



## TIME OF GRACE®

# Forgotten Blessings

## Study Notes

### Summary

How blessed we feel may depend on what we consider to be blessings, which means we may forget that we have blessings right in front of us every day. Pastor Mike challenges us to shift our mindset and open our eyes to the really good things from God that we often don't think about. In turn, we can become more grateful and feel more blessed.

- Blessing = \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Part 1: Blessings
  - Genesis 1:28 — God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number.”
  
  - Genesis 26:12 — Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the Lord blessed him.
  
  - Ephesians 1:3 — Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
  
- Part 2: The Blessing
  - Numbers 6:22-27 — The Lord said to Moses, 23 “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: 24 ““The Lord bless you and keep you; 25 the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; 26 the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”” 27 “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

- Part 3: Blessed & Kept
  - Numbers 6:24 — “The Lord bless you and keep you.”
  - One of God’s best blessings is your \_\_\_\_\_.



## Points to Ponder

1. Study the lyrics of the song *The Blessing*. Which parts come directly from Numbers 6:24-26? What additional thoughts are added?
2. Ask a friend how blessed they feel today (0-100 scale). If they ask you the same question, share something you learned from today’s message.
3. Read Jesus’ famous definition of the blessed person in Matthew 5:1-12. What surprises you about his teaching?
4. “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” according to Jesus (Acts 20:35). How can giving make a person happier than spending/saving?
5. Do you know someone who complains more than they praise? They need to hear the rest of this series. Invite them to join you.

## Homework for Next Week

Read Job 1, Job 13:15

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Forgotten Blessings**  
Genesis 1:28, Genesis 26:12, Ephesians 1:3, Numbers 6:22-27  
April 28, 2024

*Pastor Mike Novotny*

How blessed do you feel right now? Now, sometimes on social media, people will, you know, post a picture of something great and add #BLESSED. If your life right now or your week that you just had was a Twitter post, would you slap a hashtag blessed on the end of it? When you're praying to God, you know, the first thing that comes out of your mouth is it, you know, a request for something you really want or you're just so moved by what he has already given?

Or, to put it another way, if you had to pick a number between zero and 100, zero being I'm totally cursed, God's mad and getting back at me, and 100 is I can't imagine being more blessed; what number would you pick? Let's actually do that, huh? Do you have a pen in your hand, a piece of paper to write on? If you had to pick, be totally honest. This is just for you. Between zero and 100, how blessed do you feel right now compared to yesterday or a year ago? What number would you pick?

Now, as you think about your number, I should maybe define what I think a blessing is. I was trying to give a simple definition. If you're taking notes, write this down. I think a blessing is just something good that comes from God, right? Something good, something that brings you happiness, something you're grateful for. But it's not just like you saw 20 bucks laying on the ground. It's not a coincidence or an accident. If you believe that something actually came from a God who knows you and wants to do something good for you, that's what it means to be blessed.

So, back to your number. As you think about you and God, the good things he's given, maybe the things he hasn't yet given, I wonder what number you picked? Real quick, can I ask? Did anyone here pick a number greater than 50 out of 100? Yeah. Anyone hit 70? You feel that blessed? Few less hands. Anyone hit 80? Some hands go down. A lot of people feeling blessed. I want to tell you my goal today, by the time I say amen, it's to take whatever number you had and to make it bigger. My goal is at least five if not ten points.

And obviously, I'm not going to be able to fix your health. We don't have piles of money sitting in the church lobby to fix your financial situation. There are maybe complications in your family, in your body, maybe something in this nation I don't have a button to change. So, what I want to try to do is to shift your mindset and open your eyes to some really, really good things that God gives that we don't often think about.

I found out through a quick Bible search that there are 389 separate Bible passages that use words like blessing, blessed, or bless. Three hundred and one of them are in the Old Testament. And if you'd read all 301 of those verses in the Old Testament, you would find out that almost all of them are about physical things. Alright, it's about food, it's about health, it's about wealth, it's about fertility, it's about family. The Old Testament wants us to remember it's not just spiritual and eternal things. If God has done anything good for you that you can see, or hear, or taste, or touch, he wants you to count those blessings because he's throwing open the floodgates of heaven to show his love to you.

In fact, the proof is on the first page of the Bible. I believe the first example of the word bless in all the scriptures is from Genesis 1:28 where it says, "God blessed them," that's Adam and Eve, "and he said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number.'" So, I think it's accurate biblical scholarship to say the first blessing was? Making babies. Not to be too PG-13 here, but God says if he's given you the gift of intimacy, if intimacy leads to fertility, he says it's because God has blessed you.

So, husbands, I'm not telling you what to say or what not to say after you kiss the woman you love, but you could wink at her and say, "You're blessed." Or that could get really awkward and you might not want to do that. It might backfire. Alright, God says when he gives you a child, when he gives you a grandchild, when he gives you family, when he gives you someone that loves you and you love them back, don't miss that gift. Not everyone in the world has that.

You're blessed. Or a few pages later, there's another example. The book of Genesis also tells us, "Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold," why? "Because the Lord blessed him." So, Isaac goes out to the field, there's a whole bunch of grain, puts food in his belly, allows him to provide for his family. It was his ancient paycheck, his financial security. Why did that happen? Well, the Bible's simple answer is because God blessed him. The sunshine was a blessing, the rain was a blessing, the fertility of the soil was a blessing, the crop that came back, the body that could reap the harvest. All of these very, very, physical things were truly wonderful gifts from God.

And so, here's my question to you: This classic wisdom that we've heard so many times, what would happen to your relationship with God if you would slow down your busy life just long enough to count your blessings? Right? If you literally asked yourself the question, "What do I have right now that at least a billion humans don't?" That will make you feel blessed.

Now, for example, how many of you drove a car today to church? Yeah, lots of you. Literally, push the button, turn on your favorite music. How many of you have a -- one of those cars that's so fancy where you don't even have to roll down the windows? And my van is old, but I still can just push the button, wow! How many people? How difficult would it be to get to church, or to get to work, or get to school if I didn't have a car waiting for me in the garage? Just -- a billion people, at least, huh? That don't have that blessing, but I do. Do you? We're so blessed.

Now, how many of you had legs that could walk through the church parking lot and find a seat? You didn't have to be pushed in by a wheelchair. How many people aren't able physically to move like they want to, move like they used to? You and I might not be Mr. and Mrs. Universe, but if our body still moves, that's such a great gift. If you've felt healthy, that's a wonderful gift that comes from God. That means that you and I are incredibly blessed.

How many of you slept in a bed in your own home last night? Yeah, I know a lot of people who struggle with housing stability. If you had a roof over your head and four walls around that bed, that's -- can you imagine not having that gift? How many of you already had something to eat this morning, breakfast? Yeah, half of you. How many of you are already thinking about what you're having for lunch? All of you, yes. That's what you do during sermons? Alright. That was a test. Yeah, what a gift, right? Somebody can barely afford to eat. Man, we have clean drinking -- How many of you took a hot shower this morning? Yeah, me too. How many of you are sitting next to someone who didn't shower this morning? That was also a test. Don't be -- love your neighbor. I think of that sometimes when I'm just sitting there in shower like, "How did I get hot?" This feels so relaxing and good. Here's what I did... How many people in human history would have had their minds blown by that gift? If we stop, act, and think, it is such a blessing, right? Maybe life isn't perfect, but God is like stacking up dozens, if not hundreds, if not thousands of gifts that a billion people don't have. And if you slow down to count, you'll see.

But wait, there's more. If you're listening carefully, I said that the Old Testament almost entirely focuses on the physical, but not categorically. There's a famous Psalm, Psalm 32, where King David talked about the person who was blessed, and he started it by saying, "Blessed is the one whose sins are forgiven, whose sin the Lord will not count against them." David couldn't see, and touch, and taste such spiritual things, but when he stepped back and thought how good it was to be forgiven, that thought moved him to praise.

And that's exactly where the New Testament takes the topic of blessing. Alright, you turn the page from Old Testament to new, you get to the birth and the life of Jesus. And the New Testament almost launches into Matthew 5 with a famous sermon by Jesus called the Sermon on the Mount, and he talks about who's really blessed. It's called the Beatitudes. If you've read it before, what does he say? He doesn't say, "Blessed are the healthy, blessed are the wealthy, blessed are the moms and dads with the little one in their arms." No, he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are those who are insulted because of the name of God." Here's why. Because they have God. Can't see God, can't smell God, as a spiritual being, you can't touch God. But Jesus was convinced, and the New Testament is convinced that if you have God, if you're a child of God, if you've been forgiven and saved by God, you actually have something a billion times better than the best physical gift on earth.

I love how the Apostle Paul taught this. In Ephesians 1, he wrote this, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," why praise him? "Because he has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." If you're a Christian, do you have every physical blessing? No. Do you have every financial blessing? No. Do you have every relational blessing? No. Every family blessing? No. Every friendship blessing? No. But if you are a Christian, do you have every spiritual blessing? Paul's answer is, yes you do.

Oh, you want to be connected to God? Done in Jesus. You want to be forgiven for your sins? Done in Jesus. You want to be forgiven for all the sins? Done in Jesus. You want to be forgiven for that sin? It's done in Jesus. Do you want to be chosen by someone? Yeah, yours through Jesus. You want to be loved by someone, known by someone, cared for by someone? All yours in Jesus. Do you want to be sanctified, perfect, holy, pure, blessed in the sight of God? Yours, yours, yours, yours, yours, through the name of Jesus.

Pick the best blessings you could have: to be redeemed, saved, bound for Heaven, known by God, every prayer heard, all of it. Paul says, "Every spiritual blessing is yours in Christ." So, the Bible's convinced. You could be sitting in a jail cell right now, your body could be breaking down in a nursing home, you could be looking today for a place to stay, you could be off to divorce court, filing bankruptcy, struggling with fertility, but if you have Jesus, you cannot pick a small number. How could you? Life is short and everything that matters is guaranteed to be yours through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And so, mash the Bible's blessings altogether. In 389 times the Bible is saying, "Don't miss it. Please don't miss it. All the physical things you already have, all the spiritual things that are yours through Jesus." And throughout the books of Exodus, and Leviticus, and the book of Numbers, God is kind of instructing how church should work way back in the day. And it's there that we find this blessing that for the past almost 4,000 years, people across the planet in different languages and cultures have been hearing.

Here are the famous words, Numbers 6, starting with verse 22 says, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: 'The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.'"

Here's what I learned. There're three lines to this blessing: "The Lord bless you and keep you," "The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you," "The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace." In the original Hebrew language, the first line has three words, the second line has five words, and the last line has seven words. It's almost like God wanted his people to say, "Wow, I'm blessed. Wow, I'm really blessed. Woo, I'm crazy blessed." He wanted to increase their number, right? Expand their blessing. And built into the middle of the blessing, you probably caught it, was the name of the Lord spoken three times: "The Lord bless you and keep you,"

"The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you," "The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace." The Lord, the Lord, the Lord, three times in one blessing, which makes some Christians think about the Trinity.

Maybe a little hint that there's three persons in one God. God, the Father is the one who blesses us. God the Son, Jesus Christ is the one who is gracious to us. God, the Holy Spirit is the Lord who produces the fruit of peace within us. And if all that weren't interesting enough, then there's my favorite part, the shift from the plural to the singular. If this blessing was meant to be spoken to a whole bunch of people, it says, "You are to bless the Israelites," plural, "and say to them," plural. But then when you get to the actual blessing, "The Lord bless you, keep you, make his face shine on you, be gracious to you, turn towards you, and give you peace," six times in Hebrew, it's the singular form. If you've ever learned Spanish before, you might know there's a difference between "you" singular and "you" plural. Here where I live, we don't talk about that much in English. But if you go down to Texas, you'll note that in English to "you, y'all, all y'all." It's the same in Hebrew. There's a distinctive word for "you all" and just "you."

And here's what happens in this blessing, God says, "Aaron, I want you to speak to all these people, thousands, and thousands of Israelites that I love. But when you speak the blessing, make it personal." It's like God speaking through the one who's given the blessing wants to look like right at you, like it's just you and God. It's not some generic, "Yeah, God do good things for people." It's like, "No, God wants to bless you, and he wants to keep you". And he's not just happy with his people in general, through Jesus he's gracious to you.

If our church services weren't already so long, I would just love to look each of you in the eye and speak the whole thing next, so you know what this blessing was originally intended to do. Not just end the church service, not to be the time when we grab our jackets and pack up our things. God who loves the whole world wants to speak specially to each one of us children. He's like a good mom tucking her kids in at night, looking them in the eye, expressing love, making them feel safe. That's what this blessing is.

Say to them, all of them, that God wants to bless you. I mean, come on, how good is Hebrew grammar? You didn't know that before, did you? I want to think about that every time I hear the blessing, every time I speak it. God so loved the world, the whole world that he gave his only son, that whoever individually believes in him would have that blessing. In full disclosure, I've always gravitated to the part of the blessing where I think about God's face shining on me. Like, he's not disappointed, he's not mad, despite my sin, he's forgiven me.

I never really thought much about this part of verse 24, "The Lord keep me." What does that mean? A little preschooler was coloring in church and he asked in that really loud preschool voice, his mom or his dad, "What does that mean?" What would you say to him? "The Lord keep you," what's the blessing in that? Well, here's the best way that I could teach it to you. Imagine there's a big door here, can you see it?

Door handle, and you're all nice and safe and warm and cozy inside the house, and I'm standing outside of it on the other side of the door. Why do we have doors? Why don't we just live in an apartment or a duplex or a house with just walls and a roof? I think the simple answer is because doors keep us. Doors keep the dangerous things that are out here: the animals, the strangers, the wind, the rain, the snow. It keeps that stuff out here, and if you've ever raised a little kid, it keeps the ones you love in here. When the blessing says that God keeps you, I think what it's saying is God is like the door who keeps the people he loves safe here in his house and his presence, and he keeps all the dangerous threats to our souls out there. He doesn't let them in. To keep you means that you still have faith, you're still a child of God, you haven't given up your soul to sin. He's not just saved you; he's kept you saved by keeping those dangers out there and by keeping you safe in here.

Write this down, then I'll try to explain what I mean. I think at the start of this famous blessing, we're learning that one of God's best blessings is your keeping. The thing that God wants you to think about from the very start is the fact that despite all the danger out there to your soul, it hasn't gotten to you. You're still a part of God's family. You're still someone who trusts in his son, Jesus.

And think about that. If -- the Bible says, "The Devil is like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." If there was no door to your spiritual life and he just came roaring in, the world with literally billions of people who don't believe that Jesus is worth it, who are living lives of disobedience to God because at the end of the day, they just don't think Jesus is good enough to sacrifice for. If that whole world came flooding in and surrounded you with its message, what would happen to your faith?

And so, the fact that if you're a Christian, a follower of Jesus, and despite the Devil, and despite the demons, and despite the deception, despite the world, you're still a person who loves the Bible, believes in the goodness of God, and is willing to follow Jesus no matter what it costs you, how did that happen? And the only answer is because God kept you. When you woke up this morning, you could have said, "Ah, my back." Or, "Ah, what's the weather today?" Or, "Don't you see this news?" Or you could have woken up and said, "Still a Christian. Yes. I still believe there is a God. I still believe that he's my Father. I still believe that he knows me. I still believe. How good is he if he never gave me another dollar or another cent, if he never did another good thing for me? He is here. I'm still a Christian. I live in a broken world. The Devil is alive and he is very well, and yet God in his insane mercy, he didn't just bless me, he kept me. Or maybe I should say this, he blessed me by keeping me. And when I think about that, I could have walked away. I probably should have walked away. My heart would have gotten the last word, I might have. But God made the handle spin, and he kept me safe in his house close to his heart."

So, I'll give you one last try. What's your number? Did you think about everything the Bible has to say about blessings? All the physical things you have, the spiritual gifts that are yours in Christ, the God who speaks specifically to you, and especially he speaks to you this blessing have kept you, kept you close to Jesus.



Man, I don't know about you, but it makes me love him even more than I used to. You know, back in the late 1970's, in a valley just southwest of Jerusalem, archaeologists discovered what some people believe is the most important discovering in all of biblical studies. They found this old burial cave, and inside were a bunch of ancient pottery, a bunch of human bones, and I'll show you a picture. They found two of these. A tiny, tiny, silver scroll. I've seen this with my own eyes in Jerusalem. Only about an inch wide. One of them was an inch tall, the other one about four inches tall. They think that this little scroll was worn as a necklace and hung over someone's heart. And engraved on it in ancient text is the oldest surviving Bible passage currently in existence. I tracked the oldest copies of the Bible written on a pot or on parchment. This is it, dates back to 600 B.C. And does anyone want to guess what it says? "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord makes his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with favor, and may that give you and you and you peace." Let's pray.

God, that does give us peace. To think that you're God and you're not just a busy, overwhelmed dad running the universe. You are a Father in Heaven who speaks individually to each of our hearts. God, it's hard to be ungrateful when we really think. And if it was just the physical things, there's plenty to keep us grateful, even non-believers know that. But for those of us who know your son, who have been saved and then blessed by being kept, oh man, how can we complain, God? You have been so good to us.

We're so grateful that because of Jesus, your face is shining upon us. That hasn't changed. It's really what gives us peace at the end of the day. And so, God, open our eyes to see the height and the width and the depth of your love that our number would increase in leaps and bounds and we would say out of all the people on earth, we who follow Jesus are so, so, blessed.

Father, for anyone here today who doesn't, help them to know that this blessing is for them too. That by coming to Jesus, repenting of their sins, and believing in his name, everything I just said can be theirs this very moment because your blessings come not by our good works, but by the good work of our Savior Jesus Christ.

We live in a complicated world, Lord. There are many people, even within the church who have lost their peace, and we want to turn our attention to this blessing that reminds us that we don't have to lose it. There're so many good things right now that are ours because you are a God who's put your name upon us, who goes before us, and beside us, and behind us. Your spirit is within us. Father, this is what gives us peace.

So, we will not ask you just to bless us today because we already are. Instead, open our eyes to the blessings we already have. We pray this all, in the mighty name of Jesus, and all of God's people say, "Amen."