

A collection of pumpkins and autumn leaves on a wooden surface. The pumpkins are in various colors: orange, yellow-orange, and white. There are also some dark green and orange pumpkins. The leaves are in shades of green and brown. The background is a dark, textured wooden surface.

The One

November brings us the Thanksgiving season, my favorite holiday. However, gratitude is not usually automatic, complaining and grumbling is much easier.

The Psalmist View

The Psalms are filled with reminders to be thankful; they command us to give thanks. Psalm 100:4 tells us to enter His presence with praise and thanksgiving. The command to be thankful is for public expressions of praise.

Psalm 105:1: “Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples!” (NKJV)
Psalm 107:2 reminds us the redeemed of the Lord should say so. But how often do we keep God’s blessings to ourselves? Are we silent when we should be sharing His work in our lives with others?

Psalm 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 118:29; 136:1-3, 26 begin with “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever” (NKJV). Mercy can also be translated as *loyal love*, a term often used in the Psalms to describe God’s character. His mercy is forever; it is part of His eternal character.

Do you see the repetition? As a classroom teacher, I often repeated a concept or drilled math facts. Why? Students did not often learn to a mastery level the first time. So, we reviewed and repeated until we mastered the

concept or math fact. Are the writers of the Psalms trying to help us master giving of thanks and publicly acknowledging such?

A Leper’s View

When pondering thanksgiving, I immediately think of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19. Take a few minutes and read this passage, searching for details you may have missed or forgotten. Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem passing through Samaria and Galilee. He enters a village and encounters ten men. Due to their leprosy, these men were isolated from others and “stood afar off” (verse 12).

They lifted their voices and cried, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” Had they heard of His miracles? Had they hoped He would one day come their way? We don’t know the answers, but we do know they cried out and called Him by name.

Scripture tells us He looked at them and said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests” (verse 14). Luke records, “as they went, they were cleansed” (verse 14). Can you imagine the range of emotions these men experienced? Awe, wonder, happiness, expectation—but were

they thankful? Maybe. But only one acted on that emotion.

Verse 15 gives us several important details. When one leper realized he had been healed, he returned. As he was going, he glorified God with a loud voice. When he reached Jesus, he fell down and gave thanks. He was

nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" (verse 17-18) The Samaritan, the outcast, was the *only one* who returned to give thanks. We assume the other nine were Jews. This Samaritan man not only received physical healing but also spiritual healing. Listen to Jesus' response to his gratefulness, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well" (verse 19).

Where are the nine? Jesus seems disappointed. Have you been experienced this? No one showed gratitude to you in a particular situation. How did you handle that?

Where are the nine? Would we be in that group? Too busy getting to the priest to return and give thanks? Would we have even given it a second thought?

Or....would we have been *the one*. Is thankfulness and gratitude our default attitude? If not, let's develop that grateful spirit beginning today.



IS THANKFULNESS AND GRATITUDE
A DEFAULT ATTITUDE FOR US?

a Samaritan. This man did exactly what we are commanded in the Psalms.

Imagine the response of those who had not seen Jesus or knew He was in the vicinity. They would have known this man was a leper. Did they follow him to better understand his praise? Or did they ignore him because of his illness?

Jesus asks poignant questions. "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the

A Women's Ministry View

One of the blessings of Covid-19 for me has been the extra time to read. One of the books I recently read was *The Freewill Baptist Woman's Missionary Society: Faith and Works Win* (1922). This book chronicled the ministry of Freewill Baptist women from 1780, when

Benjamin Randall founded our northern movement, to 1911, when the merger occurred between Freewill Baptists and Northern Baptists. *Sparks to Flame*, written by Dr. Mary Ruth Wisheart (1985), begins with the organization of WNAC in 1935 and covers our first 50 years. I was blessed by many similarities to our current ministries. Our women have been faithful. What a legacy we have to build upon!

1841: The first local group formed in Providence, Rhode Island.

1847: FwBWMS (Freewill Baptist Woman's Missionary Society) organized in Sutton, Vermont.

Amos Sutton, missionary to India spoke at their third annual meeting. "Teach your children about missions. Sow the seed in their young hearts and it will blossom and bring forth fruit when they are men and women." So, the women responded by developing materials and training leaders for their *Cradle Rolls*, *Jewell Bands*, and *Advanced Light Bearer Heralds*.

Does this remind you of WNAC's involvement in Young People's Association (YPA), Girls' Association (GA), declamation contests, and FWB League. When CTS was formed, we joined forces with Randall House and became cheerleaders for our young people in National Youth Conference and Vertical III competitions.

1873: A national FwBWMS board was formed with specific goals: adopt a constitution and by-laws; develop a local, state, national framework; cooperate with Home and Foreign Missions Societies; maintain an independent treasury; and incur no debt. Due to travel difficulties at this same time, the "West" was organized.

1874: support first missionary—a single lady to India.

For us....Laura Belle Barnard in 1935.

1875: The salary for the lady principal at Storer College in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, was paid.

Women are strong supporters of our colleges. Funds are raised for specific projects or needs, as well as sponsoring scholarships. The Mary Ruth Wisheart Student Scholarship is given annually to a deserving female student at each of our four Free Will Baptist colleges. The Cleo Pursell Foreign Student Scholarship Fund is given to international students

studying at our Bible Institutes and Seminaries.

1878: The first edition of *Missionary Helper* was published to raise support and inform women of activities and needs on the mission field.

Heartbeat, Aim, Contact magazine, ONE Magazine, Treasure, and e-blasts have done and still do this for us. The Steward Provision Closet meets the physical needs of our church planters and international missionary families.

This same year, Rhode Island became the first state to “assume support” of their missionary to women and children.

Acts 1:8, Show Me, Total Support, and other state plans accomplish this today. What a blessing to the various missionaries who are beneficiaries!

1890: Thank offerings began to support the work, complete with suggested programs.

These are precursors to our Emphasis Month, Pre-Easter and Pre-Thanksgiving Weeks of Prayer for the World Missions (WMO) and North American Ministries Offerings.

1899: Glennville, Georgia, mentions an auxiliary, the earliest record in the South. The “sisters” contributed \$5.95 to the pastor’s annual salary.

1905: FwBWMS merged with the General Conference after the Home and Foreign Missions Societies. The ladies recognized we could do more together to greater influence the denomination.

Two quotes near the end of the book describe godly women in each generation who serve the Lord faithfully and give sacrificially.

“With the passing of years, acquaintanship and Christian fellowship have grown and Freewill Baptist women have been ready to keep step with the onward march of Christ’s Kingdom.”

Mrs. Mary Augusta Wade Bachelder

From 1935-1939, WNAC was a national department and then functioned as an auxiliary until 2015 when we became a department again.

“We have realized the incompleteness of our system of organization for our girls and young women.”

Lena Fenner Dennet

Our Shine! ministry began in 2015 for girls 12-18 and the adults in their lives. We also began a new scholarship program, Miley International Scholarship, for international students coming to the United States for their college education.

1910: The Freewill Baptists merged with the Northern Baptists.


Local groups continued to work under various names: Missions, Women’s Work, Ladies’ Aid Society, Woman’s Missionary Society, and auxiliaries.

1920-1935: Though there was no national organization, women in Texas, Missouri, Ohio, and North Carolina supported missions through the organization in the Northeast.

June 13, 1935: Meeting at the Black Jack FWB Church in Pitt County, North Carolina, the Women’s National Auxiliary Convention (WNAC) was organized and then approved by the National Association when it organized in November 1935.

The chosen watchword, found in 1 Corinthians 3:9, “laborers together with God,” describes our purpose as Free Will Baptist women. We desire to fulfill our roles in the Great Commission at home and abroad.

Our mission and purpose remain the same. However, each local group is encouraged to structure themselves to best meet the needs of their women. We acknowledge we are *better together* and will accomplish more for the Kingdom.

Ladies, I hope you have heard my loud praise through this review of our rich history. Join me and be *the one* who is grateful and *makes known His deeds and talks of His wondrous works* (Psalm 105:1-2). 

About the Writer: Elizabeth Hodges, WNAC director, is the daughter of Mary Belle Creech, who taught her children to develop an attitude of gratitude by modeling it daily. Elizabeth seeks to do the same for her three children and seven grandchildren.