



BIBLEWAY MINISTRIES

MAKING A DIFFERENCE—THE BIBLE WAY



Thanksgiving: The Giving Is in the Living

One Sunday, a Sunday School teacher asked her class what they were thankful for. One little 8-year-old boy blurted out, "I'm thankful I wear glasses."

This struck the teacher as odd because most boys didn't care for wearing glasses. So she asked, "Now why is that?"

The boy answered, "Because it keeps the older boys from fighting with me, and it keeps the girls from kissing me." What a great attitude to have.

Are you having problems being thankful this year? There is no question it is easier to be thankful when things are looking up than when they are heading in the opposite direction. When the job is good, family problems are at a minimum and the savings account has enough to allow survival for 6–12 months, even carnal Christians can say, "God is good!"

But did you know that even when things are not going so well, God is still good all the time? Over the last year, we've seen poor performance in the stock market, corporate layoffs, wars and rumors of wars, natural disasters and a slow economy.

Sometimes the perfect natural and spiritual storms come together to cause even the most tenacious believers to struggle with maintaining an attitude of thanksgiving. An example of this would be Joseph, whose brothers disowned him and sold him into slavery. (Genesis 50:20)

One jailbird, the Apostle Paul, and his friend chose to sing praises instead of singing the blues in prison. (Acts 16:25) His experiences included being shipwrecked and finding himself at one time beaten almost to the point of death. (2 Corinthians 11:25) But despite it all, he sent a message to some friends and asked them to "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4)

Here's what I have found: if you look at your circumstances, they will keep you too busy to see your blessings. If you focus on your blessings, often you will find that your circumstances are not that bad! Sometimes legitimately bad situations occur, such as the awful terrorist attack against Israel just a few short weeks ago. The point I want to make is this: if we dwell on the bad, we will never gaze at the good. Regardless of how bad our experiences may have been, if we look hard enough, we can still see some good.

Paul explained how we can do this. He simply said, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:5) Having this mindset doesn't mean we will not have problems. It will not make us super-spiritual. Just remember, people who are truly thankful don't have much time to complain. The explanation for this is they have found a reason to be grateful.

Matthew Henry, who wrote a full Bible commentary, was once robbed. The thieves took everything of value that he had. Later that evening, he wrote these words in his diary:

I am thankful that during these years I have never been robbed before. Also, even though they took my money, they did not take my life. Although they took all I had, it was not much. Finally, I am grateful that it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.

If you still struggle with having an attitude of thanksgiving, remember to "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." (Colossians 3:2) For it is things above which overflow with the blessings of the Lord.

- Dr. L.W. Edwards



Thanksgiving: A Measurement of Wealth

Thanksgiving is more than a national holiday: it's a measurement of wealth. Ten lepers stood at the city limits, pleading with passers-by for the smallest token of kindness. Some shared coins. Others shared food. Some shared nothing at all, hastily passing by in an effort to avoid the diseased like the plague which infected them.

The lepers were poor. They owned nothing more than the clothes on their backs. They could take no job in the city because of their disease. They had no family to care for them. All they had was each other — and that wasn't much. Life had been hard for them. It was all they could do to survive from one day to the next, wishing, hoping — even praying — for change to come.

But one day, Jesus passed through their city while in route to Jerusalem. The diseased men had heard many things about Him. Some said He was a Miracle Worker. (How they longed to see one of His miracles! . . . If only they weren't plagued with the evil curse of leprosy, they could join the thronging crowds which followed Him and see the wonder for themselves.)

Someone told them Jesus was a great Healer. They imagined how wonderful it would be to experience His touch. . . . But their thoughts were interrupted by the sound of an approaching commotion. A crowd followed a tiny band of men down the street. The lepers scanned the sea of faces until finally they saw Him. He was the one out in front leading the way. He didn't strut about with the bravado and charisma of other leaders they had seen, but He seemed to know where He was going. Too bad they couldn't approach Him. Their disease carried severe legal and social implications, restricting them from coming near others lest they infect them.

This was the lepers' one chance to see Jesus for themselves. In desperation, they did the one thing their disease could not prohibit: they cried out to Jesus. And Jesus heard them. With compassion, He looked into their desperate, hurting, weather-beaten eyes and instructed them to present themselves to the priests.

Clinging to Jesus' words, the lepers made their way to the priests and the declaration which they hoped would begin a new chapter in their lives. On the way, they were completely healed. Nine

of the lepers walked whole to the priests, but one could not. Overcome with emotion at the incredible transformation in his life, he returned to kneel at Jesus' feet.

As he expressed his gratitude, the newly cleansed man drew nearer to Jesus than he had ever been, nearer than the others would ever be — all because he gave thanks. He rose to his feet a changed man, for at the feet of Jesus he had found salvation.

His nine counterparts rejoiced because now they could make a living and increase their stake in this world, but the humble and grateful ex-leper rejoiced because he had found the essence of life and true wealth in eternity. His story reminds us we are never closer to Jesus than when we give thanks. With his attitude of gratitude, he would never lack again, for a thankful person always has enough.

61 days remain in this year. As you reflect on the 304 days which have passed, ask yourself the following questions: Did these days bring you joy, happiness, fulfillment or satisfaction? Did God bring you through a trial, answer a prayer, provide for a need, satisfy a longing, forgive a sin, supply grace in weakness and protect you from your enemies? Did you earn extra income, find a new job, receive a promotion, make new friends, move to a new home or accomplish a personal goal? Thanksgiving should include thanks to God for His blessings, but it should be even more specific and intentional. Everything we have comes from God, but at the heart of Thanksgiving is an opportunity to draw closer to Him. If we miss this, then all of the blessings of Heaven will never satisfy us.

This Thanksgiving, don't just say "Thank you" for your blessings and make out a list of new ones you want for the next big holiday (Christmas); draw near to the Source, and you will find contentment strong enough to carry you through Black Friday, Cyber Monday and the hectic 12 days before Christmas. Like the thankful ex-leper, your gratitude will guarantee you always have enough.

- Cam Edwards

Thank You