

Thanksgiving Is Not a Holiday Tradition, But a Heart That Sees God in Everything

Thanksgiving is not a spiritual exercise. It's not just a commandment to be obeyed or a duty and obligation. It is not a worldly holiday tradition or religious activity, but it is the outflow of a heart that is filled with God's goodness and has learned to see God in every circumstance of life.

Although contrary to human nature, thanksgiving is to be the song of believers. And the true test of whether it is more of a duty or obligation than a lifestyle is evidenced in the hard times.

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

We are not to give thanks for bad things happening to us, but we are to be thankful regardless of the circumstances. A heart full of gratitude frees us from strife and stress and allows the Lord to intervene and engage in our affairs. Supernatural forces are activated and unleashed on our behalf when we remain grateful in all circumstances, especially in hardship and in adversity.

Most people's lifestyles rule them to such an extent that they have no focus toward God. They live so much in the flesh and in the natural realm that they become a very soulless and mechanical person who may even quote the Word, but they never learn to abide in the Lord. A grateful heart helps you to abide in the Lord and to sanctify Him in your heart (1 Pet. 3:15).

The Key to a Life of Thanksgiving

What does that mean? It means that you've got to cultivate an ability to see God in everything. Most Christians only see God in the good things, but not the bad. This greatly affects the condition of their hearts and their thanksgiving. It's a compartment mentality.

In other words, many believers recognize that God wants them to have a full, abundant and prosperous life (John 10:10). When good things are not happening in their lives, God is there, but in difficult moments, they can't see Him. It has to be the devil. The problem with that mentality is that it stops you from being able to see God in every circumstance. Most believers' ability to see God has to do with their environment and their circumstances, so their faith is very limited. We as believers have to grow past that.

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Like every believer does, I've always rejoiced in the Lord when everything was calm and good. And I might rejoice in the Lord when things were not so good, but I used to do it from a heady knowledge because I knew I should. It was more mechanical than a natural outflow from the heart, because it did not include the ability to see God at that moment. I saw the kingdom of darkness, and I saw the kingdom of light. It was almost as if God appears one day and then all hell breaks loose, and in my mind, He's not there anymore. It's the devil and me having a fist fight. The devil got in, and I had to get him out. And in my thinking I had to break through that hell to find God again.

Then I started thinking differently in that God is always present, and He doesn't change. Yes, life and circumstances change, but God is still omnipresent. God is still immutable. When your faith becomes developed to such an extent that you're able to recognize that God is here—He's always

here—you'll start looking for Him even in difficult moments.

When I say "looking for Him in difficult moments," I'm not talking about looking for Him to get you out of difficult moments. Of course, you don't expect difficult moments, but the Lord makes it very clear that we're going to have trials, and we're going to have hardships.

I don't expect difficult moments, but I'm not going to set myself up for false expectations to believe that the day is going to be absent of potential trials. I already have an understanding that I'm going to experience those things perhaps today, tomorrow, or a week or a year from now. Those things are going to come my way, but the great news is that God is with me. Again, it's developing a moment by moment consciousness and awareness of God, and learning to abide in Him even in rough times.

Most believers are always looking for God to resolve their problems. And of course we want God to resolve our problems, but we've got to learn to love God even in the midst of them. I want to learn to enjoy God in the midst of my problems and difficult circumstances.

When I enjoy God in my circumstances, the circumstances become different. They have a whole different flavor. They no longer represent defeat. They no longer represent fear. This fresh perspective can help many believers learn to abide in the Lord and to stay full of thanksgiving.

Most Christians rightly believe that God is good and the devil is bad, so they fight the bad and believe for the good. But we rarely ever have any rest in the bad, do we? And the reason we don't have rest in the bad is because we don't have the kind of faith we need in the bad.

The faith we need to enjoy life is to see Him. The real faith is when we see God in everything. It's not so much what He does for us, which is wonderful and worthy of praise. Thank

God, He is forever taking care of us, but it goes beyond that. When I can see Him, and when my faith is developed to see Him in all circumstances, it brings me to a great place of rest and thanksgiving.

“Let the peace of God, to which also you are called in one body, rule in your hearts. And be thankful” (Col. 3:15).

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