

THANKSGIVING SERVICE | END OF WINTER | HOPE CHAPEL

THANKFULNESS PRODUCES JOY

How a Grateful Heart Grows the Fruit of the Spirit
Rhys Humphrys | Sunday 31 August 2026 | 9AM Gawler

Big Idea: *Thankfulness and love are the baseline of our faith. If you have God in your life, you will have love. If you have thankfulness in your life, you will find joy. And from those two things, all other fruits of the Spirit can grow.*

Introduction

Rhys opened with honesty and warmth - this was his first time preaching, and he came with something he deeply believes: that applying Scripture in our lives makes our relationships with each other better, our relationship with God better, and makes us more like Christ. Christianity is not a passive book, and we should not be passive Christians.

His theme for the Thanksgiving Service was simple and direct: thankfulness produces joy. Rhys set up two foundations he believes underpin the entire Christian life:

LOVE

If you have God in your life, you will have love.

THANKFULNESS

If you have thankfulness, you will find joy.

Out of these two - love and thankfulness - all other fruits of the Spirit can grow. This is not a passive idea. It is something we actively cultivate.

Galatians 5:22–23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

1 | Thankfulness Is Active, Not Passive

Rhys made a distinction that sat at the heart of the whole message: there is a difference between being grateful and being thankful. Gratefulness is a feeling. Thankfulness is a practice - something you choose to do, an action you take, regardless of whether the feeling is present.

Gratefulness is something you feel. Thankfulness is something you do.

This matters enormously, because feelings are unreliable. There are seasons where we do not feel grateful - grief, struggle, disappointment, loss. Rhys was not dismissing those seasons. He was saying that thankfulness is the practice that carries you through them. You do not wait until you feel grateful to give thanks. You give thanks, and the feeling often follows.

This is also why thankfulness is one of the most countercultural acts a Christian can perform. The world trains us to focus on what we lack, what has gone wrong, what we are afraid of. Thankfulness deliberately redirects our attention toward what God has done, what we have been given, and what he has promised.

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 *Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

Give thanks in all circumstances - not for all circumstances. Paul is not asking us to pretend that hard things are good. He is asking us to find something to be thankful for even inside the hard things - and to keep giving thanks as a discipline, not just a feeling.

Reflect: *Think about your default posture when things get hard. Do you naturally move toward thankfulness, or away from it? What would it look like to make thankfulness a practice rather than waiting for it to be a feeling?*

2 | Joy Is Different from Happiness

Rhys drew a clear line between joy and happiness - a distinction that is easy to gloss over but crucial to get right.

Happiness depends on what happens to you. Joy is independent of circumstances.

Happiness is reactive - it rises and falls with our circumstances. When things go well, we are happy. When things go badly, happiness disappears. Joy is different. Joy is rooted in something that does not change with circumstances: the character of God, the truth of the gospel, and the certainty of what he has promised.

This is why Paul can write 'Rejoice in the Lord always' from a prison cell. He is not happy about being in prison. But he has a joy that the prison cannot touch - because it is rooted not in his circumstances but in his relationship with God.

Philippians 4:4–7 *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Rhys pointed out the connection Paul makes here: rejoice, pray, give thanks - and the result is a peace that transcends understanding. The peace is the fruit of the thankfulness. You cannot manufacture it directly. But you can practice the thankfulness that produces it.

Joy Is Something We Can Grow

Rhys's core conviction is that joy is not simply given or withheld by God depending on our season. It is something we can grow - through thankfulness. Just as the fruit of the Spirit is not an overnight result but something cultivated over time, joy grows in the soil of a thankful heart. A person who consistently practises thankfulness will find that joy becomes more and more their natural posture - even through difficulty.

Reflect: *Is there a difference between your level of happiness and your level of joy right now? What does the joy that transcends circumstances look like for you in this season - and is thankfulness something you are actively practising to grow it?*

3 | Thankfulness Strengthens Every Relationship

Rhys brought the message back to something very practical: thankfulness does not just affect our relationship with God. It changes every relationship we are in.

He made the observation that one of the most common sources of friction in relationships - whether friendships, marriages, family, or church community - is a focus on what the other person is not doing rather than gratitude for what they are. An ungrateful heart magnifies absence and minimises gift. A thankful heart does the opposite.

When you practise thankfulness toward the people in your life - naming specifically what you appreciate about them - it changes how you see them. And it changes how they feel around you.

Rhys shared this practically: try naming three specific things you are grateful for about someone in your life this week. Not vaguely - specifically. Watch what it does to your heart toward them, and to the relationship itself.

The same principle applies in our relationship with God. Vague thankfulness - 'thanks for everything' - is different from specific thankfulness. Naming what God has actually done, in specific detail, changes our posture toward him. It builds faith. It reminds us of his character. It makes prayer feel less like talking to the ceiling and more like continuing a conversation with someone we know.

Colossians 3:15–17 *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Be thankful. Let the message dwell richly. Sing with gratitude. Do everything in his name, giving thanks. The thread running through this whole passage is that thankfulness is not a separate spiritual practice - it is the atmosphere of a Spirit-filled community.

Reflect: *Who in your life could you specifically thank this week - and what for? And what is one specific thing you could thank God for today that you haven't named out loud recently?*

Conclusion - Start Here

Rhys closed simply. If you want more joy, start with thankfulness. Not because thankfulness is a magic formula, but because it is the practice that reorients your heart toward what is true: that God is good, that he has been faithful, and that what he has promised is certain.

Thankfulness and love are the baseline. Everything else - the joy, the peace, the patience, the kindness, all the fruit of the Spirit - grows from that ground. You do not need a perfect season to start. You start now, with whatever you have, naming what is true, and letting the practice shape the feeling over time.

Love and thankfulness are the baseline.

From them, everything else grows.

Start with thankfulness. Watch joy follow.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

Use these on your own during the week, or with your LifeGroup.

1. Rhys said gratefulness is a feeling but thankfulness is a practice - something you choose regardless of how you feel. Is thankfulness more of a feeling or a discipline for you right now? What would making it a daily practice look like?
2. He said the Bible is not a passive book and we should not be passive Christians. Which area of your faith feels most passive right now? What is one active step you could take this week?

3. Joy is independent of circumstances; happiness is not. What is a circumstance in your life right now that is affecting your happiness? And underneath it - is your joy still intact? What is it rooted in?

4. Philippians 4:4–7 connects rejoicing and thanksgiving directly to a peace that transcends understanding. Have you experienced that peace? What was the thankfulness practice that preceded it?

5. Rhys said naming three specific things you appreciate about someone changes how you see them. Who could you do that for this week - and what would you say?

6. What is one specific thing you are thankful for from this winter season? Not general - specific. Name it out loud, or write it down.

Key Scriptures This Week

- Galatians 5:22–23 - The fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience...
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 - Rejoice always; give thanks in all circumstances
- Philippians 4:4–7 - Rejoice in the Lord always; peace that transcends understanding
- Colossians 3:15–17 - Be thankful; sing with gratitude; do everything in his name

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