

Dearly Beloved Sisters,

Happy New Year and welcome to 2015! The Year of Our Good Shepherd!

Our good women theme for the month of January is “a thankful heart”. I will like to encourage us to start this year with a thankful heart focusing on Psalms 136.

The psalmist encourages us to “*Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name, (Ps 100:4)*. What a great way to start the year. Reflecting in our lives in the past years, I believe there are many things to be grateful for which will motivate us to start this year and indeed every day of the year to the end with the same attitude of thanks.

Perhaps there might be some prayer points of last year that may appear yet to be answered, and you are pondering in your heart how possible 2015 will be with all the promises when the ones of 2014 are not yet perfected. I challenge you today to ponder no more, step out from that prayer of request and step into the prayer of thanks. No matter what your circumstances may be today, start each day of this year with a grateful heart, be positive about what is in your hands today and focus not on what you don't have. Do not wait until December to count your blessing before thanking Him, show your gratitude to God from the onset.

According to a popular author ~ William Arthur Ward: *Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.*

It will therefore take a deliberate and conscious effort to not just have a thankful heart but to also live it out; this is because we seem to be compounded with very busy lives especially here in Europe that by the end of each day we can be so emotionally and physically drained from all the hustles and bustles of the day that the actual “giving thanks” gets lost.

More importantly for us to note is that as Christians who are followers of Christ, the more we express gratitude, the more we reflect the life of Jesus Christ, whose heart is a heart of gratitude.

Here are some thoughts to assist us in cultivating a thankful heart.

1. **Keep a journal of Thanks:** This could be a notebook or a dairy. Keep it in a place were you are sure to reach it easily everyday, for example in your handbag, on your dinning or kitchen table, next to you bible etc. Fill up the journal as things come to mind during the day or at the end of each day if you are sure to remember all the blessings of the day. Even if you cannot think of any spectacular thing for the day, just write *thank God for taking me out and bringing me back home safely today.*
2. **Tell the story:** As often as possible share the story of the goodness of God in your life and the life of people around you no matter how small you think it may be. Don't wait only for the day of special testimony in church; tell your neighbours, friends, colleagues, house fellowship members etc.
3. **Make effort to serve:** Has God blessed you? Look for someone to bless too. Reach out and bless someone in need. It's a way of saying thank you Lord for blessing me. This can be done in different ways such as dedicatedly praying for someone, giving to someone in need, visiting, calling, SMSing and positively encouraging one another, ask someone today 'how are you", above all serve the Lord with all your heart.
4. **Sing unto the Lord:** The beauty of singing is that when we genuinely sing unto the Lord, the song will find its way into our hearts and overflow into our minds and unconsciously pop out of our lips when we least expect it. When we sing unto the Lord, the songs finds a home in our hearts, and will be ever there with us, it will always pop out in any circumstances. Are in search of songs of thanksgiving? Just go to YouTube and type songs of thanksgiving; your phone, iPods, iPads etc. can be very handy, CDs abound too.

Finally my sisters, as we make a conscious effort to have a thankful heart this year, it will not only enrich our thanksgiving, but it will also help us to look forward to receiving the blessings and promises God has packaged for us this 2015.

Let us be actively thankful this year, remembering that praise and thanks is what our God loves to eat best.

Remain blessed,

Uzo Ike
(*President Good Women Fellowship*)