

Why This Psalmist Commands You to Praise—Even When You Don't Want To

What does it really mean to be thankful? As we approach Thanksgiving, we consider the importance of living with gratitude for God's blessings.

Psalm 100 urges us to “enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.” The Israelites praised God as they first entered the temple gates in Jerusalem, continuing as they walked through the courtyard. Gratitude was extended throughout their journey.

This principle of thankful living impacts us still today. We don't need to wait until a holiday. We can reflect on God's goodness to us throughout our daily actions. Even when we are stuck in traffic or standing in a line at a store, we can turn from impatience to counting God's blessings—from our salvation, to our family members, to the little ways God shows up throughout our day, our hurried moments can become holy moments as we cultivate an attitude of gratitude.

For example, even in their hardships, the first Pilgrims celebrated Thanksgiving with this “attitude of gratitude.” A look at the first Thanksgiving prayer provides a great reminder of the holiday. History tells us that Gov. William Bradford recorded the first Thanksgiving proclamation three years after the Pilgrims settled in Plymouth. One key phrase of his prayer declares that God “has granted us freedom to worship Him according to the dictates of our own conscience.”

While many today view Thanksgiving as a holiday to eat turkey and watch football, its origin celebrated our nation's freedom to worship God. Let us all reconnect with this original Thanksgiving prayer. As we gather for the holiday with loved

ones, remember to express appreciation for America's religious liberties. More than ever, we need to remember our religious freedoms—and express them! May God continue to bless America as we seek to worship Him.

Likewise, 1 Thessalonians 5:18 instructs us that it is God's will to thank God in all circumstances. No matter our situation, we know God works for our good. Why? Romans 8:28 reminds us "for those who love God all things work together for good." Joseph, for instance, was sold as a slave and a prisoner for 13 years before the Lord made him a leader in Egypt. Yet Joseph would later recognize these tragic circumstances served as part of God's plan to save the lives of many.

We may not understand the trials we face, but we can be thankful through the storms of life. God is with us and is for us despite our most difficult situations. Let's remember to thank Him in all circumstances today.

Additionally, let us also remember that Thanksgiving is more than a day of feasting. What are we really celebrating on this special day? In the classic "A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving" television special, Marcie reminds Charlie Brown, "Thanksgiving is more than eating, Chuck. We should just be thankful for being together."

Can we relate? We often find ourselves focused on food, watching football or immersed in other plans, yet the real joy of the holiday is extended time together with loved ones, including our children and grandchildren. Scripture reminds us to make the most of every moment. Instead of overemphasizing food or other activities, remember the importance of time with those you love.

This life passes so quickly. Let's make sure we focus our lives on God and showing love to those around us. These special times will result in memories we will never regret.

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