

All Year Round

Enjoy God's Blessings Gratefully

In *Groundhog Day*, Bill Murray lives the same holiday every day. He rises each morning with dread until he realizes all the gifts and opportunities that day holds. And when we look past the doldrums and difficulties of our day, we welcome a different kind of repeat holiday. We discover that Thanksgiving is more than turkey and stuffing. We carry the aim of that November Thursday into all our days, celebrating the grace of life by expressing our appreciation to the Giver of every good gift.

We're modeling our joy after Jesus' joy as we continue our [Cross Training](#) journey. Joy comes when we receive the gospel, build our hope, respond with thanksgiving, and evangelize to others. So how do we enjoy thanksgiving all year round?

What You Need to Know

When someone gives our kids a present, we ask them, "What do you say?" We understand that receiving a gift creates a debt — not for repayment, but thanks. When Jesus healed ten lepers, only one returned, "*giving him thanks*" (Luke 17:16). "*Where are the nine?*" Jesus asked, "*Was no one found to return and give praise to God but this foreigner?*" (Luke 17:17-18). As we go on our way, do we notice we're blessed beyond measure and return to praise God?

God's people are created for praise and thanksgiving, as we enjoy his fullness (cf. Isaiah 43:7,21; Psalm 95:6). God made a "*very good*" universe that thrives by his blessing (Gen. 1:28-31). "*For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving*" (1 Tim. 4:4). But when we take all this in mindlessly, without witnessing the gifts and acknowledging their source, our hearts darken, and our thoughts turn futile (Rom. 1:21). We wall ourselves off from a grateful heart through entitlement, comparison, worry, and pride. Beware of anything that closes your heart, extinguishes your joy, and stifles your view of God's glory (Psalm 13:5; Prov. 4:23).

What You Need to Do

Before we can give thanks, we have to notice the blessing. Sometimes I sleepwalk through a whole week without taking in what God is doing in my life. No wonder Scripture links gratitude with alertness. "*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving*" (Col. 4:2). Recognize that today *is* the blessing (Psalm 90:12-15) — open the eyes of faith to see God's gracious hand (Psalm 23:6; 42:8). As Maya Angelou said, "This is a wonderful day. I've never seen this one before."

Let your gratitude out by *giving* thanks! Thanksgiving naturally arises in "*the voice of song*" (Isaiah 51:3). Sometimes — overwhelmed with joy — our songs come with the exuberance of "*a great shout*" (Ezra 3:11) or "*a joyful noise*" (Psalm 95:2). But it's the melody we make to the Lord in our hearts that best expresses our thanks (Eph. 5:19-20). Even in everyday conversations, let thanksgiving set the tone rather than complaining or "*foolish talk*" (Eph. 5:4).

Present your life as an offering of thanks to God (cf. Rom. 12:1). As grace fills our lives, it overflows into other lives! What a sacred privilege — to channel this grace! To become his conduits, to the *"overflowing in many thanksgivings to God"* (2 Cor. 9:12)! When we give our money and possessions, we *"will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God"* (2 Cor. 9:11). We also *"speak"* the good news to others, *"so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God"* (2 Cor. 4:15).

Through the Week

- **Read** — Luke 17:11-19; 1 Chron. 16:8-36; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; James 1:16-18; Psalm 107:1-43
- **Reflect** — Ask yourself, *"What changes in me when I decide to live in gratitude for my life and the joy available to me in Christ?"*
- **Request** — Pray, *"Let me see your grace all around me, Lord, and overflow with thanksgiving"* (cf. Col. 2:7).
- **Respond** — Go on a "gratitude walk" looking for God's blessings.
- **Reach Out** — Ask someone, *"How does love open you to gratitude?"*