Introduction:

As born-again believers, we can live in the closeness of God every day of our lives. God is continually pouring out His love, joy, peace, revelation knowledge, and every other blessing. But, we can get to a point where we’re not receiving and “feel” like He has drifted away.

You are as close to God—as connected to God—as you believe, sense, comprehend, or understand that you are.

Romans 1:21 gives four ways that people progressively move away from God.

“When they knew God,
(1) they glorified him not as God,
(2) neither were thankful;
(3) but became vain in their imaginations,
(4) and their foolish heart was darkened.

This scripture contains four separate elements, or keys, that are involved in our perception of our closeness to God. The reverse, moving toward God, expressed positively, is:

1. Glorify God.
2. Be thankful.
3. Recognize the power of your imagination.
4. Have a good heart

You have the power to control each of these in your life. The four lessons of this course are based on these four ways you can stay more aware of the presence of God.

The second key to staying close to God is developing and having a thankful heart. Glorifying, magnifying, and thanking Him are all interrelated. When we remember the good things that God has done for us we are thankful. As you are thanking Him, you are magnifying Him and more aware of Him.

I. Being unthankful

- Unthankfulness is one of the blights of our generation.

- In 2 Tim 3:1-5, Paul speaking about the end times, says for us to stay away from people who are unthankful or ungrateful. Being unthankful is in the same category as blasphemers and unholy.

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud,
blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, un forgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

- Unthankfulness is expressed in several different ways.
  - Complaining, moaning, grumbling and murmuring:
    - First of all, the word that occurs many times in the Bible, and which the NASV always translates "grumble," is in the KJV translated, "murmur." Other translations: "complain", "discontented".
    - “Murmur” is a SOUND word—MUR-MUR It sounds like what it is. “mormuro” = originally related to water and meaning “To make a low, continuous, indistinct sound”.
    - We are angry, but we never blow our top. We are resentful, but we never really act it out. We are rebellious against something somewhere or somebody, but we just say it, we don’t do anything.
    - Example of this: Do you remember Absalom? He was the son of David. He was in banishment and then when he came home he was so subtle. He didn’t stand on the roof tops and say, "David is a louse, he is no good. Let’s have a civil war." He was far too clever for that. Absalom stood at the gate of the city. That is where all the courts gathered and all the cases were tried. He didn’t say anything. He just watched. When David’s judges made a decision, Absalom would walk along beside them and say, "You know you really got a raw deal. If I were king, I wouldn't have done that to you. I think that was lousy. If I were king, I would have done this and this. But, of course, I am not king, but if I were, you would get a better deal than you got there."
    - Example of the Israelites in 1 Cor. 10:10. Grumbling caused stumbling.
  - There is another kind of complaint that is really tied into fear. This kind of complaint always comes with a whine in the voice. It is carefully practiced. You aren’t born with this skill. You practice it until you get good at it. You get to where you can do it without thinking. It has a twang, a whine to it. Jesus talks about it in the Sermon on the Mount. He actually quotes these people, "What are we going to eat tomorrow? What are we going to wear? Where is the next penny coming from?" (Matt.6) This kind of complaint is precipitated by fear and anxiety. It is the kind of complaining, according to Jesus, which suggests God is not going to keep His promises to you. It amounts to saying to others, "you know God. You can’t trust Him at all. Tomorrow there is no telling. Any one of us might be starving if we leave it to God. There is every reason to believe we are going to be without food, without clothes, without a job, etc. Forget it if God is in charge. In fact, we feel absolutely helpless, so if we can’t do anything, we put out our complaint.
  - Another kind of complaining is boredom.
Did you know that boredom is rebellion? You say, "I am bored." Why? Aren’t you satisfied with the life God has given you? Aren’t you satisfied with all the events God has placed around you? Are you so out of joint with God that you can’t be alive with God in every minute of His glorious universe?

Boredom is saying, "God, if I could manage my days, it would be a better life than this. I am rather disgusted with the kind of circumstances that You hand out to me." Boredom is a complaining about the life God has assigned me. It says, "And quite frankly, God, there is nothing much I can do with it." Then with my hands in my pockets, and with those big "humph" sighs, I am bored. It is just another unique kind of rebellion against God that manifests another type of complaining.

Isaiah (Isa. 1:2-3) said that the ox knows his master’s crib. The donkey knows where to go and get fed. Every time you put food down for your dog, even it has the sense to wag its tail. Yet some Christians don’t have the simplest ability to praise God for His creation. Even animals have more sense sometimes.

II. Being thankful magnifies God

Psalms 69:30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with ________________.

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with ________________, present your requests to God.

Ephesians 5:4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather ________________.

Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave __________ to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Eph 5:20 always giving __________ to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col 2:7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with ________________.

Col 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be __________.

Col 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving __________ to God the Father through him.

Col 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and ________________.
Hanging Out With God

1Th 5:18 *give _______ in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

1Ti 2:1 *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and __________ be made for everyone--*

Heb 12:28 *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be __________, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.*

- As we remember what God has done for us, we do so with a thankful heart, and that magnifies (makes larger) our estimation of Him.

### III. Being thankful involves memory

- One of Satan’s devices is our forgetfulness of what God has done for us.
- Being thankful requires at least two things, memory and humility.

**Psalms 103:2 NKJV** *Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:

**Psalms 103:2 CEV** *With all my heart I praise the Lord! I will never forget how kind he has been.*

- The reason we are told to not forget is because you will forget.
  - You have to make a decision to remember.
  - This is the purpose of the religious observances and feasts such as the Passover and the Lord ’s Supper.
- Before you can be thankful and before you can thank God for doing it, you have to first remember what He has done for you.
- A proud person doesn’t think anybody else has helped him. Thankfulness develops humility.
- Remembering and being thankful to God keeps your relationship with Him fresh.
  - I heard a story about a couple in our state who got married and a couple weeks later were taking a trip. The wife was driving and her husband was asleep in the back seat when she had a wreck. The man survived unhurt, but she almost died. When she did recover, she had lost all memory of the last 12 months. She went home with him because they said she was married to him, but she didn’t remember him or their relationship leading up to being married. They tried to have a physical relationship, but she just couldn’t hack it. They had to break up, move out and start courting again because she could not maintain that relationship without her memory.
  - If you couldn’t remember, just think what it would do to your marriage and to your children. Think what it would do to your work or your business.
  - Yet, very few people remember the goodness of God.
IV. Develop the attribute of being thankful to God.

- If you can’t think of anything for which to be thankful, be grateful for all you don’t have that you don’t want.
- You can always think of something for which to be thankful.
  - The residents of a Rest Home were asked at Thanksgiving to express one thing for which they were thankful. One aged resident said, “I thank the Lord for two perfectly good teeth, one in my upper jaw and one in my lower jaw that match so that I can chew my food.”
  - Matthew Henry, the famous Bible scholar, was once detained by thieves and robbed of his money. He wrote these words in his diary: “Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before; second, although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, and not someone else.”
- Sometimes we feel gratitude and don’t express it. A farmer in Vermont was sitting on the porch with his wife. He was thinking about how much she had meant to him during the forty-two years they had lived together, and how much help she had been as a very willing worker. He finally said, “Wife, you’ve been such a wonderful woman that there are times I can hardly keep from telling you.”
- The Apostle Paul had learned to be grateful. He began six of his writings with thanksgiving when he wrote to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and the Thessalonians!
  - The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Philippians while he was in prison in Rome. He had been in prison for two years in Israel, one year in transit to Rome and an undisclosed amount of time in Rome. He was facing possible execution. Yet, his letter to the Philippians is the happiest letter of any he wrote. He mentioned joy and rejoicing seventeen times in this short letter.

V. Keeping a thankful heart makes you constantly aware of God’s love and presence.

The very quality of your life, whether you love it or hate it, is based upon how thankful you are toward God. Our attitude determines whether life is to us a place of blessedness or wretchedness and misery. Indeed, looking at the same rose bush, some people complain that the roses have thorns while others rejoice that some thorns have roses! It all depends on your perspective.

This is the only life you will have before you enter eternity. If you want to find joy, you must first find thankfulness. Indeed, the one who is thankful for even a little enjoys much. But the unappreciative soul is always miserable, always complaining. He lives unaware of the presence of God.