

Becoming a Thankful Person

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Prayer: Hungry for God Series

1 Thessalonians 5:18

In just a few days most Americans will be celebrating Thanksgiving. If you remember all the way back to elementary school, you might recall that the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. The winter was a devastating one resulting in nearly half of the 102 passengers, who had sailed from Plymouth, England, dying before spring.

But the harvest that came in from that spring was enormous. Governor William Bradford penned the first Thanksgiving proclamation in 1621 calling for “a day of solemn gratitude to God Almighty for his abundant mercy, grace, and provision through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The pilgrims celebrated over three days with neighboring Indian tribes, who supplied much of the food – venison, wild turkeys, dried berries, shell fish, cornbread.

And, of course, they spent the afternoon watching the Detroit Lions on TV and John Madden serving up an eight-legged turkey.

Did you know that the first presidential proclamation ever issued in the United States was by President George Washington, who proclaimed a national day of thanks. Listen to George Washington’s words:

Whereas, it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor; and whereas both houses of congress have, by their joint committee, requested me to recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness: now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to a service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be; that we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks for his kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation.

This is great theology! And this was drafted by the President of the United States, calling upon the nation to acknowledge with grateful hearts the many blessings we have received from Almighty God.

Thomas Jefferson was opposed to a national day of Thanksgiving. It reminded him, he said, of the English monarchy. And so we did not have another national day of Thanksgiving until 1863 when Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November as the national day of Thanksgiving. This, of course, was in the middle of the Civil War. Listen to Lincoln's 1863 Thanksgiving proclamation. This was penned by Lincoln himself.

It is the duty of nations as well as of men to owe their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations are blessed whose God is the Lord. We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied, enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God who made us. It seemed to me fit and proper that God should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States...to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwells in the heavens.
~Abe Lincoln, October 3, 1853

Can you imagine a politician today, someone in a presidential debate for example, someone holding high national office looking into a bank of TV cameras and saying to the American people: "We have been the recipients of great blessings. We have grown and prospered, but we have forgotten God. We have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that the blessing upon America has been produced by our hands. We have become intoxicated with our own success. We have become too self-sufficient, too proud to pray to the God who made us." Can you imagine the howls of protest coming not only from the non-religious, but also from the religious?

This is supposed to be a happy day, a day in which we remember only good things. Let's not talk about self-sufficiency, an independent spirit, or arrogance.

But Abraham Lincoln, as is almost always the case, recognized that unless we dealt honestly with some of our character flaws as Americans, we could never become truly thankful people. And we could not properly celebrate Thanksgiving.

It is not a straightforward thing to becoming a thankful person, or a thankful nation. We have to clear away certain impediments in our hearts and spirits before Thanksgiving can be properly expressed.

I've been doing a series this fall on prayer. Over the last several weeks I've given you a track to run on when you are thinking about your prayers. We need a place to begin. We need to know how to continue in prayer. We need to know how to end our prayers. The track that I've given you to run on is an acronym – ACTS.

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A = Adoration

C = Confession

T = Thanksgiving

S = Supplication

This model has been profitably used by many Christians. A stands for adoration. We begin not with ourselves, but with the worship of God. C stands for confession. We talked about that last week. T stands for Thanksgiving, which we will be talking about today. And S stands for supplication, or making petitions, which we will talk about next weekend.

As we look forward to Thanksgiving this week, I want to talk about becoming a thankful person. That's the title of our talk. Let's pray.

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^{1Th 5:18} give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Why is giving thanks in all circumstances God's will for you?

The reason why thanksgiving is such a big deal is because it reveals your fundamental view of life. Perhaps nothing reveals more about your basic orientation than thanksgiving. If you want to find out what a person thinks right down to their toes, you watch how often they say "thank you" either to God or to other people.

Why is thanksgiving so revelatory? It is because you recognize that either God or other people are the source of everything good in your life, or you honestly believe that you are the source. There are two basic approaches to life. There is the American mythology of the self-made man, the self-made woman. We are the source of all of our blessings, what Lincoln condemned by saying, "We have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. We have become too self-sufficient." Either in pride we say we are the source of all the good in our life,

or in thankfulness we say: God is the source of everything good in my life and I am standing on the shoulders of other people. That's why I'm ten feet tall. Either the blessing that is on your family is due to you because you are a brilliant parent, because you are a phenomenal spouse, or the blessing has come from the hand of God and others.

GK Chesterton wrote a biography of St. Francis of Assisi. And in this biography, Chesterton said that St. Francis saw the world hanging upside down in complete dependence upon God. Chesterton wrote instead of being merely proud of his strong city because it could not be moved, he would be thankful to God Almighty that it had not been dropped; he would be thankful to God for not dropping the whole cosmos like a crystal vase to be shattered into falling stars.

Chesterton goes on to remind us that the Latin meaning of the word "dependence," literally means hanging. When you go into your study, or you go into your office and you have a framed degree on the wall, you have a high school degree, a college degree, a law school degree, you have some certificate, or license, what do you think those things are hanging on? Your degrees, certificates, licenses are not merely hanging on a nail in the wall. They are hanging on the goodness of God and the goodness of other people in your life.

Everything that you have is literally hanging, dangling, and completely dependent upon the goodness of God and the goodness of others in your life. Are you a professional? Are you making a lot of money in your career? Great! But don't forget to thank God for your intelligence. Thank your parents for educational opportunities. Thank your sixth grade teacher for motivating you.

Have you done well in sales? Great! But don't forget to thank the hard-working staff around you; your secretary, all the people who make your success possible.

Do you have your own business? Great! But don't forget to thank the people who trained you.

Can you think of anything that you've produced entirely on your own? Don't you just hate it when you hear one of these grossly overpaid, loud-mouth braggarts who play some professional sports talking about their own greatness and what they're able to do on the field? This last week an offensive tackle, who truly is offensive, said that there were perhaps only two men on the planet that could play tackle as well as he played. And that he was the cornerstone of his team's success. It makes you want to gag.

Friend, can you think of anything that is working in your life that isn't the product of you standing on the shoulders of others? The eyes of faith would say: Can you think of any goodness in your life that doesn't hang on the open hand of God?

Thanksgiving reveals your basic spiritual orientation to life. Either God is the source, or we are.

And thanksgiving reveals whether God is the goal or we are. Why do you exist? What is your purpose in life? Is the purpose of your existence to try to multiply as many pleasurable experiences as you possibly can? To see everything there is to see? To taste everything there is to taste? Is the purpose of your life to own everything there is to own? Or to be insanely comfortable, or ridiculously secure?

The Catholic writer, St. Francis de Sales said this back in the early 1600's: "God gave you understanding that you might know him, memory that you might think of him, a will that you might love him, imagination that you might realize his mercies, sight that you might behold the marvels of his works, speech that you might praise him, and so on with all your other faculties."

See, theoretically you might believe in God. You may have even prayed to receive Christ into your life. But practically, if you are not frequently saying thank you to God, then you are living like an atheist. You are revealing that your orientation toward life is selfish. Biblically, one way to measure the quality of your relationship with God is to ask: Do you thank God a lot. Do you pause in your day to say thank you to God? I recognize that you, God, are the source of this blessing. I recognize that the goal of life is not to please myself, but to please you. The goal of worship is not whether I enjoy it, but whether you enjoy it. Not whether it sounds good to my ear, but does this worship sound good to your ears?

Looking back at the last week, did you pause many times during the week and say: Lord, thank you?

Why is it so hard for us to be thankful? I think it is because as Americans we live with an entitlement mentality. Our perspective is that all we have is given to us by some sort of constitutional right. I deserve, I am entitled to all of the blessings that I enjoy. We can see this entitlement mentality by our shock and upset when things go wrong in our lives. If we get sick, we immediately say, "Why God? Why did you allow this cancer into my life, this heart problem, this arthritis, this accident?"

If we experience tragedy, we say: "Why God, why did you do this to me?" If someone dies, if we experience financial problems, if we're out of work, if we have our heart broken in romance, or we have some relational problem, we immediately say: "Why God, why is this happening to me?"

It is so rare for any of us who have this same sense of shock and bewilderment, "why God" when it comes to the good things in our lives. We Americans have such an over-inflated sense of entitlement to good. Of course, everything should

go well for me. Have you ever stopped and said: Why is it that I'm, right now, not in pain? Why did my car work this morning? Why do I have friends, me being what I am? Why did I have breakfast?

We think of course we should have great food, lots of attention, and lots of love, healthy children, respectful children, a great education, a great house, and a hot shower. It is only when the plumbing breaks that we stop and say: What's going on here. Something is wrong.

It is the rare person who walks around with a sense of shock and awe that so much good is happening in their lives. It is difficulty and pain that catches us up short and causes us to recognize that nothing good has to be. Our happy circumstances are not inevitabilities. Nothing has to be. Our happy circumstances are gifts.

The psalmist in Psalm 124 recognizes this truth that nothing has to be. In Ps. 124:1-8,

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Ps 124:1 If the LORD had not been on our side—

let Israel say—

Ps 124:2 if the LORD had not been on our side

when men attacked us,

Ps 124:3 when their anger flared against us,

they would have swallowed us alive;

Ps 124:4 the flood would have engulfed us,

the torrent would have swept over us,

Ps 124:5 the raging waters

would have swept us away.

Ps 124:6 Praise be to the LORD,

who has not let us be torn by their teeth.

Ps 124:7 We have escaped like a bird

out of the fowler's snare;

the snare has been broken,

and we have escaped.

Ps 124:8 Our help is in the name of the LORD,

the Maker of heaven and earth

Do you understand what the writer is saying? Underline in your Bible Psalm 124:1,

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Ps 124:1 If the LORD had not been on our side—

let Israel say—

And right next to that in your Bible, “the response to American entitlement.” If the Lord had not been on our side, we would have been swept away in the flood.”

If the Lord had not been on our side, we would have been devoured.

Friend, do you often say to yourself, “If God had not been there, I might not be alive today.” Truly, many of you can point to an instance, or several instances whereby all rights you should be dead, had the Lord not been by your side. If the Lord had not been by your side, some of our marriages would be dead. The only reason some of our marriages have continued is because of the grace of God.

If the Lord had not been by our side, the Christian faith would be dead. The reason the Christian faith has been handed down generation to generation is the grace of God. The Romans might have wiped it out in the first century feeding Christians to the lion.

We Americans have such a difficult time saying thank you because of our unbelievable sense of entitlement. I want to share with you a brief clip from some of our African friends.

VIDEO CLIP

And then, of course, along with the issue of entitlement, there is the factor of our greed. We have a hard time saying thank you to God because instead of enjoying the pleasure we have now, we want more than God is currently giving. We are not grateful to God because we want more. What we have is not enough.

How often, friends, do you and I behave like children at Christmas. We rip through all of our presents and then at the end, looking up at saying: Is that all? Is that all I get? But I didn’t get the Game Boy I asked for. I didn’t get Halo II Live for my X-Box. I didn’t get Metroid Prime 2 for my Nintendo. These clothes are not from Banana Republic. How can I wear them?

What is greed? Greed is the internal attitude that says whatever I have from God currently is just not enough. Greed is what the whole marketing industry is trying to encourage you in. You don’t have enough. Every newspaper, every magazine, every park bench, and the side of every bus communicates the message: “You need more. What you have from God is not enough.”

- I can’t say thanks for the husband I do have because he is not spiritual enough, he is not my spiritual leader
- I can’t say thanks for the husband I have because he is not affectionate enough
- He’s not a great conversationalist.

- He doesn't listen to me enough and understand all of the ways that I feel about things.

I can't say thank you God, for the wife I have. Instead, I grumble because she is not:

- Our ideal of beauty
- She's not supportive enough
- She's not sexual enough
- She's not a good enough cook

Yes, I have a job. But it is not really what I like. It is not fulfilling enough.

How far we Americans have come. My grandfather sold meat from a pushcart as he walked around New York City. My dad spent his winters on top of roofs in New York repairing them. I don't think either of them ever asked regarding their jobs: Am I being fulfilled? They were just grateful to have work. They were grateful that in America they were able to put food on the table for their kids, they had a roof over their heads, their children had free education. We have work, but it is not fulfilling enough. We have a house, but it is still not fixed up enough. We have clothes, but they aren't fashionable enough. Not enough...not enough...not enough!

Greed kills thankfulness. And so does forgetfulness. Psalm 103:2 says:

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Ps 103:2 Praise the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—

I love the statement by the 19th century preacher, DL Moody. He said if he can't remember all his benefits, just don't forget them all. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

We approach God with a sort of "what have you done for me lately" attitude. Sometimes we're just too busy enjoying all the blessings. We are enjoying our hobbies, enjoying our health, enjoying our relationships, enjoying nature, and our friends – we're too busy to simply pause and say thank you. Forget not all his benefits. Like what?

How about the bodily gifts you have? Your body? The fact that your heart works, that your organs work, that your hands and legs move. Consider how many people are unable to walk, or have internal organs that don't work, or can't see, or can't hear. Thank God for material gifts like the gift of your bodies, the cup of coffee you drank this morning, a good night's sleep. Every day things that you enjoy – the morning newspaper, TV in the evening.

Thank God not only for material gifts, thank God for the mental gifts he's given you. There are many in our community that are mentally disabled. Do you ever

thank God for giving you a clear mind? Have you thanked God for your education, the fact that you are literate, when so many around this country, around our world, cannot read.

Do you thank God for the spiritual gifts God has given you? We are not alone in our walk of faith. God has given us the church to instruct us, to encourage us, to support us. We've been give so many wonderful books, tapes, and teachings. We've been given bibles where in so many Christian communities around the world there may only be one Bible owned by the pastor. And in many languages, the Bible has not yet been translated.

We've been given gifts of worship and songwriting. Have you thanked God for great worship songs, for great leadership, or for gifts of mercy, or counseling, or prophecy, or prayer?

What about our relational gifts – have you thanked God for friends who call us, small groups to fellowship in, family members who love us, parents who are alive and healthy?

Thanksgiving is not something that we merely ought to do. Thanksgiving is something we get to do. When you give thanks, you are doing something good for yourself. To be a thankful person pulls you out of the centripetal orbit of self-absorption and allows you to escape the gravitational pull of yourself. It frees you from so many destructive habits. Like what: Like the habit of gossip and unholy speech. Ephesians 5:4

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Eph 5:4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving is a gift you give to yourself. Paul says to get rid of unclean speech. Like what? Like gossip. A few days ago I had a conversation with someone and a certain out-of-town church came up in the conversation. I had visited the church and had a mildly unpleasant experience there. My comment about the heart was slightly negative. It wasn't overboard, but it was slightly negative. The other person responded by talking about all of the great things this church was doing in the community and how grateful she was for the church.

One of the ways you can test whether you have forgiven someone and one of the ways you can test whether you have forgiven a former church where you might have had a negative experience is whether you can say thank you for the good that is going on in that individual's life, or the good that is going on in that church's life. Can you say thank you God that people are getting saved through that church? Thank you God, for that outreach to the poor, or for the missionaries they sent out, for the care that they do exercise.

If you struggle with vulgarity, with cursing, practice thanksgiving in your car.

Thanksgiving is a cure for anxiety. Have you ever wondered why you don't feel better about something after you pray? Why do you continue to worry even though you just prayed about a matter, or you just prayed about a loved one? Why don't your prayers help you with your anxiety? Philippians 4:6,

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Phil 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And in your Bibles I would like you to underline the words "with thanksgiving." Prayer without thanksgiving is like watered-down milk. Do you want to spike your prayers with a little bit of hundred proof, what shall we call it – Christmas Cheer? Spike your prayers with thanksgiving. We miss the words with thanksgiving in Phil. 4:6. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Don't worry about anything; pray about everything with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is the secret ingredient. If this was a drug, then we would say that thanksgiving is the active ingredient curing worry and anxiety. Why? Think about what happens when you give thanks. When you give thanks, you remember all the good that God has done in the past. You remember that God loves you. You remember that your prayers in the past have been answered. And if God has answered your prayers in the past, then you can trust that God will answer these prayers.

When you give thanks, you are not only for what he has done, you are thanking God for who he is. Psalm 136:1-3,

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Ps 136:1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

His love endures forever.

Ps 136:2 Give thanks to the God of gods.

His love endures forever.

Ps 136:3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

His love endures forever.

I don't need to worry because I am talking to someone who is good. Thanksgiving is a gift you give not only to God or to others, but also to yourself. Thanksgiving is a cure for a sorrowful heart, or a broken heart. Thanksgiving is a cure for depression. There is a phrase in 2 Cor. 6:10 that has always intrigued me.

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2Co 6:10 sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

The apostle Paul wrote that he was “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” When my heart is broken because I’ve suffered loss, because I’m grieving someone’s death, because I’ve lost a job, I’ve lost a ministry opportunity, I’ve lost someone’s respect, I’ve lost a friend, how can I be more than sorrowful? How can I be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing? The secret is 1 Thess. 5:18

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1Th 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

The Greek word for giving thanks is “eucharisteo.”

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Eucharisteo

Now the root of this verb,

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Eucharisteo

Is char which refers to joy. It is a derivative of

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Eucharisteo

Charis means grace. Thanksgiving in the biblical world was related to joy and to an experience of God’s grace. How does thanksgiving function as a cure for a broken heart? How can I be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing? Let’s say you’ve lost a loved one to cancer. Unlike some Christians, I don’t believe we thank God for evil. We don’t have to say thank you God for heart problems, or for cancer. But thank you God that you work in the midst of cancer. Thank you God that we had my brother, my sister, my friend, my parents for so long. Thank you for their life. Thank you for the blessing that came to me through their life. Thank you that I had the opportunity to know them. Thank you for all the years. Thank you for Dad’s hard work, and his sense of responsibility, for always being there, or the carefulness in which he did things. Thank you for his graciousness, for his courage when he was in the Army.

Thanks is related to joy. Thanks is related to our experience of grace.

So how can we put thanksgiving into practice? Thankfulness is something we have to practice. It is like learning how to play the piano. You have to practice playing the scales over and over again. It is like learning a foreign language. Thankfulness does not come naturally to self-centered people who believe that all the good things in life are ours by way of entitlement.

Thankfulness doesn't come naturally to people like us who are greedy and who never feel like we have enough. Thankfulness does not come naturally to forgetful Americans who don't stop long enough to count their blessings. Thankfulness is like a foreign language. We have to practice it, or we lose it.

How can you practice thankfulness? How about writing a note of thanksgiving? One of the best ways to practice thanks is to write out what you are thankful for to God when you pray.

A really useful practice is for you to get a notebook, or a prayer journal, and along with even writing out your prayers, write out what you are thankful for to God. I guarantee you that joy will rise up in your heart. I guarantee you that you will be set free from a grumbling, critical spirit if you take the time to write a letter to God thanking him for relational, material, and spiritual blessings in your life. And while you're at it, why not write a thank you note to a person who has blessed you this week?

The apostle Paul constantly wrote thank you notes. Phil. 1:3-8,

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Phil 1:3 I thank my God every time I remember you.

Phil 1:4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy

Phil 1:5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,

Phil 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Phil 1:7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

Phil 1:8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

His letters brim over with thanksgiving to God because of one of the churches he planted, or one of the people who blessed his life. Why not follow the example of Paul's letter writing and drop a note of thanks this thanksgiving to someone who has helped you – your parents certainly; maybe a former teacher who wonders, "Does what I do matter? Have I changed any lives in these 25 years?" Or a former coach, a friend – write a note to someone who discipled you or a Sunday School teacher who impacted your life, or the lives of your children right now.

Here is a novel idea. How about writing a thank you note to your spouse? Tell someone this week in writing how they have blessed your life.

Let me read to you a note from a single mom in our church who has just recently married.

Dear Church,

I began going through a really hard time about 5 years ago following a separation, which quickly led to a divorce. Through your intervention, intercession and interest, you helped me survive a terrible event that shook me to my core. You showed me what was important. How a relationship with Jesus is everything.

Thank you for praying with me in my tears, hoping with me and dreaming with me. Thank you for the caring, unexpected phone calls when I was down. For the 'check in' phone calls when you didn't know I was in trouble. Thank you for encouraging me that things would get better. For the money to pay my bills, my heat, and my phone.

I thank you for the spiritual discipling and speaking truth into my life from many wonderful people, who I will not name, because they would be embarrassed. Thank you, church, for your wisdom and always pointing me to Jesus Christ when I had problems that seemed, and often were, bigger than me.

I thank you for people who sneaked up onto my porch to leave groceries for us. One dear person gave us a wonderful car, and another bought the old beater I used to drive for 100\$ more than I was asking for it. Thank you for all you have given and all who have given. Thank you for lifting me and many single moms up in prayer. It is really tough out there. I kept coming back because you all care about us, we had a home in you. Many was the time my child and I would come and sit at the church because it was warmer in winter and cooler in summer than our house. Everyone was great saying hello and making us welcome. Thank you for the single parent fairs and all the generous donations of food, time and talent. Thank you for the blessed ones who gave time for babysitting, and delivered gifts, cooked food and sacrificing their warmth and comfort in winter for us.

Through it all, I saw the love of Christ. You showed me and my little girl the love of Christ. Because of you our walk with the Lord was strengthened, our faith deepened and my daughter and I were blessed. You made God's word real to us by your actions. Really, there are so many more things that we were given that I was so thankful for: books and clothes, computers and school supplies.

I hope to be a blessing to others at least as much as you all have been a blessing to me, and really, more so. Happy Holidays to all, and many many Blessings.

Why not write a note like this to a friend or family member this week?

And one other practical way you can give thanks is by gift giving. Thanks and gifts are tied together over and over in the Bible. The way people said thanks to God was they gave him an offering. There were actually thank offerings made in the Old Testament. We say thank you to a waiter or waitress by leaving a substantial tip. We say thank you to people at our jobs who have blessed us by giving them gifts.

I've noticed something about really generous people. They are almost always thankful people. And you know something? The more that you give, the more you get in return. Just as thanksgiving is a gift you give to God, others, and to yourself, giving is a gift you not only give to others, but to yourself. Luke 6:38 and Ecclesiastes 11:1.

SLIDES

Lk 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Ecc 11:1 Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.

A number of years ago an English family journeyed to Scotland for a summer holiday. The mother and father were looking forward to the time away with their young son. But one day the son wandered off by himself and found an abandoned swimming hole. He took off his clothes and jumped in. He immediately got terrible cramps and cried for help as he struggled to keep himself from drowning.

By God's grace, a farm boy was working in a nearby field. He heard the boy and came running. The farm boy dove into the water and pulled the nearly drowned boy to safety. The next day the father went to meet the young farmer boy, who had saved his son's life. As the two of them talked, the father asked the boy what he planned to do with his future.

The boy answered, "Oh, I supposed I'll be a farmer just like my father."

"Well, is there something else that you would rather do?" asked the father.

"Yes," he replied, "I've always wanted to be a doctor. But we're poor people and could never afford to pay for my education."

The English father, who was quite a wealthy man said, "You shall have your heart's desire. Make your plans for medical school and I will pick up the cost."

This is a very nice tip for services rendered. And the farmer's son did become a doctor.

A number of years later in December 1943 Winston Churchill came down with a near fatal case of pneumonia while he was in North Africa. So Alexander Flemming, who discovered the new wonder drug, penicillin, was summoned. Dr. Flemming flew in from England and administered the drug to his own Prime Minister. This was the second time Dr. Flemming saved Winston Churchill's life. Years before it was Flemming who dove into the swimming hole and rescued the boy, Winston Churchill, from drowning.

The gift given by Churchill's father came back to Winston Churchill once again. Bread was cast upon the water and it came back to him. Give and it will be given to you. Give thanks and not only will you honor God and bless others, you yourself will be blessed. Learn to be a thankful person. Let's pray.

Becoming a Thankful Person

Rich Nathan

November 20-21, 2004

Prayer: Hungry for God Series

1 Thessalonians 5:18

I. The Importance of Thanksgiving (1Thess. 5:18)

- A. Either God is the Source, or We Are
- B. Either God is the Goal, or We Are

II. The Difficulty of Thanksgiving

- A. The Problem of Entitlement (Ps. 124)
- B. The Problem of Greed
- C. The Problem of Forgetfulness (Ps. 103:2)

III. The Blessing of Thanksgiving

- A. The Cure for Unholy Speech (Eph. 5:4)
- B. The Cure for Worry (Phil. 4:6)
- C. The Cure for Depression

IV. The Practice of Thanksgiving

- A. Letter-Writing (Phil. 1:3-8)
- B. Gift-Giving (Lk. 6:38; Eccles. 11:1)