



"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, and confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend."

—Melody Beattie

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Benefits of Thanksgiving

It is that time of year when we Americans celebrate Thanksgiving. These days, it seems like it exists as "Opening Day" to the [Christmas](#) retail sales season when shoppers can find discounts up to 70 percent off regular prices. Thanksgiving was originally established to give thanks to the Almighty [God](#) for His benevolent care and providence to men, but it has become commercialized to garner the most year-end profits. Many people covet the merchandise for themselves and as gifts for their families.

Working in the retail industry for many years, I have seen customers' attitudes and conduct evolve. Earlier generations were taught to practice courtesy toward others and express thanks for the benefits they enjoyed. In the hustle and bustle of today's extreme lifestyles and moral decline—where the pace of life is so fast and chaotic—the giving of thanks is a rare thing.

My experience on Thanksgiving Day a few years ago was an example of human nature driven by the carnal mind. Most stores open their doors early in the morning to begin the rush for profits. My store opened at 6 am. When

CGG Weekly: Benefits of Thanksgiving (13-Nov-21)

I pulled into work that day, the parking lot was already full, and many people had been [waiting](#) for hours. Once the doors were unlocked, shoppers exploded into the store. They came running and jostling each other to be the first to get their hands on the specially priced merchandise that they craved throughout the store.

Thankfully, the rush was peaceful; no violence broke out, and no one was pushed to the floor and trampled. For hours, a constant flow of people traversed in and out and back and forth throughout the store. Many demanded the "special" pricing on the "great deals," despite having sold out almost immediately. Some appeared primed to do anything necessary to acquire that coveted TV, computer, or exercise bike.

Their only thought was to "get" that product. It did not seem to cross their minds to thank God for His benefits throughout the year—not even for having the ability to purchase the material goods they had set their hearts upon. They had fixed their focus on "getting" the coveted item for the best price and returning home to the large feast awaiting them.

They have no excuse for neglecting gratitude, as God gives benefits to all humanity. [Jesus](#) states in [Matthew 5:45](#) that "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." He adds in [Luke 6:35](#), "For He is kind to the unthankful and evil."

Are we thanking God daily for all His blessings? Do we thank Him for only the pleasant things? He wants us to thank Him for His benefits, mercy, and graciousness. Notice [Psalm 107:8-9](#): "Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His [goodness](#), and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness." [Psalm 69:30](#) adds, "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving."

Each of us is in training for a position in the [Kingdom of God](#). Above all others, we should be extremely thankful to God for His benefits, testing, and training. We have the responsibility to respond to Him in humbleness of mind and thankfulness of heart.

The Bible contains many examples of the thankfulness of people and even whole nations. Exodus 15 records Israel's praise and thanksgiving after God defeated the Egyptians in the Red Sea. But it was not long before the same people fell into an unthankful attitude. When they heard the negative report from the spies about the land of Canaan—despite Joshua and Caleb's glowing account of the land's beauty and fertility—they moaned and complained, forgetting about God and His promised benefits:

So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against [Moses](#) and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" ([Numbers 14:1-3](#))

Here, Israel exposed their thankless heart. We see this in their modern descendants. The mantra of the day is "Take care of Number One!" We enjoy more benefits, prosperity, and natural resources than the rest of [the world](#), yet we are complainers, unthankful for what God has bestowed so freely on us. We fail to support each other, instead saying, "Do unto others before they do unto you." Our streets are violent, and leadership does little or nothing. Selfishness and pride reign supreme. The nation is plunging quickly downhill and will not be able to stop. The penalties that have accrued will at some point have to be paid.

[II Timothy 3:1-4](#) provides a list of character traits that we see daily in today's society, among which is "unthankful." The apostle Paul warns us sternly, "And from such people turn away!" (verse 5). We cannot allow ourselves to fall into this end-time mindset but instead, be humble, respect God, and thank Him for His daily providence.

David, a man after God's own heart, was not perfect, but he was a very thankful man. In the Psalms, he wrote extensively about thanking God, always grateful for His blessings:

CGG Weekly: Benefits of Thanksgiving (13-Nov-21)

Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations. ([Psalm 100:3-5](#))

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods. ([Psalm 95:1-3](#))

Gratitude is a recurring theme within David's psalms, providing us a solid example of the Christian attitude of thanksgiving. A study of them will show that he frequently associates thanksgiving and obedience to God's laws, showing that obedience is an act of [love](#) towards God. Giving Him daily thanks also shows our love for Him.

We can promote healthy relationships with brethren by giving God thanks for them, treating them courteously, helping them through their trials, and frequently praying for them. Doing the same for those we interact with at work or school can also improve those relationships. Practicing Christian virtues always goes a long way in building bonds of friendship.

We must never slack off in giving Him thanks, especially as this world spirals down morally and ethically. God has given us so many amazing benefits—many of which we did not ask for, including our calling to God's truth and the opportunity to become His children. We should be very thankful and respond to His call daily. As the psalmist writes in [Psalm 118:1](#), "Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."

- Gary Montgomery

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

The Spirit of Gratitude

by Charles Whitaker (1944-2021)

Ingratitude is one of the most common as well as one of the most egregious sins. Proper thanksgiving and the spirit of gratitude are necessities of life. Pride, the kind demonstrated by Nebuchadnezzar when he boasted about what he had accomplished, militates against any feelings of gratitude. Thanksgiving begins with a mindset to see, appreciate, and recognize God. To not recognize God is tantamount to idolizing the self. The spirit of thanksgiving involves a spirit of sacrifice, sacrificing our ego, sacrificing our own lives, and our prideful self-sufficiency, yielding to God's calling out into the body of Christ. The apostle Paul admonishes us repeatedly to be thankful for our shelter in Christ's spiritual body.

From the Archives: Featured Article

Ingratitude

by Mark Schindler

Why do some people gripe, complain, and feel slighted even when others have jumped through hoops to smooth their way? The answer may be ingratitude. A reluctance to thank others - particularly God - for their help reveals a self-centered and inconsiderate attitude. In recounting a personal story, Mark Schindler shows how ingratitude can stifle and eventually derail our relationship with God if we let it.

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