

ReDay

Renew...Refresh...Restore...Retreat



I will give thanks...

Perhaps one of the hardest Scriptures for many of us to follow is Paul's admonishment to the Thessalonians:

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
1 Thess 5:18.

Most of us can be thankful – at times, for the good things.
But *in all circumstances???*

This is definitely not so easy. Yet Scripture overflows with thanksgiving, and often that thanksgiving comes from people in the midst of difficult circumstances or trying times.

This month we explore what Scripture tells us about giving thanks, and reflect on what it might mean to

Give thanks in all circumstances.

(Feel free to look up the songs used here on YouTube to sing along or simply to listen to)
<https://youtu.be/2RZt-XfetY0>

I will give thanks...

Call to worship

Come, let us give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness;
Let us sing the praises of the name of the LORD Most High.

I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.
I will be glad and rejoice in you;
I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High.

Praise the LORD.
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.



From Ps 7:17; Ps 9:1-2; Ps 106:1

Scripture

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, “The Lord reigns!”
³² Let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them!
³³ Let the trees of the forest sing, let them sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth.
³⁴ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.
1 Chron 16:31-34

Prayer

Lord, we give you thanks, for you are good. *Your love endures forever.*
² God of gods, we give you thanks. *Your love endures forever.*
³ Lord of lords, we give you thanks: *Your love endures forever.*

Lord, we give you thanks for your unfailing love
and your wonderful deeds for mankind,
⁹ for you satisfy the thirsty and fill the hungry with good things.

*We give you thanks, Lord, for your unfailing love
and your wonderful deeds for mankind.*
²² *We will sacrifice thank offerings and
tell of your works with songs of joy.*

We exalt you in the assembly of the people
and praise you in the council of the elders.

Thank you, Lord.

From Ps 136:1-3; Ps 107:8-9, 21-22, 32



Raise your voices; make a beautiful noise to the Eternal, all the earth.
² Serve the Eternal gladly; enter into His presence singing songs of joy!
³ Know this: the Eternal One Himself is the True God.
He is the One who made us; we have not made ourselves;
we are His people, like sheep *grazing* in His fields.
⁴ Go through His gates, giving thanks; walk through His courts, giving praise.
Offer Him your gratitude and praise His *holy* name.
⁵ Because the Eternal is good, His loyal love *and mercy* will never end,
and His truth will last throughout all generations.
Psalm 100 (VOICE)

Song

Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice
You became nothing, poured out to death
Many times I've wondered at your gift of life
And I'm in that place once again
I'm in that place once again

And once again I look upon the cross where you died
I'm humbled by your mercy and I'm broken inside
Once again I thank you
Once again I pour out my life

Now you are exalted to the highest place
King of the heavens, where one day I'll bow
But for now I marvel at your saving grace
And I'm full of praise once again
I'm full of praise once again

Thank you for the cross
Thank you for the cross
Thank you for the cross, my friend



Reflection

The Greek word used in the New Testament for being grateful, expressing gratitude, and giving thanks is:
Eucharisteo

It's a verb – an active kind of word and is used 39 times in the NT

From this word comes the word
Eucharist...

This is the word denoting the Lord's Supper, where He broke bread, gave thanks, and told us to do the same
in remembrance of Him.

*After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you.
18 For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."
19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying,
"This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."
20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.
Luke 22:17-20*

God's Word says, "Give thanks..."

...for God's goodness, love, and great deeds (see Psalms)
...even in the midst of turmoil and attack, as David so often was (see Ps 9)
...when entering the house of God (Ps 100)
...when there just isn't enough (as in 7 loaves, 2 fish and a hungry crowd of thousands – Matthew 15)
...when you are about to be betrayed, arrested, and crucified (as Jesus was)
...in all circumstances (1 Thess 5:18) – and this from the man who endured shipwreck, famine, whipping, persecution, etc!!

There are times when thanksgiving flows out of us:
when the sky is blue, when all is well and life is going our way.
We feel blessed and full of thanksgiving.

More often, however, we have to dig deep inside ourselves to find a gritty little handful of thanksgiving to tear out of our bloodied heart and place before the Lord.

What was it like for Jesus to give thanks, break bread and share it with those he knew would desert him, including one he knew would betray him?

This was the night before he died and he knew exactly what that death would be like. His heart was breaking – to the point of sweating drops of blood! This was truly his darkest hour – and he faced it alone.

And He gave thanks!

Giving thanks is...*giving!*

It's a gift – and a costly one at that!
Our gift is often given with blood-stained hands, torn and broken fingernails,
and hearts that ache with loss and grief.

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

If Paul urges us to give thanks in all circumstances, and both he and Jesus lived this out for us, then giving thanks will at times arise out of our darkest night, when we are faced with suffering, fear, betrayal and persecution.

How can we give thanks...in **ALL** (even the darkest) circumstances?

How do **YOU** give thanks... in **ALL** (even the darkest) circumstances?

David did it - by **remembering** and **reciting** all the awesome deeds of God and the ways God has helped him in the past. (see Psalms, eg 9:2)

Jesus did it - by **knowing** that he had come to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45) and to bring life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

Paul did it - by **realizing** that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18)!!

What enables you to give thanks in **ALL** circumstances?

What might you need to...

Remember?

Recite?

Know?

Realise?

Eucharisteo – give thanks

Eucharist – Christ breaking bread, giving thanks - Christ's broken body

Silence



Scripture

³⁵ He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. ³⁶ Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. ³⁷ They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ³⁸ The number of those who ate was four thousand men, besides women and children.
Matthew 15:35-38

Prayer

Lord of Heaven, you broke the bread and gave thanks,
on a hillside before a hungry crowd – and there was enough;
on an anguished evening when darkness and suffering lay before you.

Teach us, Lord, to not only give thanks when you provide all our needs,
and take us by surprise when we are sure there is not enough;
But teach us to also give thanks when with brokenness
we walk the path of darkness and do not know where we are going.

Teach us to give thanks when we are deserted, rejected and betrayed,
when we face pain and suffering, and do not know how long that will last.
Teach us to give thanks when we face grief and loss
and do not know how to move forward.

In the midst of uncertainty and brokenness,
in all circumstances and at all times,
give us thankful hearts as we remember:

You are good and your love endures forever.ⁱ

Song

What can I give to you
What can I offer to the king
For all the love you've shown
For all your mercy over me

I called your name, you heard my cry
Out of the grave, and into life
My heart is yours, my soul is free
Thank you God for saving me [x 2]

The rock of salvation
My hope is built on nothing less
Morning by morning
How great is your faithfulness

I called your name, you heard my cry
Out of the grave, and into life
My heart is yours, my soul is free
Thank you God for saving me [x3]

You gave your life upon the cross
You suffered once for all
You made a way
Jesus in victory you rose
You made us all your own
Now we are saved

REPEAT

Thank you God for saving me
Thank you God
Thank you God for saving me
Thank you God for the cross
Thank you God for saving me, for
saving me

I called your name, you heard my cry...

Scripture

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:4-7

Benediction

I pray that God, the source of all hope, will infuse your lives with an abundance of joy and peace in the midst of your faith so that your hope will overflow through the power of the Holy Spirit. VOICE

Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope! MSG

Romans 15:13



GOING DEEPER

Here are some suggestions that may help you in your time of reflection.

- **Reflect:** Read through the Reflection again. Notice what stands out for you and think about why this might be. Notice the words: what moved you? What was jarring? What was hard to read? How do you feel when you read these words? Where in your life do these words resonate?
- **The Bible** is full of the call to give thanks and the Psalms overflow with thanksgiving, even in difficult circumstances. Here are some passages which you might like to read again that have something to say about giving thanks: Phil 4:4-7; 1 Thess 5:18; 1 Chron 16:31-34; Ps 9:1-2 (of David); Psalm 100 (VOICE); Matthew 15:29-39; Luke 22:17-20

Choose one (or more) of these passages (or any other that comes to mind) and think about what God is saying to you through his Word. Reflect on the words used in these passages and how they might or might not impact your life today.

- Use one of the Bible passages or songs provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**.
- **Visualise Scripture!** Choose one of the Scripture passages that readily brings an image to mind, such as Jesus feeding the crowd or the last supper with his disciples.

Slowly read the passage through. Close your eyes and picture what is being described. What do you see, smell, hear? What would it feel like to imagine your life like that today? How is God speaking to you through this? You could either record this experience in your journal or share it with someone.

- **Meditate** on a verse that reminds or inspires you to give thanks. It might be a verse from the material above, or you could use a concordance to find a verse that speaks to your heart at this moment. Simply sit quietly and slowly repeat the verse until you feel it settling into your heart.
- **Be creative:** think of ways you can creatively express your thankfulness to God for all he has done for you – think about everything you can be thankful for and how you can creatively depict some of those. You could also express some new insight you have gained from the above Scripture passages. Ideas include creating a collage, drawing, painting or sculpting some of the things you are thankful for. You could write a poem, prayer, or song that challenges or inspires others, or simply write your own love song or prayer.
- Go for a **walk**. What do you see in the world around you that fills you with thanksgiving? Are there some places where you find it hard to be thankful? Does this challenge you in any way? In what ways can you encourage those around you to be more thankful?
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time sharing your reflections or insights. Share what God might be saying to you about this topic. Pray together.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:

Thank God for who he is and what he is doing in your life

Notice what is happening around you and in you

Respond to what God has shown you, by thanking him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him

- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.

EVEN DEEPER

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be practiced both by individuals and in groups.

Practicing Lectio Divina Individually

1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

Mars Hill Bible Church
marshill.org/teaching/sp

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN - Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

This is something that can be done throughout the day or at the end of the day. It helps us to become more aware of and focused on the presence of God in the midst of everyday life.

1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

Mars Hill Bible Church
marshill.org/teaching/sp

SONGS

Once Again: Matt Redman, CAPITOL CHRISTIAN MUSIC GROUP

Thank You God for Saving Me: Songwriters: Chris Tomlin / Phil Wickham © Music Services, Inc

Used with permission CCLI 185711

¹ Jo-anne Brown