



## Christian Life Fellowship

Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



### Thanksgiving November 18, 2007

Rev. David Koch

#### Introduction:

It is easy to lose sight of the blessings that come our way and to take for granted the health, prosperity and freedom that we enjoy. One of the ways we can develop an attitude of thanksgiving and gratitude is to focus on our blessings and really be thankful to God for them. Reflection in a quiet atmosphere is helpful to have gratitude in our hearts.

Do we have to encounter a blind or deaf person to thank God for the gift of sight and hearing? Do we take for granted the ability to read and listen to music? Does it take the loss of a parent or a brother or sister to be thankful for the members of our families and the love and care we receive from them? Do we thank people who go out of their way to do something for us? Do we thank the waitress or the bus driver who serves us or do we just expect it, thinking that they are only doing their jobs? Do we ever thank our teachers for their lessons and all they do to educate us? Do we send notes to show our thanks and appreciation for gifts given or for invitations to meals in the homes of others? Do we acknowledge special kindnesses done to us?

Do we ever sit down and thank God for the many people who have touched our lives and have influenced us in some way or other? A spirit of thanksgiving should be in the heart of every Christian because we know that we ultimately depend on God for everything we have and are.

Jeff Herring, licensed marriage and family therapist. Knight Ridder Newspapers

Issue date: 11/27/01 Section: [The Daily Extra](#)

Very soon, we will be celebrating Thanksgiving. This holiday is a special time based on a special idea that seems to get lost in our hectic world. It seems like we move from going back to school to Christmas with hardly a blink or thought about Thanksgiving.

**1 Thes. 5:18 - Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

#### I. GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

Paul encourages whoever would read his writings, to give thanks in all situations and circumstances. How do you do that when things go wrong? How do you do that when your world falls apart? How do you do that when there has been failure or brokenness? I believe it has to do with what you choose to focus on and how you let that impact your attitude.

Look at the word, "thanksgiving", giving thanks, being grateful. I wonder what it would be like if we gave real thanks on Thanksgiving and sustained an attitude of gratitude throughout the year. We could call it moving from *thanksgiving* to *thanksgiving*.

Before you dismiss this idea as one that's nice to think about but really doesn't mean very much in the

real world, consider this: One of the best ways to get more of anything you want is to be grateful for what you already have.

An attitude of thanksgiving helps us keep the things that are important to us. This is because those things that we take for granted become things that are granted to be taken.

Since thanksgiving and thanksgiving are both attitudes, let's look at some keys to developing these attitudes in ourselves and in those we influence. In our hectic and stressful lives, it is much too easy to lose perspective and focus on what we don't have instead of what we do have. We live in such an affluent society. Some of you, however, may not feel affluent. It depends on how you define affluence.

Author and speaker, H. Stephen Glenn, offers an interesting definition. From a perspective of the population of the world, people are affluent if they have: a choice of what they will eat each day; a choice of clothing; a job; a way to get to work.

Measuring life that way puts things into a very different light when it comes to our materialism and striving for more. When we are desperately holding on to what we've got and just as desperately striving for more, we close ourselves off to the abundance life has to offer. On the other hand, when we come from an attitude of gratitude, or thanksgiving, we open ourselves up to seeing the abundance we already have and the possibility of more.

## II. ACTIONS TO HELP US KEEP OUR FOCUS

Here are some actions you can take this Thanksgiving that will help develop an ongoing attitude of gratitude all year long:

**1. Make a gratitude list.** Write down the many things you are grateful for in your life. You may be surprised by all that you discover. If you don't think you have anything to be grateful for, make a list of the things you could be grateful for if you wanted to be. Look over your list and notice the number of people you are grateful for. Then tell them and thank them face to face, in a note, by phone or in an e-mail. Just do it. While they will surely appreciate you, it's not for them, it's for you.

In Paul's letter to the Philippians he says this:  
**Philip. 1:3 - I thank my God every time I remember you.**

### 2. Pay attention to what you complain about.

There is usually room to be grateful if you take time to look. Instead of doing this as a Thanksgiving exercise, what would it be like if you did this at least once a month? What changes in perspective would that cause? What changes in your attitude?

Both the hummingbird and the vulture fly over our nation's deserts. All vultures see is rotting meat, because that is what they look for. They thrive on that diet. But hummingbirds ignore the smelly flesh of dead animals. Instead, they look for the colorful blossoms of desert plants. The vultures live on what was. They live on the past. They fill themselves with what is dead and gone. But hummingbirds live on what is. They seek new life. They fill themselves with freshness and life. Each bird finds what it is looking for. We all do.

*Steve Goodier, Quote Magazine, in Reader's Digest, May, 1990.*

## III. THANK-BUSTERS WE NEED TO LOOK OUT FOR

There are three main reasons why followers of Christ aren't thankful, three "thanks-busters" that we can fall victim to if we're not careful. Not only will these three thanks-busters keep us from being thankful, they'll stop us from truly enjoying life and becoming all that Christ wants us to become as His children!

### 1. Conceit

The attitude of pride is one of the biggest thieves of thankfulness. Why? Because a conceited spirit says, "I deserve what I've got", and, "I deserve all the credit for what I did and for what I accomplished."

This reminds me of the story about two ducks and a frog who lived happily together in a farm pond. The best of friends, the three would amuse themselves and play together in their waterhole. When the hot summer days came, however, the pond began to dry up, and soon it was evident they would have to move. This was no problem for the ducks, which could easily fly to another pond. But the frog was stuck. So it was decided that they would put a stick in the bill of each duck that the frog could hang onto

with his mouth as they flew to another pond. The plan worked well--so well, in fact, that as they were flying along a farmer looked up in admiration and said, "Well, isn't that a clever idea! I wonder who thought of it." The frog said, "I did..."

*Today in the Word, April, 1989, p. 34.*

**Proverbs 16:18 - Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.**

## 2. A Critical Spirit.

Another thief of thankfulness is a critical spirit. You know, those who have a critical spirit are petty. They're never satisfied. And they're all wrapped up in themselves. They're constantly finding fault... constantly blaming... constantly being negative. I doubt you know anyone like this! People like this grumble because they don't have what they want, instead of being thankful for not getting what they deserve. This kind of attitude destroys thanksgiving...and it could potentially wreck your life.

**"He has the right to criticize who has the heart to help." A. Lincoln.**

## 3. Carelessness

Having an attitude of carelessness means getting accustomed to your blessings, getting used to what God has given you. An example for us from scripture is the children of Israel when they were in the wilderness.

God satisfied the needs of the nation of Israel as they wandered through the wilderness by feeding them with manna, incredibly light bread that appeared on the ground every day. It was a miracle every morning and, of course, they celebrated it at first. But as they wandered in the wilderness due to their own disobedience, they eventually grew to hate that light bread! They got used to the blessing. They became accustomed to what God had given them. And that will destroy thanksgiving in our hearts every time! Paul tells us in [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#) - to "Give thanks in all circumstances." Why does Paul tell us this? Because he knows that when we limit our

gratitude, when we don't say thanks, we build a very small fence around our lives. Instead of living and enjoying the full expanse of what God has given us, we build a little hut around ourselves — and our world becomes very small, narrow, and selfish.

**1 Thes. 5:18 - Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.** In [1 Thessalonians, 5:18](#) - there is a very short phrase of instruction, "**Give thanks in all circumstances.**" Obviously this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. God desires this. The little phrase at the end of verse 18 actually follows two other commands, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing and in everything give thanks." All three of those sum up God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Whatever may come into life should be treated with joy and with gratitude. As Christians we often sin with our ingratitude. It's not just the lack of joy that is sin; it's the lack of gratitude. We ought to be thanking God for every blessing, no matter how large or small, for every goodness no matter how large or small and everything that God provides for us, no matter how large or small.

We should be thanking Him for all the blessings He pours upon us, for the way in which we can give and extend those gifts into the lives of others and cause more thanks. Thanks should come out of our mouth every time we open it. We should be thankful in everything, constantly, unceasingly because the Spirit is controlling our lives. When we are not thankful, the Spirit is not in control.

If we are convinced that God is in control and His power is at work in all things, why not be thankful? God's wisdom is at work, His purpose is at work and His love is expressed. If you doubt that, you're going to have a problem being thankful.

## Conclusion:

We have so much to be thankful for, God's goodness and mercy which is always available, the unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ for which we are thankful. Victory over sin and death, divine guidance, complete provision for all our needs, the hope of heaven, the power of the Word and on and on we go. There are many reasons to give thanks. And if the church is to be the church of Jesus Christ and His life is the flow through that church, it will be people who are filled with gratitude, even for the trials, even for the pain, even for the suffering.

My prayer is that God will fill your heart with joy, no matter what, and that you'll rejoice always and in everything give thanks. That's crucial to the life of the church and it's crucial to your life as well. You can do that on the basis of this one little verse in [Philippians 2:13](#) - "It is God who is at work in you."

**Attitudes are contagious. Are yours worth catching? ~Dennis and Wendy Mannering**