



Have you ever had the feeling you've lost your focus due to the distractions of the holiday season? By the time the Thanksgiving holiday rolls around, many are already overwhelmed with Christmas. There was a time when Thanksgiving signaled the "beginning of the Christmas season," but these days, people feel they're behind the curve if they haven't gotten an early jump on Christmas preparations. And it's not just shopping. Look around: Many people (yourself included perhaps) are stressed out about holiday finances or feeling the pinch of household projects that need to be completed before the relatives come visiting.

But there is a gift available to you right now – one that you can also share with others, one which you can embody for others – *the gift of God's goodness*. In other words, *we need to rekindle the habit of giving thanks*.

Everyone knows they're supposed to be thankful on Thanksgiving Day, but the heart-attitude won't kick in by magic: it has to be cultivated. Here are three ways to help us out:

1. Thanksgiving is more than an American holiday; it's a godly way of life. A thankful heart is more than a good idea; it's the will of God for His people. *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* (1 Thes. 5:16-18). Paul's words have something to teach us about the will of God: He wants us to be thankful from the heart. Why torture ourselves over discovering God's will when the obvious first step is right in front of us?

2. True thankfulness should be a mark of God's community. Look at the way of life exhibited by the early church: *"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:46-47). How many times have we overlooked the "glad and sincere hearts" witnessed throughout Scripture? Happiness is not a duty required by God; it's the result of new life in Christ! You don't have to get very far into the fruit of the Spirit to see the role of thankfulness in producing love, joy and peace.

3. The best defense against holiday stress is a happy heart. There is an excellent article I found called, *"Boost Your Health with a Dose of Gratitude."* The title of this secular article could be the challenge of the Christian! It's no surprise that God's way is the good way. Remember and proclaim the benefits of a thankful heart to both body and soul, even for the simple everyday things around you. It doesn't matter if you repeat yourself some days—some things are worth giving thanks for every single day.

God's people should be a thankful people. A thankful heart is a heart awake to God's goodness. It lives in the constant wonder of His first judgment about the world: *"It is good."* Let the world overflow with thanksgiving. The thankful heart speaks the language of heaven. By fostering this ongoing spirit of thanksgiving, we are better able to make November and December a more joyful—and more godly—place, wherever we—the Body of Christ—go.

In gratitude to our Savior,

Pastor Chris

Purge Pride, Teach Truth, Live Love