

Giving Thanks



Worship

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

James 1:17

God’s provision is so consistent. In the midst of a world filled with challenges—a world of shifting shadows—we know that every good and perfect gift we receive is his hand at work in the world. Whether it’s the simple things like the weather we enjoy or the food on our table—or things much more unique to our personal stories—all of it is evidence of God’s care for us. That means Thanksgiving ought not be just another holiday, it ought to be a day of intentional worship wherein we acknowledge the source of all the gifts we’ve received—*God Himself and his one and only Son Jesus Christ*.

So before we give thanks, let’s acknowledge the giver—let’s acknowledge God. He alone is the source of our blessings and the recipient of all our thanks.

Offer this time, whether gathered with others or in the company of God alone, as a time of worship. You can do that by praying a prayer that commits this exercise and devotional time to God or setting the atmosphere in your home by playing worship music behind a portion of your holiday festivities.

Taking communion or spending time praying for others as the day goes on can further enliven this day as a day to acknowledge your Father in Heaven who is the author of “every good and perfect gift.”

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“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 5:18-20

Thanksgiving is a day to indulge not in food and drink, but in the praise of God—giving thanks to the Father for everything as we worship him. When we give thanks for everything, let us acknowledge not just those conventional blessings that are obvious to all, but those areas where God has been at work in redeeming the challenging, difficult, or painful experiences of this last year into experiences that have grown us or shaped us for his purposes.

If you're gathered with others, spend some time going around the room sharing about the blessings you've received this year that are easily recognized as good and beneficial. Or if you're only in the company of God, maybe speak those blessings in prayer to him or make a list.

Now take some time to consider how God's redemptive goodness has been on display in the difficult or challenging experiences of this last year. It may take a bit longer to consider this prompt, so just let others share as examples come to mind. It could be something God taught you or showed you in the midst of something you might typically consider negative. Again, if you find yourself in the company of God alone today, consider this same prompt in prayer and share it with him or write it down.

Rest

Whether you're gathered with others or spending this day without the company of your loved ones, God is present with you. He has been present in the good and bad in this last year. He promises to be present with you in the future.

In **Matthew 6:25-27** Jesus says, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?" **Verse 33:** "...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Thanksgiving is an opportunity—through our recollection of the goodness of God in praise and worship to him—for us to rest. When we acknowledge God's faithfulness in the past, it helps us trust him with the future. Worry won't change anything for us or our world, but faith and trust in God will always yield us clarity of vision and peace. Choose to rest in him this day.

What worries (if any) for the year to come are you harboring? Maybe you want to take turns expressing those fears to those you've gathered with today or maybe just quietly in your heart to God.

Remind each other—or let the Lord remind you—that rest is available in Jesus and that everything that is needed for this year will be provided as we seek his Kingdom and righteousness. As your heart rests from the worries of the world, consider: what is one way you can make "his Kingdom and righteousness" more of a priority in the year to come?