

## **GOD'S WORDS FOR OUR GRATITUDE**

### **PSALM 116**

#### **Case Study:**

Those who know Becky today have a hard time imagining her full story of growing up in a home with no father, three siblings, and a mother who had to work two jobs to make ends meet. As a middle child, she was not the leader or the baby; she was either alone or in the way.

She spent most of her school age years trying to get attention. She would do whatever it took. As a young girl she would make good grades because the teachers would praise her. Later she would take whatever dare came along so that people would watch her. As she became older and dating was “the thing” she would do whatever it took to get and keep a boyfriend.

Eventually, she began to feel as used as she really was. She realized that no one truly cared about her, they just enjoyed being entertained by her. The thought that no one would care if she died was too much to bear, so she began to dive harder into the drugs she had already experimented with.

Becky began attending a church because they gave aid with food and clothes. Several of the women there remembered her name, asked her favorite color, and would put back clothes in her size especially if they were green. With time Becky finally understood the grace these ladies told her about and accepted Christ as her Savior. The change was dramatic.

Becky hungered to be discipled. As she learned more of God's love, Becky found the courage and reason to finish her GED, go to Tech school, met a Christian man, married, and now has three children of her own. While she still feels out of place around people with “nice things,” she is a leader in her church and one of the most enjoyable people you'd ever care to meet.

There is a deep, abiding gratitude that marks almost everything she does. Her enjoyment of life is contagious. When she prays Becky truly talks to her Heavenly Father and her conversations are saturated with thanksgiving. One day as she read Psalm 116, she said she found “her chapter” and loves to pray it back to her Savior.

#### **Pre-Questions:**

This case study is meant to challenge you to think biblically about the real struggles of life. These questions will not be answered completely in the sections below. But they do represent the kind of struggles that are being wrestled with in Psalm 116. Use the question to both stir application and to give you new insight into the psalm.

- What would you want to ask Becky about how God has transformed her difficult upbringing and regret over painful choices?
- How does learning of the love of God make wise/righteous living seem more “reasonable”?
- What role did the ladies at the local church's mercy ministry play in Becky's life transformation?

**Read Psalm 116** in your preferred Bible translation. The “rewrite” of Psalm 116 below is an attempt to capture the words that God would give Becky to pray (Romans 8:26-27). This would be something Becky would want to pray many times as she celebrated her heart of gratitude before the Lord.

## **A re-write of Psalm 116**

1. Lord, You heard the cries of my heart before I knew who to address them to. When no one knew me well enough to recognize my voice on the phone, You heard my pleas for love.
2. Lord, because you cared enough to listen, I will always enjoy our conversations. I never knew what it was to have someone to count on before You. I had always wanted a best friend, or even just a friend. Jesus You are my friend for a life time.
3. I was in a dark, dark place. As I searched for love, I placed myself in so many situations that could have been fatal or permanently changed my life. But I was so fearful and hurting I just did not care.
4. Once I realized You were there to call to (and would listen to someone like me), I cried, “God, cleanse my soul, make it whole! Lord, deliver me from this brokenness.”
5. You are so good! Your kindness amazes me! Our God is the One who loves the yet unloved.
6. I did not have a clue and yet You protected me from myself for years. When I got the point I would quit performing to earn “love” (I hate to call it that now), You entered my life and saved me.
7. That was the first time I knew what rest really was. I didn’t have to do anything to make the good feeling last. You were not flirting with me to pleasure Yourself. You loved loving me. I had never known that. I would return to Your presence thousands upon thousands of time for that refreshment of my soul.
8. You saved my soul from death (both Hell and the living death in which I swam). You saved my eyes from tears (there are no more hopeless tears for me). You saved my feet from stumbling (my old destructive ways no longer seem “worth it” to me).
9. I just want to sing, “I’m alive! I’m alive! I’m alive! I’m alive!” as I walk with You. I used to feel as if I absorbed death in my every interaction; even my pleasure and laughter were dark. You saved me into a community of life-giving people. Common conversation and joking breathes life.
10. When I first started telling You (and the ladies at the church) about my life, I wanted to believe You cared. I think I really did believe that is why I was so scared to talk. I didn’t want to be wrong, hurt, and abandoned again.
11. I kept saying to myself, “Every person I know is a liar and a user. Why should You (or they) be any different?”

12. I didn't know what I had to offer that You (or they) could possibly want. I had no asset, service, or pleasure to give. The whole thing seemed "too good to be true" so I cautiously kept looking for the catch.

13. But that is the content of the Gospel. We have nothing to offer. We are to only call on the name of the Lord. It was easy enough that this high school drop out, semi-homeless drudge could do it.

14. All You ask of me is to enjoy the community of my fellow believers. I will gladly pay that price. I would have paid all the money I had to be a part of a loving community. All You asked of me was what I ever truly wanted.

15. I remember the night it struck me that someone will care when I die. I always thought I would fade out of existence unnoticed. You care for Your children and welcome them into Your presence when we die. I don't know how to express how that makes me feel.

16. Lord, I am Yours. You have freed me and I belong to You. I trust You and I wouldn't even know what that words means (much less what the experience feels like) if it were not for Your grace.

17. "Thank You" will be the first words out of my mouth each time I pray. May it never be mistaken for a rote, habitual way of starting to pray. "Thank You" will forever be the cry of my heart!

18. You have given me a family (both a husband/children and a church). I will give testimony to your goodness and faithfulness to them as long as I live.

19. I long to be known everywhere and by everyone as "the lady who thanks her God." You are my everything! Praise You!

### **Passages for Further Study:**

2 Corinthians 4:13-18; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 2:6-7, 3:16, 4:2-4; Revelation 7:9-12

### **Post Questions:**

Now that you have read Psalm 116, examined how Becky might rewrite it for her situation, and studied several other passages, consider the following questions:

- How would you describe the major changes that God has brought in your life since your conversion?
- What needs to change in your perspective to make gratitude the natural overflow of your heart rather than something you try to express more often?
- How would your answers to the "pre-questions" have changed as a result of reflecting on Psalm 116?
- For what instances of God's deliverance do you need to re-write your own version of Psalm 116 to express gratitude to God?