

A LIFESTYLE OF THANKSGIVING

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Thanksgiving is not just a day on the American calendar - it is an **assignment** given to every follower of Jesus and every person of faith who looks to God and depends on Him.

Days of Thanksgiving to God - the source of all blessings - have been a part of American culture since the first Pilgrim settlers. Days of Thanksgiving were proclaimed by the Continental Congress, and later by America's first President, George Washington. After the conclusion of the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln made Thanksgiving an annual holiday. These days of Thanksgiving to God have created a culture of faith and spiritual optimism that is a special part of America's heritage and something to be emulated among all nations. It goes without saying that a nation that does not acknowledge its dependence on God and its gratitude to Him greatly diminishes its receptivity to His blessings which, though freely given, need to be received with faith and thanksgiving.

To thank the Lord is a major expression of faith and one of our

greatest responsibilities. *"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."* (1 Thessalonians 5.18) By thanksgiving we acknowledge that everything we have and everything we are is a gift from God. Our life itself, our redemption, every heartbeat, the creation that surrounds us, the destiny prepared for us, the forgiveness given us - ALL these are gifts from God. They are **not earned**, but a vast matrix of things **gifted** to us by God directly. They are manifestations of His love, care and destiny for us.

The believer's thanksgiving has an object. When we are thankful, we are not just practicing positive thinking or developing *"an attitude of gratitude."* We are thanking a Living Person - our loving Father God - who is **personally and directly** behind all our gifts and graces. *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."* (James 1.17)

By thanksgiving we humbly and joyfully acknowledge Him as the Source of all we have and are - our existence, our present

blessings and our future destiny. Above all the believer's thankfulness is directed to the great LOVE that inspired God to pay for our sins on the Cross, restore us to His favor and give us *"all things that pertain to life and godliness."* (2 Peter 1.3)

As believers, who have entered covenant with God, we are not only connected to the **love** of God, our Father, but His **promises and His covenants**. Because He has promised to be with us always, to never leave us nor forsake us, we can thank Him in every situation - pleasant or unpleasant, difficult or easy. We thank Him because we can rely on His faithfulness, in full assurance that He will use everything for our ultimate good to conform us to His image. Furthermore He has promised us that His mercies will endure forever and His *"goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives"* and on into eternity. Thankfulness fills us with hope and great expectations as we confidently look to God, Our Father, for everything and in all circumstances, with full assurance that He will bring His plans and purposes to pass.

Thanksgiving is the great antidote to pride, self-sufficiency, discontent, self-centeredness and fear. Every time we are thankful to God we remind ourselves of our utter dependence upon Him and of

His faithfulness to carry us through. Thanksgiving opens our hearts wide to be aware that, despite the many difficulties of life, we are surrounded by God's goodness and supported by His faithfulness and power.

"Fear not for I am with you be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41.10) Thanksgiving gives us the true perspective of life. It awakens us to the ultimate reality that as surely as the earth orbits the sun our lives revolve around God and His goodness Thanksgiving connects us to the reality of the Kingdom of God from which everything else follows. So let us be thankful to God and praise Him continually and then we shall *"see the goodness of God in the land of the living."*

*"I will bless the Lord at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul shall make its boast in the Lord;
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.
Oh, magnify the Lord with me, And let
us exalt His name together
I sought the Lord, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears."
(Psalm 34.1-4)*

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