NUDGES 14

Nudges in the right direction



UNDERSTANDING GOD'S VOICE

Gratitude

Wim Kamphorst

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Foreword

Ten men with an incurable skin disease called out to Jesus. He sent them to the priests and on the way they were healed. Nine of them kept walking. One turned back. He fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked Him. Jesus asked: “Were not the ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?”

All ten received a miracle. But only one also received an encounter. Gratitude brought him back to Jesus.

> *“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”*
> 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

I have noticed that gratitude opens my ears. When I give thanks, I see better what God is already doing and I hear better what He says. This booklet is about that. These are nudges: small pushes to turn back, like that one man, and thank Jesus.

Wim Kamphorst, founder of (F)Luister Nederland

Introduction

When I first came to faith, something happened that I have never forgotten. Everything around me seemed to become more alive. The birds, the trees and the grass. It was as if I saw for the first time that they had been made by God and honored Him. Nothing had changed about nature. Something had changed in me.

Gratitude begins with seeing. You can only give thanks for something you notice. That is why gratitude is not a feeling that overcomes you, but a way of looking that you can practice.

> *"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."*
> Psalm 103:2

David is speaking to himself here. He knows how quickly you forget what God has done. So gratitude is also remembering.

A closer look:
The Greek word for giving thanks is eucharisteo. In it is the word charis: grace. So giving thanks is literally: recognizing grace. Every time you give thanks, you are actually saying: I did not earn this, this was given.

Chapter 1 Giving thanks opens your ears

Gratitude and listening to God have more to do with each other than you might think. Whoever complains sees mostly what is missing. Whoever gives thanks sees what is already there. And God often speaks precisely through what is already there.

God wants to give more than you need

While shopping for groceries I once felt strongly that I should pay the bill of the customer behind me. I knew her from before. She is a Christian and the amount was less than eight euros. All kinds of thoughts came up: she can easily pay this herself. Still, the prompting became stronger than my doubts. When I had paid, she said: “But that’s not necessary, you know.” I answered spontaneously: “I know, but God also wants to give things that you don’t need.”

That moment brought both of us to the same realization. God does not only give what is necessary. He gives in abundance. Gratitude is learning to see that.

Giving thanks for what He has said

I have noticed that it helps to thank God for what He has already spoken, even when I do not yet see the fulfillment. On a disappointing evening, when fewer people came than I had hoped, I thought back to the words that we as a team had received about that evening. I chose to focus on what God had said, and not on what I saw. Peace came. Giving thanks moves your gaze from the circumstances to God.

> *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”*
> Philippians 4:6

An hour of enjoying

After my quiet time I once suddenly experienced the presence of God, like a warm blanket. I lay down and enjoyed His love for an hour. There was no question and no assignment. Only gratitude that He was there. Some of my most beautiful moments with God were moments when I asked for nothing and only gave thanks.

A new heart enjoys new things

After my conversion I stopped cursing, something I had previously done in almost every sentence. I started reading books, although before that I had never finished a book. Nobody had told me to. My new heart simply enjoyed new things. When I think back to that, I still become grateful. God did not only change my destination, He also changed my ordinary days.

Perhaps it is good to look back on your own life with God. What has changed since you have known Him? Which habits have disappeared, which new ones have grown? Often you only see when you look back how much He has done. And that looking back automatically becomes giving thanks.

Giving thanks for people

Paul began almost all his letters by giving thanks for the people he was writing to. I thank God for my mother and her friend, who kept praying when things were going badly for me. For my wife, who kept trusting what God had said. For father figures who showed me what I had not received from home. One of them taught me to hug. He embraced me again and again, until I no longer found it strange.

When you thank God for the people around you, you begin to see them differently too. Not as a burden or as competition, but as a gift.

Chapter 2 Giving thanks when things go against you

Paul writes: give thanks to God in everything. He does not say: give thanks to God for everything. You do not have to thank God for illness, loss or injustice. But you may thank Him in those situations. Because He is there. Because He remains faithful.

Learning to be content

Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians from prison. Right there he wrote about joy and contentment.

> *"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."*
> Philippians 4:11

Notice the word learned. Contentment did not come by itself, not even for Paul. He had to learn it. That encourages me. I am still far from there too.

Giving thanks while waiting

In the fourteen years that my wife and I waited for a child, giving thanks was not always easy. Every year at New Year's we spoke out our hope again. Tears flowed too. Still, again and again we tried to give thanks for what God did give: His peace, His words, and the things He let grow through us in those years. Giving thanks did not make the waiting shorter. It did make our hearts softer.

Sharing at the table what God is doing

At our own table we try to make it practical. We ask each other how the day was, and sometimes follow up: has God shown you something beautiful or surprising today? Our daughter is still too small to join in the conversation. Still, we have started. We want it to be normal for her later to share what God is doing. We do not make it an obligation. It is a habit that also makes us more grateful ourselves.

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."
Colossians 3:15

Gratitude against bitterness

I once worked for a boss who liked to tease me, sometimes in a humiliating way. At a moment like that a gift of the Spirit helps little. What does help is the fruit of the Spirit. I noticed that giving thanks is a medicine against bitterness. Not giving thanks for the teasing, but giving thanks for what God was doing in me, and for what was good. Bitterness gets less room in a heart that gives thanks.

Singing when it is hard

After I came to faith, nothing happened for three weeks. Then came a disappointment that brought all the old pain back to the surface. I cycled home in tears, and at the same time I was singing a worship song that I did not even know. Right at that moment I heard His voice from within: "Wim, I am with you and I will never leave you alone." I came home in peace.

I do not think it was a coincidence that the singing and the hearing came together. Praise and gratitude open something. Paul and Silas sang in prison, with their feet in the stocks. They prayed and sang hymns of praise before anything had changed. After that the doors opened.

Chapter 3 How do you grow in gratitude?

Gratitude is like a muscle. The more often you use it, the stronger it becomes. A few nudges:

1. **Write down three things every evening**

   Take a notebook or your notes app and write down three things every evening for which you thank God. Small is allowed. A cup of coffee, a ray of sunshine, a nice conversation. Do it for a month and then look back.

2. **Give thanks before you ask**

   Begin your prayer with giving thanks, before you name your worries and questions. Notice how your heart changes. Often your questions become smaller when you first see how great God is.

3. **Give thanks for what He has said**

   Take your notes of what God has spoken to you. Thank Him for those words, also for the words that have not yet been fulfilled. Giving thanks for a promise is an act of trust.

4. **Say it to others**

   Gratitude is not only for God. This week thank three people personally, with a text message, a card or a conversation. Name concretely what they have meant to you.

5. **Turn back, like that one man**

   Has God done something for you for which you have not yet truly given thanks? Take time for it deliberately. Go back to Jesus, like the healed man who turned back. Tell someone else about it too. That is how gratitude becomes a testimony.

A grateful heart sees more of God. And whoever sees more of God also hears more from Him.

FAQ

Question: I don't feel grateful at all. Do I still have to give thanks?
Answer: Yes, and you may be honest about how you feel. Giving thanks is first of all a choice, not a feeling. Start small. Often the feeling follows later. If you notice that you can no longer enjoy anything for a long time, talk to someone about it. Sometimes there is more behind it.

Question: How can I thank God when something terrible has happened?
Answer: You do not have to thank God for the terrible. The Psalms show that you may also complain and cry. But in the middle of your grief you may look for what is still there: His presence, people who care about you, strength for today. That is giving thanks in all things.

Question: Isn't gratitude just positive thinking?
Answer: No. Positive thinking tries to make reality prettier than it is. Gratitude looks honestly at reality and sees God at work in it. It does not focus on a feeling, but on Him.

At whispermagazine.org you can read true stories of people who heard God speak, learn more about hearing His voice and read our free Whisper magazine.

About (F)Luister Nederland

(F)Luister Nederland is a movement that wants to help believers understand the voice of God and grow in it. We believe that God still speaks today and that His children can learn to recognize, understand and obey His voice.

Our mission

We want to equip and encourage people to walk in relationship with Jesus in their daily lives, led by the Holy Spirit. It is our desire that more and more followers of Jesus learn to listen to His whisper and take bold steps in response.

Our vision

We see a church and a society in which God's voice is central once again. Where believers do not only listen to sermons or opinions, but live out of an intimate relationship with their Father in heaven. A generation that understands God's voice and, as a result, makes a difference in their surroundings.

Together we learn to understand His voice

There is more

This booklet is a nudge in the right direction. Do you want to go further? Whisper has more to help you on your way.

Whisper magazine
Our free magazine, to read online. **whispermagazine.org/magazine.html**

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Gratitude

Listening to Him. Giving thanks in all things.

God speaks. Every day. Not only to prophets or spiritual leaders, but to each one of us. The problem is not that He is silent, but that we often do not tune in properly.

In this book, Wim Kamphorst takes you on a journey to learn to recognize, understand and obey the voice of God. You will discover:

- why giving thanks is a way to hear God's voice better;
- how you can give thanks when life goes against you;
- five nudges to grow in gratitude.

After his conversion, Wim Kamphorst suddenly saw how alive the birds, the trees and the grass were. Ever since, he learns every day anew to see what God gives.

With personal testimonies, clear Bible passages and practical examples, this book makes clear that a grateful life is something that is close to God's heart.

God speaks.
What do you thank Him for today?

