

Overflow

The Secret to Contentment

October 25, 2026

Introduction

Aloha everyone! I'm Mark and I want to welcome you to our service. This weekend marks one year since the soft-launch of our Mililani Site here at Hanalani Schools. This year has completely flown by and we have already seen God do so much. He has added many wonderful families to our fellowship, many have reconnected with the Church, we have launched several new ministries, we have partnered with other Churches in the community for Kingdom events, and we are seeing lives completely transform.

And when I think about all God has done in this past year, a single word comes to mind. When I think about how God has moved supernaturally to bring us into this season, when I think about all of the countless hours of sacrificial service from our amazing teams, and when I think about what God is doing through the Churches of Central Oahu to reach our communities, I am constantly brought back to the same word — Grateful.

How many of us are grateful that we serve a great God? God is truly doing exceedingly and abundantly more than all we could ask or imagine. We can't make this stuff up, God is the One building His Church. We just have front-row seats.

Gratitude

We're coming out of a season where we were dealing with offense in our lives. And many people really resonated with the things that were being discussed. All of us deal with offense in our lives and all of us must continually battle to release those offenses to the Lord. But as we enter into a season of Thanksgiving, you need to know that gratitude is one of our greatest weapons against offense! Gratitude is like weed-killer against the root of offense. It is extremely difficult, dare I say impossible, to live with offense when your heart is overflowing with gratitude for what God has done. On the flip side, it is very hard to release forgiveness when you don't realize how much you've been forgiven. It is very hard to be gracious when you lose sight of God's grace. It is very hard to be Pono with others when you forget all God did to be Pono with you. But when you live in the overflow of God's grace, you now have the power to release that same grace to others!

How many of us want to live in the overflow of God's grace? Gratitude isn't just a mood or a feeling, it is a powerful state of being that can change your reality. The problem is that most of us approach gratitude with a wrong mentality that says, "I'll be thankful once everything is perfect, once I get everything I want, and once I'm at peace." But how many of us know, if we wait for everything to be perfect before we can experience gratitude, we'll never be grateful! There will always be something wrong, something missing, or something off.

It reminds me of the story of a woman who was celebrating her 90th birthday. In her life she had raised three very successful sons who each wanted to buy her a special present as a token of their gratitude.

The first son said, "I'm going to buy mom a Ferrari. It's worth half a million dollars and mom can take for a nice drive."

The second son said, "I'm going to buy mom a luxurious villa with a downstairs sleep and bathroom."

The third son said, "I bought mom a million-dollar parrot. It's the only one of its kind and has been trained to have full conversations."

A few weeks later the first son received a thank you note from his mother. "Thank you for the Ferrari son, but my vision is no longer what it used to be so I can't drive any longer. The next day the second son also received a letter. "Thank you for my pretty house dear, but I can no longer walk up and down stairs so I'll have to sell it." A day later the third son finally got his letter. "My boy, thank you so much for your gift! The chicken was delicious!"

Even if we get everything we could possibly imagine there will always be challenges! Here's what the Bible wants us to see.

1. GRATITUDE IS NOT THE RESULT OF PEACE, BUT THE ROAD TO IT.

Gratitude isn't what happens after everything settles down, it's what settles us down in the middle of everything! If anyone understood this it was the Apostle Paul. Look what he wrote from inside a prison to the believers at that time,

⁶ "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus," (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV).

Notice the order of events here? Do we experience peace first and *then* pray with thanksgiving? Nope. We pray with thanksgiving in *every* situation. Even in the situations that scare us, even in the situations that worry us, even in the situations that confuse us. And God promises that when we present prayers of thanksgiving in every situation, His peace that transcends all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. How many of you have experienced God's peace even when it didn't make sense? Like there's no reason I should feel peace right now but there it is.

There once was a king who offered a prize to the artist who could paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The king looked at all the pictures but there were only two he really liked, and he had to choose between them.

One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror for peaceful towering mountains all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains, too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky, from which rain fell and in which lightning played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. At first glance the picture really didn't look peaceful at all.

But when the king looked closely, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest - in perfect peace.

Which picture do you think won the prize? The king chose the second picture. Do you know why?

"Because," explained the king, "peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of peace." As the old hymn goes,

*God hath not promised skies always blue, Flower strewn pathways all our lives through;
God hath not promised sun without rain, Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.
God hath not promised we shall not know toil and temptation, trouble and woe;
He hath not told us we shall not bear many a burden, many a care.
God hath not promised smooth roads and wide, swift, easy travel, needing no guide;
Never a mountain rocky and steep, never a river turbid and deep.
But God hath promised strength for the day, rest for the labor, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above, unfailing sympathy, undying love.*

- Annie Johnson Flint

Gratitude isn't something that just falls in our lap. Gratitude is a conscious decision in the midst of every circumstance.

2. A LIFE OF GRATITUDE ISN'T GIVEN, IT'S GAINED.

Nobody is born grateful. Any parent knows this. You don't have to teach a child to say, "mine," but you have to constantly remind them to say, "thank you". Nobody wakes up grateful all the time. You're not just going to stumble into gratitude. Why? Because gratitude isn't found it's forged. It doesn't come easy, it's earned.

Gratitude is like a muscle, it grows through resistance. It's trained in the moments when life doesn't go our way. No pain, no gain!

¹² "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who gives me strength," (Philippians 4:12-13).

Did you catch that? Paul said he *learned*. In other words, he didn't wake up one day content — he *learned* it. Gratitude and contentment are taught in the classroom of life — through plenty and little, hunger and satisfaction, pain and provision. It doesn't come natural but it is possible. And that's why Paul calls it a secret, because most people never discover it!

If we want to live with lasting contentment, we have to ask ourselves one question, "What is my gratitude anchored in? Christ or my circumstances?" Christ is steadfast but circumstances are shifting.

When our gratitude is tied to circumstances then we will be at the mercy of external forces. Like a boat without an anchor, when the ocean is at peace we're at peace. But when the ocean is in chaos, we're in chaos. Our inner life is a reflection of our outer reality. Our happiness is tied to happenstance. But those who root their gratitude in Christ and His steadfast love are like a ship that is anchored in the storm. The waves may crash and the winds may blow but the ship is not tossed around by the sea. Paul says the secret to contentment in every situation is to anchor our hopes in Him who gives us strength. The writer of Hebrews says,

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure," (Hebrews 6:19).

Gratitude isn't given, it's gained. It's forged in the waves, fastened by the anchor, and fueled by the strength of Christ. The final gratitude shift I want to talk about is,

3. GRATITUDE IS NOT ABOUT GETTING WHAT I WANT, BUT REMEMBERING WHAT I'VE BEEN GIVEN.

⁹ “For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me,” (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

Paul’s entire ministry was a grateful response to something he had received — undeserved grace.

The Greek word Paul uses here for grace is χάρις (charis). It is God’s unearned, unmerited favor. It’s the kind of undeserved favor that could take a former terrorist against the Church and transform him into the greatest missionary who ever lived. *Charis* is where we get words like *charisma* (gift), *charity* (love expressed through giving), and *eucharist* (thanksgiving).

This is not just true in Greek but in Latin too. Our English word for *gratitude* comes from the Latin *gratia*, which means grace. *Gratia* describes both the gift being given and the thanks that is returned. It is a divine rhythm of *gratia* received and *gratia* returned.

- **Grace** — the unearned gift that starts it all.
- **Gratitude** — the recognition of that gift.
- **Gratuity** — the generosity that overflows from gratitude.
- **Congratulate** — to *share* in someone else’s grace and joy.
- **Gracious** — to live in a way that reflects the kindness of grace itself.

Do you see how this works? God’s grace (His undeserved favor) flows down to us. As we receive it, our gratitude flows up to Him. Then that grace flows toward others in the form of generosity (gratuity). This is the “Gratitude Shift” the Bible calls us to live in — constantly living in the flow of God’s grace and pouring out our gratitude back to Him and then letting that grace flow out to others. But the moment we lose sight of God’s grace, gratitude dries up. When we don’t feel like praising, when we don’t feel like giving, we’ve lost sight of grace. Gratitude, gratuity, graciousness, flow directly from grace!

Conclusion

I’ll never forget the moment grace became real for me. I was sitting across from the Dean of students in his office at the Bible College I was attending. There was an entire rap sheet of offenses stacked against me. Students had been expelled for less. I began to play the scenario in my head. Pastor’s Son returns home in disgrace — kicked out of Bible College. The Dean opened his mouth to speak, “We could kick you out.” “Here it comes” I thought. “But...we’re not going to do that.” I needed a moment to pick my jaw off the floor. “I believe, you’re truly sorry so we’re going to let you stay.” No! That isn’t right! That isn’t fair! That’s not how the story should go. It was undeserved grace — undeserved favor. I was permitted to finish my final year of college. That year I served in a leadership role on campus and was selected to be the Senior chapel speaker. Believe me when I say, I know a little of how Paul felt and the prodigal son felt when the Father placed the ring on his finger, the robe on his shoulders, and threw a party in his honor. My story is one of undeserved grace. Everything I do now is in grateful response to that.

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Are there things in your life that are making it difficult to be grateful? How might gratitude be your road to peace?

2. Are you facing resistance in any areas of your life that could be opportunities to strengthen your gratitude muscle? What habit or practice (journaling, gratitude prayer, serving, etc.) could you begin this week to “train” your gratitude.

3. How have you experienced God’s undeserved grace in your life? How does that inform your gratitude and gratuity (generosity)?