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## Can Thanksgiving Change Your Life?

**Psalm 95:2: (NASB) *Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.***



There was once a time (and it seems that it was long ago!) when the whole idea of Thanksgiving as a holiday held deep and profound meaning. That seems kind of funny to say because when we think of Thanksgiving now, what do we think of? Family, turkey, football, stuffing, days off, pumpkin pie, eating too much and thinking too little. Thanksgiving - the concept can change your life! It can take you from a crying heart to a contented spirit. It can alter what you see and how you see it. It can find hope and strength where there seemed only to be despair and weakness. Thanksgiving...how do we live it?

Thanksgiving as a holiday was originally about one thing and one thing only: a day to give honor to God for His deliverance. How do we know? Let's look at those who were there - what drove them? What made them go to the "New World?"

(Source: history.com) In 1608, a congregation of disgruntled English Protestants from the village of Scrooby, Nottinghamshire, left England and moved to Leyden, a town in Holland. These "Separatists" did not want to pledge allegiance to the Church of England, which they believed was nearly as corrupt and idolatrous as the Catholic Church it had replaced, any longer. (They were not the same as the Puritans, who had many of the same objections to the English church but wanted to reform it from within.) The Separatists hoped that in Holland, they would be free to worship, as they liked...

In fact, the Separatists (they called themselves "Saints") did find religious freedom in Holland, but they also found a secular life that was more difficult to navigate than they'd anticipated. For one thing, Dutch craft guilds excluded the migrants, so they were relegated to menial, low-paying jobs. Even worse was Holland's easygoing, cosmopolitan atmosphere, which proved alarmingly seductive to some of the Saints' children. (These young people were "drawn away," Separatist leader William Bradford wrote, "by evill [sic] example into extravagance and dangerous courses.") For the strict, devout Separatists, this was the last straw. They decided to move again, this time to a place without government interference or worldly distraction: the "New World" across the Atlantic Ocean.

**LESSON FOR A TRUE AND GODLY THANKSGIVING: LIVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHAT YOU ARE TRULY THANKFUL FOR!**

**Luke 10:25-28**

...In August 1620, a group of about 40 Saints joined a much larger group of (comparatively) secular colonists - "Strangers," to the Saints - and set sail from England on two merchant ships: the Mayflower and the Speedwell. The Speedwell began to leak almost immediately, however, and the ships headed back to port. The travelers squeezed themselves and their belongings onto the Mayflower and set sail once again...

Because of the delay caused by the leaky Speedwell, the Mayflower had to cross the Atlantic at the height of storm season. As a result, the journey was horribly unpleasant.

**Observations:** What do we know about those first pilgrims so far?

- They were thoroughly convicted by their beliefs.
- They were willing to uproot themselves for the sake of their beliefs.
- Their beliefs focused them on a God-first approach to all aspects of life.

**We MUST thank God for His plan of deliverance from sin! 1 Corinthians 15:54-58**

**LESSON FOR A TRUE AND GODLY THANKSGIVING: WE SHOW OUR THANKFULNESS WHEN WE STAND FIRM AND UNAFRAID KNOWING THAT VICTORY, THOUGHT IT MAY COST OUR VERY LIFE, IS INEVITABLE!**

(Source: history.com) The colonists spent the first winter, which only 53 passengers and half the crew survived, living onboard the Mayflower. (The Mayflower sailed back to England in April 1621.) Once they moved ashore, the colonists faced even more challenges. During their first winter in America, more than half of the Plymouth colonists died from malnutrition, disease and exposure to the harsh New England weather. In fact, without the help of the area's native people, it is likely that none of the colonists would have survived. An English-speaking Pawtuxet named Samoset helped the colonists form an alliance with the local Wampanoags, who taught them how to hunt local animals, gather shellfish and grow corn, beans and squash. At the end of the next summer, the Plymouth colonists celebrated their first successful harvest with a three-day festival of thanksgiving.



(Source: Wikipedia) On March 16, 1621, Samoset entered the encampment at Plymouth, greeted the colonists in English, and asked for beer. After spending the night with the Pilgrims, he left to return with five others, who brought deerskins to trade. As it was Sunday, the colonists declined to trade that day, but offered them some food. On March 22, 1621, Samoset came back with Squanto, the last remaining Patuxet tribesman, who spoke much better English than he. Squanto arranged a meeting with Massasoit.

(Source: [www.pilgrimhall.org](http://www.pilgrimhall.org)) There are only two primary sources for the events of autumn 1621 in Plymouth: Edward Winslow's writing in *Mourt's Relation* and William Bradford's writing in *Of Plymouth Plantation*.

*Mourt's Relation*: (In modern spelling) "Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labors; they four in one day killed as much fowl, as with a little help beside, served the Company almost a week, at which time amongst other Recreations, we exercised our Arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five Deer, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed on our Governor, and upon the Captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."

Here is an example of a deep thanksgiving for simple things. We have lost that to a great deal in our society. What are we thankful for and can that gratitude change our lives? We must realize God is worthy of our thanks.

**LESSON FOR A TRUE AND GODLY THANKSGIVING: TO BE THANKFUL IN THE WAKE OF TRAGIC DIFFICULTY IS TO TRULY BE THANKFUL!**

**2 Corinthians 11:21-29:** There was an extreme cost to the Apostle Paul for following Christ. We have a cause for gratitude when we have others who want to enter into our difficulties.

**Psalms 107:21-22:** (KJV) <sup>21</sup>Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! <sup>22</sup>And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

**LESSON FOR A TRUE AND GODLY THANKSGIVING: TO BE WILLING TO UNDERGO INJUSTICE AND TORMENT IS TO OFFER ONESELF AS A SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING- FOR EVEN UNDER SUCH PAIN AND PRESSURE, VICTORY IS SURE!**

(Source: Wikipedia) *Of Plymouth Plantation*: (In modern spelling) "They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides, they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports."

We know Thanksgiving did not take hold as a national holiday for a long time after, but we also know the celebration was not lost sight of in over 100 years in between.

Even long before there was any Proclamation from the Continental Congress, there was this from William Bradform in the year 1623 - two years after the first Thanksgiving: Inasmuch as the great Father has given us this year an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, beans, squashes, and garden vegetables, and has made the forests to abound with game and the sea with fish and clams, and inasmuch as he has protected us from the ravages of the savages, has spared us from pestilence and disease, has granted us freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience. Now I, your magistrate, do proclaim that all ye Pilgrims, with your wives and ye little ones, do gather at ye meeting house, on ye hill, between the hours of 9 and 12 in the day time, on Thursday, November 29th, of the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred and twenty-three and the third year since ye Pilgrims landed on ye Pilgrim Rock, there to listen to ye pastor and render thanksgiving to ye Almighty God for all His blessings. --William Bradford, Ye Governor of Ye Colony

Their Thanksgiving was three hours in church, not three hours watching football on television!

**LESSON FOR A TRUE AND GODLY THANKSGIVING: TO REVISIT OUR PREVIOUS BLESSINGS AND TO COUPLE THEM WITH OUR PRESENT BLESSINGS IS A RECIPE FOR EVER-GROWING GRATITUDE!**



Extreme experiences can lead to extreme gratitude, providing extreme peace. [Acts 16:22-25](#)

**LESSON FOR A TRUE AND GODLY THANKSGIVING: TO TRULY REJOICE IN THE PAIN AND SUFFERING THAT COMES TO US - ESPECIALLY WHEN IT IS UNJUST - IS TO SHOW DEEP GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S PLAN - ALL OF GOD'S PLAN!**

**How do we encourage thanksgiving to God in others?** [2 Corinthians 9:10-15](#): *And increase the harvest of your righteousness* - although this talks about a physical harvest, there is another spiritual harvest of righteousness for which we should be striving. That is where our truest gratitude can find its roots - through the experiences and even the tragedies in our lives. Christian thanksgiving finds its momentum to be a life-changing experience.

Even before George Washington's proclamation, there was this:

The Very First Thanksgiving Proclamation made by the Continental Congress:

IN CONGRESS November 1, 1777. FORASMUCH as it is the indispensable Duty of all Men to adore the superintending Providence of Almighty God; to acknowledge with Gratitude their Obligation to him for Benefits received, and to implore such farther Blessings as they stand in Need of: And it having pleased him in his abundant Mercy, not only to continue to us the innumerable Bounties of his common Providence; but also to smile upon us in the Prosecution of a just and necessary War, for the Defense and Establishment of our unalienable Rights and Liberties; particularly in that he hath been pleased, in so great a Measure, to prosper the Means used for the Support of our Troops, and to crown our Arms with most signal success:

It is therefore recommended to the legislative or executive Powers of these UNITED STATES to set apart THURSDAY, the eighteenth Day of December next, for SOLEMN THANKSGIVING and PRAISE: That at one Time and with one Voice, the good People may express the grateful Feelings of their Hearts, and consecrate themselves to the Service of their Divine Benefactor; and that, together with their sincere Acknowledgments and Offerings, they may join the penitent Confession of their manifold Sins, whereby they had forfeited every Favor; and their humble and earnest Supplication that it may please GOD through the Merits of JESUS CHRIST, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of Remembrance...

The last paragraph states: And it is further recommended, that servile Labor, and such Recreation, as, though at other Times innocent, may be unbecoming the Purpose of this Appointment, be omitted on so solemn an Occasion.

We are so self-absorbed and "entertainment-absorbed" that we have lost a sense of what true gratitude is.

**God's presence is appropriately approached with Thanksgiving - for He is our Creator! Here is the context of our theme Scripture: [Psalm 95:1-6](#): We should express our deep gratitude!**

**LESSON FOR A TRUE AND GODLY THANKSGIVING: WHEN EXTREME EXPERIENCES PROVOKE EXTREME GRATITUDE WE ARE POISED FOR THE EXTREME PEACE OF GOD!**

Sometimes the most impactful gratitude (which usually happens in a time of private pain) finds its way to the ears and hearts of others to spur them on as well: [Psalm 100:1-5](#)

**Do we ask God for more than we thank Him for?**

**LESSON FOR A TRUE AND GODLY THANKSGIVING: ONCE WE BEGIN DOWN THE ROAD OF EXTREME GRATITUDE, OUR WHOLE APPROACH AND REACTION TO LIFE'S EXPERIENCES WILL CHANGE AND WILL BECOME LIVING SACRIFICES OF PRAISE!**

If we can find gratitude through our extreme experiences for God's overruling and care, we can begin to lock in the extraordinary peace of God to carry us. With such peace, nothing shakes us. What is our focus when we pray? Our own wants or thankfulness? We are to thank God by offering sacrifices of praise! Does that mean just a lot of emotion and singing? Not entirely...

The sacrifice of praise is all about the quality of our sacrificial life: [Hebrews 13:15-19](#): We are to "do" and "live" our faith, not just "think" our faith. We want to make sure our lives are focused on what the Scriptures teach us and then be a shining example to those around us.

Do we sacrifice begrudgingly? We may not like our present experience, but we can be thankful the Lord's hand is in it.



**1 Timothy 6:6-8:** (NASB) *6But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. 7For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.*

True contentment is a result of true perspective.  
True perspective can only be achieved through true gratitude.  
True gratitude can only be mastered by applying our trials to holiness.

Our trials are there so we can become more holy, to be sanctified - set apart for holy service. If we are following Christ, our gratitude should echo through our experiences. Having a life of ease and comfort will not set us apart as it does not provoke us to focus on spirituality.

Our abundance is with God's peace, care, love and overruling.

### Where should we look to begin to exercise our gratitude muscle?

After seeing how the original Thanksgiving proclamation was entirely God-centered, **Psalm 147** seems to fit well - the thankfulness and praise here bounces between the smallest human things and the largest heavenly things.

**Setting the context of praise and thanksgiving:** **Psalm 147:1-20:** (NKJV) *1Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.*

**The first comparison:** *2The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. 3He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. 4He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. The outcasts of Jerusalem are compared with the stars - God has both in control.*

**The resulting praise:** *5Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.*

**The second comparison (first half):** *6The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground.*

**The resulting praise:** *7Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; Sing praises on the harp to our God,*

**The second comparison (second half):** *8who covers the heavens with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow on the mountains. We acknowledge and praise that there is order and sense in the universe whether great or small. It is all infinitely complex, and God is in control.*

**The third comparison:** *9He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry. 10He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. 11The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.*

**The resulting praise:** *12Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!*

**The comparison:** *13For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. 14He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest wheat. 15He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. 16He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes; 17He casts out His hail like morsels;*

**The resulting praise:** *Who can stand before His cold? 18He sends out His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow. 19He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. 20He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise the LORD! Whatever your trial or dilemma, try to apply extreme gratitude to the experience. Know God's hand is in it and His ultimate protection is with you. The result is the extreme hope and peace of God.*

**So, can Thanksgiving change your life?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!**