

Preparing for an Inspiring Thanksgiving

Before we know it, the holiday season will be upon us. Think it would be wise to ponder some helpful insights to make it more memorable and meaningful?

May I suggest something simple and practical that you can do to first prepare yourself so you have a more thankful heart? Then consider trying some things to cultivate a more inspirational time when you gather together on the traditional Thanksgiving Day.

Testimony Time

The Bible says Satan is defeated “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Rev. 12:11b, NIV). Have you taken time recently for reflection upon your conversion experience to inspire fresh appreciation for all God has done for you and how your life was miraculously transformed by His grace? Then will you tell your testimony more consistently to win others to Jesus? It’s been said: “The man with a testimony has it all over the man with an argument!”

Remember your life B.C. (Before Christ) and where you were? Never take for granted the miraculous transformation that has taken place. Then sing afresh the words penned by former slave trader and blasphemer John Newton, who wrote: “Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)/ that saved a wretch like me.”

Today we had a young man come to our home to discuss some renovations, and when he began sharing his testimony, my wife and I were so uplifted that we couldn’t hold back declaring, “Praise the Lord!”

I regularly listen to Billy Graham’s classic sermons, during

one of which he related the following testimony:

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Before you came to our city, I was 18 years old with a very big chip on my shoulder. I thought God didn't love me and I thought no one loved me! I thought there was no meaning to life.

I convinced myself that I was having a lot of fun as I was going out with guys and getting drunk. I hated my family, who viewed me as a loser. One of my brothers sexually abused me; the other one beat me up.

I heard you were coming to speak, and I determined I would not go! But then I was told by my boss that I was assigned to do first aid every night at the meetings, so I went, and I mocked you.

The first night, I have to admit, I started listening. The next service I thought, "I don't deserve God's love and really don't care." Then unexpectedly, I sensed God's love for me for the first time! I responded and received Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

I want to know the God who loves me more than anything, and that's why I write this letter. I have since been received back home. Thank you!

The crowd erupted in applause as Billy Graham said, "We receive hundreds of letters like this every week." You and I are called to reach people like this, and our testimony can plant a seed.

Try It This Thanksgiving

Maybe your personal testimony is not as dramatic as that of the woman above, but you have a story that can ignite fresh gratitude to God plus draw others into a personal relationship with our Savior and Lord.

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Sitting around the table this Thanksgiving, how about sharing your story and invite others to do the same? Use discretion if younger ears are listening, but do it in faith and trust God to use it to foster an attitude of gratitude and change the spiritual atmosphere in the room.

How Thanksgiving Started

Living in our increasingly secular society, it's important we remind ourselves and our families of the pertinent facts concerning this holiday of Thanksgiving.

It was in 1863 that our Christian president Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of "Thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father Who dwells in heaven." This commemorated the first Thanksgiving holiday, which was a joyous event celebrated by 90 Native-Americans and 53 Pilgrims who enjoyed a plentiful harvest after their prayers and hard work redeemed a very difficult first year in America.

Remember that the Pilgrims signed the Mayflower Compact, stating that their purpose in leaving England was to come to America for religious freedom, not selfish greed. That purpose was clearly stated: "For the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith." Subsequently, they joined together for three days of prayer for thanksgiving to God for the harvest and the blessings He bestowed upon them.

It's important to review these historical facts with family members and guests, lest we fall prey to thinking this is just a day off for feasting, football and a Friday shopping prep!

Areas in Which to Give Thanks

So your Thanksgiving get-together is an enriching experience for all, remind everyone before a prayer of blessing how Jesus healed 10 lepers, yet only one came back to say thank you. Then maybe briefly cite some of the following:

1. Thank God for sending His Son to redeem us from sin and judgment.
2. Thank God for the results of the recent election, displaying His mercy and the opportunity for a turnaround in America.
3. Thank God for the gift of freedom, upon which America was uniquely founded.
4. Thank God for the abundance of food we enjoy each day, with hunger the number one cause of death in the world.
5. Thank God for our health, medical technology and personnel who keep us healthy. More than 1 million children die each year from preventable diseases globally because they lack treatment we can easily take for granted.
6. Thank God for the gift of sight, reminding ourselves, "The eye is the lamp of the body" (Matt. 6:22a, ESV). For our eyesight to function, over 2,000 components must all work properly!
7. Thank God for our parents and the promise: "Honor your father and your mother ... that your days may be long and that it may go well with you" (Deut. 5:16).
8. Thank God for clean running water available in our sinks, washing machines, dishwashers and toilets. More than 1 billion people lack access to clean drinking water, which yields sickness and complex problems

worldwide.

9. Thank God for the wonderful gift of electricity and ponder how more than a quarter of the human population does not have access to it. What would life be like without the multitude of items in our homes powered this way?
10. Thank God for our parents, teachers and educators, whether schooling is public, private or done at home. One out of every four children in America grows up without the ability to read. What a blessing to have teachers and the blessing of learning!

Here's the deal: Review again the list of areas that can contribute to making this Thanksgiving a fantastic experience as we cultivate an attitude of gratitude.

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow/ Praise Him all creatures here below."

Happy Thanksgiving!

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Larry Tomczak is a best-selling author of 10 books, cultural commentator of 50 years, Intercessors for America board member and a public policy adviser with Liberty Counsel. Go to to watch 30 amazing, free, brief, on-demand videos by America's top leaders so you can confidently address today's tough issues.