

10 Reasons to Give Thanks in Tough Times

If you're like me, you appreciate practical tools to help you in your Christian life. With Thanksgiving approaching, here's a gift to enable you to cultivate grateful hearts in those with whom you gather.

First of all, living in our increasingly secular society, it's important we remind ourselves of the pertinent facts concerning the holiday of Thanksgiving. In 1863, a Christian president, Abraham Lincoln, proclaimed a national day of "thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwells in heaven."

Second, the first Thanksgiving holiday 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 of leaving England and coming to America was religious freedom not selfish greed.

That purpose is clearly stated: "For the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith." Subsequently, they joined together for three days of prayerful thanksgiving to God for the harvest and the blessings He bestowed upon them.

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

Third, as Christians, we always want to cultivate thankfulness in our lives. Recall how Jesus had 10 lepers whom He healed and yet only one came back to say thank you. God gives us a directive, not an elective: "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1

Thess. 5:18). We need to develop the habit of giving thanks “in” everything, not necessarily “for” everything that comes our way.

10 Thanksgiving Talking Points

Feel free to adapt, delete or custom design the following questions, or to use them as a springboard for some great interaction in a short devotional time before or after eating or while enjoying that scrumptious meal.

1. Thank God for sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who lived a sinless life and then died the death we deserved. Why does this matter? What does it mean to you?

2. Thank God for the gift of freedom upon which America was uniquely founded. Ours is the only nation in history ever established on the principle that “all men are created equal” and enjoy certain rights that do not come from a dictator, king or government, but rather from the living God.

3. Thank God for all the bountiful varieties of food we enjoy every single day. Hunger is the No. 1 cause of death in the world. Fifteen million children die yearly, and 21,000 die daily because of this. One-third of the world is starving, while another one-third is underfed. Imagine if we had to search garbage cans for specks of nourishment to feed us.

4. Thank God for our health, medical technology and the personnel who keep us healthy. In the '90s, more than 100 million children died from illness and starvation alone. Yearly, more than 1 million children die from preventable diseases, such as diarrhea and pneumonia, because they lack treatment we easily take for granted. Does this matter?

5. Thank God for our eyes and the phenomenal gift of sight. Jesus called the eye “the lamp of the body,” and it has more than 2,000 components! Cover your eyes for a moment and imagine what it would be like to live in darkness as some do.

Would you take \$1 million in exchange for your eyes?

6. Thank God for our parents and the promise that God gives: “Honor your father and your mother ... that your days may be prolonged, and it may go well with you” (Deut. 5:16). Why is this important?

7. 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. How would you feel if this was our situation?

8. Thank God for police officers, firefighters, garbage collectors, 911 operators and others who protect us—especially men and women in the military. Can you picture what our life would be like without these public servants?

9. Thank God for the wonderful gift of electricity. More than one-quarter of the human population does not have access to any electricity. Name some items in your home powered by electricity. What would life be like without them?

10. Thank God for our teachers and education, whether it’s public, private or done at home. One out of every four children in America grows up without the ability to read. Sixty percent of inmates in prison are illiterate. Are we thankful for our teachers and the gift of learning?

Here’s the deal: It is so easy to take things for granted and to grumble and complain unless we catch ourselves and intentionally cultivate thankful hearts. The Thanksgiving holiday affords us a tremendous opportunity to nurture an attitude of gratitude. *Carpe diem*—seize the day!

Larry Tomczak is a best-selling author and cultural commentator with 42 years of trusted ministry experience. His passion is to bring perspective, analysis and insight from a biblical worldview. He loves awakening people to today’s

*cultural realities and responses needed for a restored,
influential church. Please visit and follow him
on Facebook or at @larrytomczak on Twitter.*