a moment and say, “Oh, God, I thank you I have not had to go through that.” It is practicing the presence of God.

It doesn't mean that you have shut yourself up in a room, and you have started taking amphetamines so that you can stay awake perpetually, on and on. You will be in the presence of God, if you don't ever sleep. And it will begin with a trip, not unlike taking LSD, enough sleep loss will do that.

What it means is that you sleep in the presence of God, you read in the presence of God, you eat in the presence of God, you go to the bathroom in the presence of God. You greet other people in the presence of God. And that means you are having this unbroken fellowship with him.

Have I got that down pat, Folks?

I have got to tell you, “No.” But I can tell you that I have experienced a lot more of it for a lot longer periods of time today than I used to. And if you want to think more about spiritual disciplines, come out tonight as we sing some old hymns and as Vincent Escandell shares some teaching on spiritual disciplines.

If you are here today, and you want to make a fresh commitment to rejoice in the Lord, to pray without ceasing and in everything to give thanks, I would like you to do it while we sing the last song. And if you would like someone to pray with you, we would invite you to come forward. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you that you are in control of the world and that not even a sparrow falls to the ground apart from you. The very hairs of our head are numbered by you. Lord, we thank you. You put people in our lives for a season. I don't know how long a season you are going to keep Sandy in my life or me in her life, but I thank you for the season of our life that we are together, because I love her so much. Don't ever let me love her the way I love you, Lord. Would you bless us each one as we make a fresh commitment to choose to confess that we are thankful and to do it over and over again until finally the reality of our lips is the reality of our heart. For Jesus' sake. Amen.