

God Wants You to Give Thanks, Part 2

Scripture: Psalm 100:4; 2 Corinthians 4:15

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Pray, read your Bible, go to church, share the gospel, obey your parents. Recognize that list? It's the answer you're likely to get when asking the question—What does God want me to do? That centers on your *actions*, which is good...but what about your *attitudes*? You can pray with a proud heart, attend church reluctantly, and even share the gospel with wrong motives. God cares about our attitudes, too. In fact, that's part of His will—a *big* part. He wills us to be thankful *all the time*. Here are five more reasons why . . .

1. Thankfulness Glorifies God:

In 2 Corinthians 4:15 Paul says to the church at Corinth, “For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.” Paul is declaring his motive for all the sacrificial service he rendered to Corinth—thanksgiving that abounded to the glory of God. Think of all the heartache Paul experienced in his ministry to the Corinthian church: he was misunderstood, ridiculed, maligned, and even attacked for serving the Lord. Yet he selflessly spent himself in order that God's grace might reach more sinners, and the praise of the redeemed would ascend to God's throne. A story from Luke 17 strengthens this point. Christ met ten lepers in a village between Samaria and Galilee and told them to go and show themselves to the priest. As they obeyed His command, Christ instantaneously healed all ten. Verse 15 picks up the story, “Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan.” Note how Luke carefully defines the means through which the Samaritan glorified God—he fell at the feet of Christ giving thanks to Him. God's glory and thanksgiving are inseparable.

2. A Thankful Heart recognizes God's goodness:

Paul reminded Timothy of an important principle when he said, “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the Word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:4). Some deceivers at Ephesus refused to affirm God created everything *good*, including food. They flatly denied the benevolence of God's creation, which led them to reject partaking in His gifts. But by gratefully receiving and enjoying God's gifts, believers fulfill the noble intention for which they were created. The doxology of Romans 11:36 sums up this perspective: “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

3. An Unthankful Heart Characterizes Fallen Humanity:

In 2 Timothy 3:1-2, Paul says, “Realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, **ungrateful**, unholy . . .”

Paul is saying not only will the last days find narcissistic, greedy, conceited, proud, slanderous, rebellious people, but also *ungrateful* people. Ingratitude characterizes fallen humanity in the last days. Look around—we're living in those days, aren't we. Paul goes on to say evil men will grow worse and worse (2 Timothy 3:13). The closer we get to the Second Coming of Christ, the more wicked men become; the more wicked they become, the more thankless they are. It shouldn't surprise us to see unsaved people going through life complaining, bitter, angry, thankless, without any gratitude, expecting to receive everything good that comes their way and exploding when they don't. We expect such thankless expressions from unbelievers, but they have no place in the lives of God's people.

4. Thanksgiving is a common part of worship:

The Psalmist calls us to an attitude of thanksgiving when he writes, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name" (Psalm 100:4). William Hendriksen says, "When a person prays without thanksgiving he has clipped the wings of prayer so that it cannot rise." When you enter God's presence harboring ingratitude, your worship is unacceptable.

When the early church met in the New Testament, one of its main purposes was to give thanks to God. That's implicit in Paul's instruction to the Corinthians concerning the proper use of tongues during their worship services. He says, "If you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified" (1 Corinthians 14:16–17).

Paul's other letters remind believers to express their thankfulness and thereby distinguish themselves from the ungrateful, unbelieving culture. "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks" (Ephesians 5:3–4; see 2 Corinthians 4:15; 9:11).

5. A Thankful heart reflects godly humility:

The occasion of your thanksgiving, as well as what you give thanks for, says a lot about your spiritual maturity. The Bible tells us to be thankful for all people and all things. Have you ever thought what a list of *all things* includes? Corrupt governments, unjust employers, bitter spouses, severe illnesses, economic collapses—all things (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Philippians 4:6).

Only one kind of person is able to express gratitude for those things—a humble Christian. Believers *know* they don't deserve anything from God but judgment, so like the early church, they can sing hymns while they suffer in prison (Acts 16:25), or rejoice when they're persecuted for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41). Humble Christians view every bitter thing as sweet, and rejoice always (Philippians 1:18).

Of course, that's not an exhaustive list. There are many other reasons in Scripture God wills us to be thankful. Can you name some? Here's our list of some of those reasons. See if you can expand on

this using only Scripture as your source:

1. God commands us to be thankful
2. Thankfulness acknowledges God's sovereignty
3. God judges ingratitude
4. Thankfulness glorifies God
5. A thankful heart recognizes God's goodness
6. An unthankful heart characterizes fallen humanity
7. Thanksgiving is a common part of worship
8. A thankful heart reflects godly humility
9. . . . ?

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