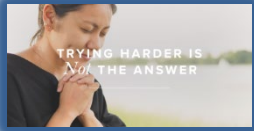


The Covenant Contact

July 2025

"It's Not about Trying Harder"



I love how often Jesus asked questions when he was teaching and interacting with others. As recorded in the four Gospels, he asked over 300 questions. One of the more interesting ones is

when he heals 10 men with leprosy and only one of the 10 expressed gratitude to Jesus. From Luke 17:16-18:

He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?'

Samaritans were seen as racially impure by the Jews, as well as members of a false religious sect. They were originally Jews in the northern territory of Israel who, 750 years before the time of Christ, had been conquered by the Assyrians. Some remained, and they defied God's law by intermarrying with the Assyrians. Eventually, they developed their own version of the Torah, claimed to worship God, and had a competing temple.

So Samaritans were not exactly the "good people" of the day for the Jews. In many ways, they were considered enemies. They were definitely not people to look up to and here Jesus is telling his people, "Hey - see that group over there you think are horrible? Yeah, they are doing what you should be doing."

For us today, as primarily white Evangelical Christians (one of the most privileged people groups in America), we lack for little, so we often forget to be grateful for what we have.

And Jesus sits here teaching us that even a _____ [insert group we think is less than us] knows how to be thankful when we don't.

Ouch.

It's really easy to do a cursory study of this text and simply take away, "What are some ways I can cultivate more gratefulness in my life?" And it's not as if that application is incorrect in this text. It's just that it's not good enough. I think we can do better. Why? Because sometimes simply trying harder isn't what creates life-long transformation.

Ann Voscamp wrote a book called One Thousand Gifts - and made all kinds of money on the concept of teaching us how to be more thankful. And, good for her, because our hearts often need a grateful attitude adjustment. Did I write down my things each day during the month when reading the book? I sure did.

Did it help create a thankful heart in me? You bet.

For a while.

For a while, the trying harder worked just fine. I saw the little things around me that I was grateful for. Then I simply got out of that habit. That tells me something: that's it's not about just about looking for what we ought to be grateful for.

So how do we get beyond trying harder?

When the healing in Luke 17 occurred, the Samaritan was seized with "an irresistible emotion of gratitude" and "captive to this spontaneous gratitude, put off going to the temple to rush back to Jesus."

The ceremonial clean bill of health could wait (which I imagine would be a pretty big deal to a leper). His spiritual obligation overrode his ceremonial need. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him, at the very least recognizing the Jesus was an agent of God. More likely, he did realize Jesus was King. The Samaritans were well-acquainted with the messianic Scripture, and this man saw Jesus in that light. He returned to Jesus with a heart giving glory to God and thanksgiving for Jesus. He recognized God's power in Christ.

So maybe, just maybe, instead of focusing on trying harder to see what we can be thankful for, especially when things are challenging, the way to cultivate a spirit of thankfulness in your heart is about reframing the question.

Rather than asking, “What should I be thankful for?” it may be more helpful to ask questions like this:

“What is God doing in this situation right now?”

“What is He teaching me?”

“What is He redeeming and restoring?”

By focusing on what God is doing in the present rather than on what we **ought** to do – like writing down a 1000 ways to be thankful – we are cultivating a faith that leads to obedience.

What is God teaching you in the midst of your current challenges? What is He redeeming and restoring? How is God at work and what does he want you to take from this situation?

Let’s reframe our questions so they are not about trying harder, but about what God is already doing in our midst.

In Christ, Pastor Stephanie

Pastor Stephanie’s Vacation

- Pastor Stephanie will be vacationing July 14 through 28. If you have a pastoral need during that time, please contact Diaconate Chair Cathy Fredlund or another Diaconate member.
- Dr. Jessica Carter will be speaking during worship on July 20 and 27. She is the founder of Hear Wisdom Ministries (hearwisdom.org) and is a preacher and teacher ordained in the Evangelical Covenant Church. Dr. Carter last visited us in September 2023.

Worship Music Night

- Watch for a sign-up sheet to a worship night on Friday July 11, 6:00 pm, at Calvary Church in Southbury. The Worship Team is part of the program. We will take the van (leave our church at 5:15 pm).

Summary: Quarterly Meeting of June 1

Pastor Stephanie’s fall doctoral course requires developing a curriculum to present and lead in this church. This fall she will present a five-session course focusing on prayer and being more outwardly or inwardly focused.

A QR Code contact card is posted in every pew so that anyone in the congregation can contact the church for follow-up.

General Fund offerings through 21 weeks were \$60,002, which is under budget by \$5,977. Summer offerings generally fall off. All bills are up to date. As of May 30, 2025, the General fund balance is \$26,821.57. Restricted funds are \$63,693.96

Pastor Stephanie will vacation in July. Dr. Jessica Carter will speak on July 20 and July 27. All of us are encouraged to reach out to visitors or to people usually at worship who are missing.

A new lawn service company has been arranged.

A Monday evening Zoom meeting is praying for the church’s outreach. Using the church’s snow cone machine is planned for the Thomaston’s annual car show in September. The M&E Board sent \$1,000 to a pastor in Cuba to share among pastors and missionaries in Cuba. The “Playground Project” is expanding to collect used Weber gas grills in good condition to send to orphanages in Guatemala.

New stoves have been installed in the Kitchen. The annual WM graduates picnic is June 17.

For future consideration: 1) providing iPads for the worship team musicians, as used by other local worship teams at the Night of Hope; and 2) increasing the congregation through personal invitation and by electronic means.

John Bedosky, Chair

Thomaston Summer Concert Outreach

- Again this summer, our Diaconate will have a presence at the Thomaston Summer Concert Series at Seth Thomas Park on Monday evenings at 7:00 pm. We will have cold water for people to refill water bottles and free cookies. Bring a chair and attend – if possible, sit near the water and cookie table. **These are the dates: July 7 and 21, August 4.** (We are splitting the concert dates with the Congregational Church. They will have a presence at the other concerts.) Contact: Glenn Hafele.

Christian Education

- **Summer Sunday School:** Sunday School doesn't have to end when school does! We are holding a single Sunday School class downstairs for all ages (pre-K to 6) during the normal 9-9:45 am time. It will be a video and/or a craft or coloring sheet, something low stress and fun, to keep kids learning about Jesus all throughout the year. It will look different from our Sept.-June classes, so when you're not on vacation or busy this summer, send the kids and we'll be glad to have them
- **VBS Planning:** Planning for VBS begins on Wednesday, July 2 at 4:00 pm in the Potter's House. Anyone interested in helping plan the for our three nights of August 17-19. The theme is "Awesome God".
- **Kids Camp:** Mark your summer calendar for Vacation Bible School – for Pre-K3 through Grade 6 – the evenings of August 17-19. We plan to hold it outdoors again at Nystrom's Pavilion. Each evening session will begin with supper before programming. If you want to help, contact Christy Barrett.

Women Ministries



Women Ministries events are for all women of the church and their friends.

- **Kitchen Detail:** Wednesday, July 2, 9:00 am
- **WM Book Swap:** Our Book Swap – Novels and Nibbles – will be July 12 at 10:00 am at Linda Chandon's. Please bring any books you would like to swap or share and be prepared to take home some new reads.
- **Walking Nystrom's Track** instead of Zumba, Monday evenings at 6:30 pm, weather permitting. No one is required to walk together, but it's nice knowing that others are there for safety. Contact: Peggy Schwetz.

Summer Seminar

- Pastor Stephanie will be conducting a series of three sessions on "Tough Questions of the Faith." Meetings will be by Zoom on the following Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm: July 2, 9, and 30. Contact: Pastor Stephanie (860 283-9146 or pastor@covchurchthomaston.org).

Zoom Prayer

- **Join us** on Monday nights, 8:00-8:30 pm, to pray about our community, how to reach the lost and those who don't know Christ, and our congregation's prayer needs. Contact Jessica Bedosky to get the email link.

Youth Groups

Trailblazers/Pathfinders is for students in Grades K-6. Leaders are Brenda Tousignant, Lori Vigeant, and Haley Morton. They meet once a month (done for the summer).



D/C (Discipleship/Confirmation) is for students in grades 7-8, a two-year journey, exploring who God is and what God means in our life. All junior high students are welcome to attend. Pastor Stephanie is the leader. They meet on Sundays at the 9:00 am Sunday School time.



CHYG (Covenant High Youth Group) is for all students in grades 7-12. The leaders are Beth Campbell and Sue Sundell.



Liturgical Dance is for girls in grades 1-8. The leader is Jessica Bedosky. Practice times vary and are in the Sanctuary.



Thomaston's 150th Anniversary

FAMILY FUN DAY is Saturday, July 12 at Nystroms Park from 10:00-2:00 pm. We are looking for volunteers to serve snow cones and greet the families. If you would like to volunteer for a 2 hour period please contact Cathy Fredlund.

Trustees

- **Used Rug Available:** The rug that was used in the Potter's House (now rolled up in the craft area) is available to anyone who wants it. Contact: Bee Bothroyd

Banquet of Blessing

- **Need**, soups, canned pineapple, paper towels, toilet paper.
- **No perishable foods. Check expiration dates.** We don't give away out of date food.

Prayer Chain

Contact Prayer Coordinator Mary Butkevich for prayer concerns and rejoicings.

Benevolence Needs

Consider giving to the church to help those who need basic necessities: write "Diaconate Benevolences" on your check's memo line. If you have a benevolence need, contact Pastor Stephanie (860 283-9146 or pastor@covchurchthomaston.org) or John Butkevich or Linda Lawrence.

Meal Coordinator

Providing a meal to someone during a difficult time is one way to show how much we care. If you know someone who might benefit, contact Sandy Dunn.

Crafty Fridays

In the Potter's House, 6:00-8:00 pm. If you have a craft to do, bring it. If you would like to just visit and chat, that's okay! Contact: Ruth Johnson.

Giving Made Easy

- Give online in just two minutes. You can opt for one time, weekly or monthly donations. Just open the camera app on your phone and scan the QR Code. You will then be taken right to the Giving Page on our website.

Covenant Church of Thomaston

[Giving Page QR Code](#)



July 2025

(Rev 6/29/2025)

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Romans 12:4-5

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>*Sundays: 9:00 am Summer Sunday School; 10:00 am Worship; 11:15 Fellowship</p> <p>Sunday worship services are recorded and posted on the church website (covchurchthomaston.org). Worship bulletins, which include the weekly announcements, also are posted on the church website.</p>		<p>1</p> <p>5:00 Prayer (Church Office)</p>	<p>2 9:00 Kitchen Detail 4:00 VBS Planning (Potter's House)</p> <p>6:30 NA (Fellowship) 7:00 Summer Seminar (Zoom)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>7:30 NA Subcommittee (Gathering)</p>	<p>4 FOURTH OF JULY HOLIDAY</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>6*</p> <p>9:00 Summer Sunday School</p> <p>7:30 M&E Board (Zoom)</p>	<p>7</p> <p>6:30 Nystrom's Track 7:00 Summer Concerts (Seth Thomas Park) 8:00 Zoom Prayer</p>	<p>8)</p> <p>5:00 Prayer (Church Office)</p>	<p>9</p> <p>6:30 NA (Gathering) 7:00 Summer Seminar (Zoom)</p>	<p>10</p> <p>6:30 WM Book Club (Martha Tillow's)</p>	<p>11</p> <p>6:00 Worship Music Night (Southbury Calvary)</p>	<p>12</p> <p>10:00 WM Book Swap (Linda Chandon's) 10-2 Family Fun Day (Nystrom's)</p>
<p>13*</p> <p>9:00 Summer Sunday School 11:30 Diaconate (Conf.)</p>	<p>14 10:30 39ers Study (Fellowship) Pastor Stephanie's Vacation 7/14-28 6:30 Nystrom's Track 8:00 Zoom Prayer</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Pastor's Vacation 5:00 Prayer (Church Office)</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Pastor's Vacation 6:30 NA (Gathering)</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Pastor's Vacation</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Pastor's Vacation 6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's House) 6:30 Tres Dias Secuela (Fellowship)</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Pastor's Vacation</p>
<p>20*</p> <p>9:00 Summer Sunday School Pastor's Vacation</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Pastor's Vacation 6:30 Tres Dias Secretariat (Fellowship) 6:30 Nystrom's Track 7:00 Summer Concerts (Seth Thomas Park) 8:00 Zoom Prayer</p>	<p>22)</p> <p>Pastor's Vacation 5:00 Prayer (Church Office)</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Pastor's Vacation 6:30 NA (Gathering)</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Pastor's Vacation</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Pastor's Vacation 6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's House)</p>	<p>26 9:30 "Chosen" Group (Esme's & Ruby's) Pastor's Vacation</p>
<p>27</p> <p>9:00 Summer Sunday School Pastor's Vacation</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Pastor Stephanie returns 6:30 Nystrom's Track 8:00 Zoom Prayer</p>	<p>29</p> <p>5:00 Prayer (Church Office)</p>	<p>30</p> <p>6:30 NA (Gathering) 7:00 Summer Seminar (Zoom)</p>	<p>31</p>		

Volunteers: . . . through love serve one another. Galatians 5:13b

Coffee Fellowship sponsored by: Christian Education Board**

****Beverages and snacks are provided by the church.**

NURSERY			ALTAR FLOWERS		LAY READERS:		SCREEN MONITORS	
7/6	Courtney Ayer	8/3	7/6	Communion	7/6	Ruth Johnson	7/6	Martha Tillow
7/13	Cathy Fredlund	8/10	7/13		7/13	Ruth Johnson	7/13	Peggy Schwetz
	Haley Moreton		7/20		7/20	Ruth Johnson	7/20	Cathy Fredlund
		8/17	7/27		7/27	Jennifer/Grace Nolan	7/27	Peggy Schwetz
7/20	Patricia Vigeant		8/3	Communion	8/3	Jessica Bedosky	8/3	Martha
	Megan Campbell	8/24	8/10		8/10	Gina Whaley	8/10	Peggy Schwetz
			8/17		8/17	Peggy Schwetz	8/17	Cathy Fredlund
7/27	Gina Whaley	8/31	8/24		8/24	Janet Cappelletti	8/24	Peggy Schwetz
	Lauren Whaley		8/31		8/31	Liz Montambault	8/31	Peggy Schwetz

Sunday School Staff

K &-Pre-K	3-4	7-8 (D/C) Pastor Stephanie	
1-2	5-6	Class Helpers:	

Youth Staff

CHYG (Grades 7-12)	Trailblazers/Pathfinders (Grades K-6)
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Liturgical Dance (Girls, grades 1-8) Jessica Bedosky

July Birthdays and Anniversaries

Birthdays			Anniversaries		
3	Jean Morton (72)		5	Christy & Mike Barrett	
3	Troy Muckle		7	Sandy & Jeff Dunn	
10	LJ Rodriguez		12	Brooke & Dave Holway	
12	Jake Morton		21	Sue & Tim Sundell	
12	Jen Samela		26	Holly & Jay Herbert	
14	Melissa Fay				
14	Martha Tillow				
16	Megan Campbell	23	Rick O'Connell (81)		
17	Aubrae Oporto	24	Dennis Montambault		
17	Raelin Oporto	24	Carolyn Strattman (93)		
18	Elin Ayer	25	Kris Fredlund (82)		
19	Michelle Bothroyd	27	Lou Wynkoop (96)		
22	Dillon Gomes	28	Dave McClay (76)		
22	Ted Ryan (86)	29	Haley Morton		

Connections:

- Pastor: Stephanie Nelson: pastor@covchurchthomaston.org
or 860-283-9146 (study)
- Church Chair: John Bedosky:
- Diaconate Chair: Cathy Fredlund:

- Treasurer: Ken Hopkins:
- Office "Churchmouse" Ruth Johnson: cmouse@covchurchthomaston.org
Office/Kitchen: 860-283-5071
- Meal Coordinator: Sandra Dunn
- Prayer Coordinator: Mary Butkevich