

The Benefits of Thanks-Living

Pastor Eddie Turner

Sunday, November 19, 2017

1 Thess. 5: 14-22(NLT) ~ ¹⁴ Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone.

¹⁵ See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people.

¹⁶ Always be joyful. ¹⁷ Never stop praying. ¹⁸ Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

¹⁹ Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Do not scoff at prophecies, ²¹ but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. ²² Stay away from every kind of evil.

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*Thanksgiving is now celebrated as the #1 holiday for being with families and friends.*

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When we pause in our busy lives for a few days to be thankful, the spirit of thankfulness always leads us back to our family and friends we love.

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*May the Holy Spirit impress upon our hearts that the joy and love we experience during the Thanksgiving holiday doesn't have to be a once a year event. In fact, I am asking the Lord to use this Thanksgiving to launch me into a life of Thanks-Living!*

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"Pastor how can I find and know God's will for my life?"

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*There is a desire planted in each of us to know our purpose for being. Why I here, and what am I suppose to be doing with my life?*

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I do not know the specific plan God has for your life, but I do know God has a unique plan for each of us:

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Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) - <sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

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Psalms 84:11 (NLT) - For the LORD God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The LORD will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.

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*I have spoken to many people over the years who think finding God’s will for their life is like a puzzle. They live their entire life trying to figure it out. They view God’s plan as a scavenger hunt, with twist and turns around every corner.*

*But understand, God doesn’t play games with us; God desires that we run the race that is set before us and to finish our course and receive our reward.*

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2 Tim. 4:7-8(NLT) - ¹ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. ⁸ And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.

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*Concerning the will of God for our lives; God has a general will/plan for all of us and He has a specific will/plan for each of us individually.*

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When we are obedient to his general will (which is the word of God); finding his specific will be much easier.

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John 14:21 (NLT) - Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.”

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When we obey his word which is the plan for every Christian; then it will be easier for us to see his specific and individual plan for our life. Some of us can't figure out God's specific plan for our life because we are not being obedient to the things he has plainly revealed to us in his word.

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1 Thess. 5:18 (NLT) - <sup>18</sup> in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

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Finding God's specific will begins by being obedient to his general will for our lives. God plainly tells us that his general will for all of our lives is to be thankful.

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“Well Pastor, you don't realize what I have gone through lately-I have nothing good to give thanks for.”

If you stay right there in your thought life and confession-you are headed for a long downhill journey of bitterness and brokenness.

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Psalm 107:21-22 (NKJV) - Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the LORD *for* His goodness, and *for* His wonderful works to the children of men!
²² Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.

Heb. 13:15(NKJV) ~ ¹⁵Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name.

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*Sometimes living a life of thanks-living requires bringing the sacrifice of praise.*

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“My heart was aching. I was filled with grief. Bitterness and self pity were beginning to fill my life. The Devil said, “God has been very cruel to you. How would a loving God allow something like this?”

I was bombarded with a series of thoughts and strongholds, that were about to sink my spiritual ship. I came to the point of one of the greatest decisions of my life.

I got on my knees to pray and my words sounded hollow. The Devil sat on my shoulder and whispered in my ear and said, “Terry Law, you’re a hypocrite. How can you praise God when you hurt so bad inside.”

I had to make a fundamental decision. The words of Psalm 34:1 came to me at that moment, “I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.”

I made my choice. I said, Devil I will bless the Lord, and I command you to shut up. I command you to leave my thoughts alone. I’m going to praise the Lord.

Nothing happened immediately. In fact it was two hours before I felt anything whatsoever. There were two hours of barren praise. No emotion, no feeling, no tears, no sense of God’s presence. But I said, “I will offer a sacrifice. “ And then the moment came. There was an explosion in my spirit. The presence of God came into the room and my life has been changed every since.

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Jonah 2:1-10(NKJV) ~ Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish’s belly.

<sup>2</sup> And he said: “I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, and He answered me. “Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, *and* you heard my voice.<sup>3</sup> For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and your waves passed over me.

<sup>4</sup> Then I said, ‘I have been cast out of your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.’

<sup>5</sup> The waters surrounded me, *even* to my soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head. <sup>6</sup> I went down to the

moorings of the mountains; the earth with its bars *closed* behind me forever; yet you have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.

<sup>7</sup> “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer went *up* to you, into your holy temple.

<sup>8</sup> “Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy. <sup>9</sup> But I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the LORD.” <sup>10</sup> So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry *land*.

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1). Thankfulness relives stress (which lowers the risk of heart disease)

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*2). Thankfulness boost the immune system (Stronger immune system helps fight off colds and flu)*

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3). Thankfulness also is tied to helping lower a person’s blood pressure.

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*4). Gratitude improves psychological health. Gratitude reduces a multitude of toxic emotions, from envy and resentment to frustration and regret. Robert Emmons, a leading gratitude researcher, has conducted multiple studies on the link between gratitude and well-being. His research confirms that gratitude effectively increases happiness and reduces depression.*

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*5). Grateful people **sleep better**. Writing in a gratitude journal improves sleep, according to a 2011 study published in Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being. Spend just 15 minutes jotting down a few grateful sentiments before bed, and you may sleep better and longer.*

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*6). Thankful people have proven to be better friends*

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7). People who practice gratitude are more resilient

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8). Thankfulness opens the door for God's presence

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Psalm 100:4(NLT) - Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him and praise his name