

# What to Do When You Just Don't Feel Thankful

Have you ever been so horrifically devastated by life's circumstances that the words, "Thank you, Jesus" get stuck in your throat? You know the words of Paul, "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18) but somehow you don't *feel* like giving thanks for what you are currently facing.

If you just received a bad report from the doctor, lost your job (especially before the holidays), were handed an eviction notice, divorce papers or news that a loved one unexpectedly died, your first words, if any, might not be, "Thank you, Lord." Yet we're admonished to do just that, but we can only do it by the grace (empowerment) of God.

The holidays are upon us, and for some, it's the happiest time of the year, but for others, it's the saddest. It's easy to give thanks when you feel blessed but very hard for those who are suffering. This year has been devastating to the many who lost their homes and loved ones in the California wildfires. Others faced horrific losses through hurricanes, floods and tornadoes. Not to mention the unexpected mass murder in Las Vegas and the most recent attack on worshippers in a small town in Texas.

They will sit across the Thanksgiving table somewhere this week even though their pain is great and the wounds are still open. God understands. He's the God of all comfort.

Jesus promised us that in this world (system) we would have tribulation but admonished us to "be of good cheer" because He has overcome the world (see John 16:33). He suffered more than any one of us, yet when facing His betrayer at the Last Supper, He stopped to give thanks before sharing his heart and

the bread with His disciples. Hebrews tells us that it was because of the “joy that was set before Him” (Heb. 12:2b) that He was able to face and endure what He had to do. He kept Himself focused on the end result, not on what He was currently enduring, and He trusted in Heavenly Father.

The apostle Paul did the same thing. He focused on God’s faithfulness in spite of what he was currently facing. I don’t know if while he suffered isolation and imprisonment he realized what effects his writings would have on the body of Christ. I know his suffering was severe, yet he wrote that we always “rejoice in the Lord” (Phil. 4:4a) and to always give thanks for it’s the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us (see 1 Thess. 5:18).

Some years ago, when I was serving as a children’s pastor, the Holy Spirit gave me some insight into that Scripture. He showed me that He wasn’t asking me to give thanks *for* the circumstance but *in* the circumstance. I was to focus on Him and not the circumstance. I would thank Him for His faithfulness, goodness, provision and promises because He knows the end from the beginning and is totally trustworthy.

There is evil in this world, but God is a good God and has overcome evil. The pain of disease, disappointment, disaster and death is real, but God is still good and makes us more than conquerors through Christ in the midst of it. He has promised never to leave or forsake us. We can take Him at His Word. He understands pain because He endured it. He watched His Son suffer on the cross. Jesus suffered, died and then conquered death. The proof is the resurrection, and the promise for what’s ahead for us is just as real as that historic event. Take heart. You don’t have to give thanks for disease, material loss, the death of loved ones and evil, but do thank the One who is the giver of life and the restorer of all that was lost, for He is faithful and will surely accomplish His Word.

## **Prayer Power for the Week of Nov. 19, 2017**

This week, take time to thank the Lord for who He is: faithful, giver of life, closer than a brother, restorer, lover of your soul, Creator of all that is good and the one true God. Find more descriptions of who He is in the Word. Continue to pray for the nation and its leaders. Remember those victimized by evil in all its forms and suffering great losses. Ask the Lord to show you how you can be a blessing in this season. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18.