



Bulletin

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Give Thanks to the Lord!

A DAY OF THANKS

BY JIM DALY

WITH OUR NATION FACING UNCERTAINTIES, THANKFULNESS MAY BE IN short supply for many Americans this year. The early Pilgrims encountered extreme hardship, but their response is instructive to us today.

The Pilgrims' struggle to colonize America was fraught with challenge from the moment they embarked on the *Mayflower*. The journey across the Atlantic Ocean took 65 days in cold, damp, and miserable conditions. A number of the passengers became ill, and one person died along the way.

Even after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, their troubles were only beginning. It was mid-November, and winter was upon them. The cold and snow frustrated their efforts to establish a settlement. Over 100 Pilgrims had arrived in the new land, but less than 50 survived the harsh winter.

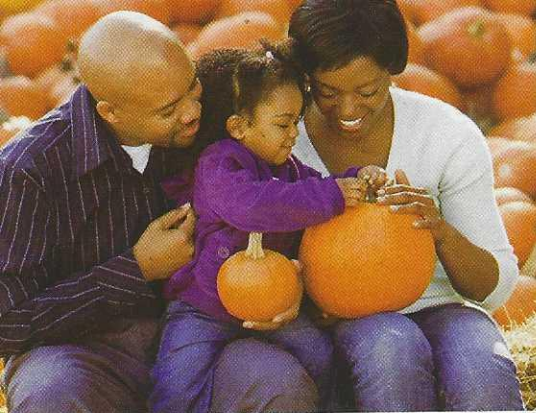
Despite this adversity, the following autumn the Pilgrims' governor, William Bradford, proclaimed a day of Thanksgiving to God for His grace and provision. After all they had endured, they still gave thanks for what they had—however little or much that was. Their sense of thanks had increased through their trials; not diminished.

Americans have overcome incredible challenges throughout our history. You've probably fought battles of your own. Individually and collectively, our nation's spirit is strong, and God deserves our thanks for carrying us through.

"Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!" (1 Chronicles 16:34).

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ENCOURAGING A THANKFUL HEART

The holidays are upon us. It is easy to lose touch with the purpose of the fourth Thursday in November. Here are some suggestions for putting “thanks” back into Thanksgiving.

1. Bless others through your creativity

Thanksgiving gives your creative abilities a place to shine. I love driving by homes this time of year. I marvel at Instagram-worthy front porches. There are such varied types of pumpkins and so many ways to display them! Your creative powers are at work in your kitchen as well. And some of you decorate your Thanksgiving table with love and care, creating an environment that builds special memories.

Creative skills reflect the Lord’s creative abilities, a communicable attribute of the One who created the world. The Lord equipped His people with the creativity to construct the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:30-35), and He gives those gifts today.

2. Find activities to encourage a thankful heart

I have joined others at a table after eating, listening to each person express thanks to the Lord for the person sitting next to them.

Thanking the Lord for those you love has biblical precedent. Paul thanked God for the readers of his epistles. In Romans 1:8,

he thanked God for their faith proclaimed in all the world. The Corinthians were objects of thanksgiving because “in every way [they] were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge” (1 Corinthians 1:5). Paul did not cease to give thanks for the believers in Ephesus and Colossae. He prayed with joy as he thanked God for the Philippians. Your family can begin a tradition of showering others with thankfulness.

3. Develop your own heart of thanksgiving

All your activities and preparations lead up to the primary goal of facilitating a day to give thanks to God. A thankful attitude grows when you purposefully find reasons to render thanks. “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

The thoughts and motivations of your soul come out in your words. Jesus taught this in Luke 6:45. Seek a grateful heart that overflows with thanksgiving. Determine to glorify God even when your day goes badly and responsibilities endlessly flood over you.

—*Caroline Newbeiser*

MODELS FOR A THANKFUL HEART



Here are five people who exemplify a thankful heart in the Bible. Then we will look at the number one reason for every Christian to be ever thankful.

First, Job is an outstanding example of a faithful soul. He lost *everything*, and yet he was able to keep his head above water and say with (what seems to be) a heart of thanksgiving, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).

King David is also a wonderful example of a heart that overflowed with thankfulness. God used him to gift us with Psalm 103. Take out your Bible and see how rich it is with thanksgiving.

Hannah’s story is one of thankfulness. When she was hopelessly barren, she fervently prayed for a child. And when God granted her request, and she gave birth to Samuel, she overflowed with thanks to God in prayer (see 1 Samuel 2:1-10).

Then there is Mary, the mother of Jesus. After learning that she would give birth to the Messiah, Mary said, “My soul magnifies

the LORD, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47).

The Samaritan leper didn’t forget to thank God for his healing. Jesus healed 10, and yet, only one returned to do the right thing (see Luke 17:11-19). What a lesson he is for us cleansed lepers!

Each of these individuals is an example of a living faith, reminding us never to forget to be thankful to God when we are happy or sad, wealthy or poor, healthy or sick. But all this brings us to the number one reason each of us should be thankful. It is the cross—the wellspring of our joy.

In Matthew 11:25-26 Jesus thanked His Father for the greatest of enigmas—the hidden nature of the gospel: “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight’” (NKJV).

—Ray Comfort



PREPARE FOR JESUS THIS ADVENT SEASON

The Christmas story is not only what happened near the manger one night in Bethlehem. Jesus' birth and arrival are part of a larger story that stretches all the way back to the beginning of time when God created the world.

The Advent season reminds us of that story. Celebrated the four weeks leading up to Christmas, Advent is when we remember God's promises to send a Messiah and how Jesus Christ fulfilled every prophecy written about Him.

Within this story, we see that God loves us and has a plan to rescue us from our sin and disobedience. We are invited to see Jesus as the Savior of the world who came to Earth as a baby.

Celebrating Advent is a wonderful way to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection made it possible for us to have a relationship with God and to one day spend eternity with Him.

However, Advent celebrates not only the birth of Jesus; it's also a time to rejoice and hope in Jesus Christ's second coming. In the same way that people waited with anticipation and prepared for the Messiah's birth, Advent reminds us to anticipate and prepare for His return.

Advent is a beautiful season of the year and an excellent time for families to discuss Christian beliefs and values, their faith and Jesus' return.

Sign up for this season's Advent resources at FocusOnTheFamily.com/live-it. Then check your email for updates that will help you and your family draw closer to Christ this Advent season.

These resources will help your family grow in faith, feel the anticipation of Christ's return and encourage you to share the love of Jesus. New content will be released during the four weeks of Advent, so **check back often!**

For more information on any of the topics in this bulletin, go to FocusOnTheFamily.com or call 800-A-FAMILY (232-6459). To reach Customer Service regarding your subscription, please call 1-800-692-9912. To check out more ministry resources, please visit us at www.tyndaleperiodicals.com.

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