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GIVING THANKS TO GOD

In **Psalm 30:12**, the psalmist cries out, "O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever." David openly declares His commitment to give thanks to the Lord forever. God's goodness and faithfulness moved him to make this commitment. God desires this same type of commitment from every believer. God wants you to make a commitment to thank Him. He is not looking for an occasional giving of thanks during a sentimental moment. He wants more than an outburst of thanks when you are feeling profoundly grateful. He longs for a lifestyle of gratitude that leads you to thank Him on a continual basis. For this reason, giving thanks should be an essential part of your prayer life. It needs to become an integral part of your daily life. This should motivate you to make a commitment to give thanks continually to God. In order to help you make this commitment, this article will cover the basics of giving thanks to God.

What Does It Mean To Give Thanks To God?

Giving thanks to God consists of three basic parts. It begins with a heartfelt attitude of gratitude. This is the foundation of giving thanks. It is a feeling of thankfulness for the provision of particular needs especially when they are urgent needs. At the same time, the continual flow of

God's blessings into your life amazes you. The abundance of God's blessings in your life staggers you. Thankfulness wells up inside of your heart because of how much God has provided and how abundant this provision has been. You have been sustained and provided for through the circumstances of life. Gratitude for this runs through your heart and soul.

Giving thanks to God also includes an acknowledgment of God's goodness and faithfulness. You come to realize that these blessings and the provision for the needs in your life are due to God. It is God who blesses and provides in your life. When you trace back to the source of these blessings and provisions, you discover that it flows out of the goodness and faithfulness of God. It is not because of your merit or worthiness. It depends on God's gracious character.

A danger that any Christian can be trapped into is focusing more on the gifts than on the Giver. It is easy to focus more on God's blessings than on God Himself. Giving thanks to God does mean acknowledging the specific blessings that God provides (**Psalm 103:1-2**). It is important to do this. Yet, you must always trace these blessings back to the God who is good and faithful to provide them. In giving thanks, it is crucial to acknowledge that God is the One who is blessing and it is due to His nature that you are blessed (**James 1:17**). Giving thanks not only focuses on the gifts, but also and primarily, on the One who gives these gifts.

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Why Should You Give Thanks?

A third and final part of giving thanks is the outward expression of thankfulness. There is a difference between feeling grateful and giving thanks. One can feel grateful and never give thanks to God. Feeling grateful is an inward feeling. Yet, this is only a part of giving thanks to God. This inward feeling must find expression in thanks to God. Feeling grateful needs to give way to an expression of thanks to God.

The Lord Jesus Christ expresses His displeasure over feeling grateful yet never giving thanks (**Luke 17:10-11**). He desires that you express this gratitude by giving thanks in some concrete way. Giving thanks calls for the expression of gratitude to God for His blessing and provision. Giving thanks moves you to act. Giving thanks moves you to express your gratitude to God whether through prayer or song.

Giving thanks to God begins with the feeling of gratitude for the blessings and provisions that one receives. It also requires an acknowledgment that it is God who has blessed and provided. It is realizing that God's character is the reason that one has these blessings. Following this, there is the concrete expression of that gratefulness to God. Giving thanks is an action that the child of God takes to show his or her gratitude to God for His blessing and provision.

It is important to understand that giving thanks to God is not an occasional activity for the Christian. It is not something that should only be done at Thanksgiving or in moments when you are feeling profoundly grateful. This is something that God wants to be a part of your daily lifestyle. The Word of God makes this clear in **Ephesians 5:20**. This same thought is expressed in **1 Thessalonians 5:18** and **Hebrews 13:15**. Notice the theme of the continual giving of thanks that runs through all three verses, "always . . . in everything . . . continually." God desires a continuous flow of thanksgiving from His children. He wants to produce in you the spiritual ability for giving thanks at all times, in all situations, and for all things. It must be your commitment to yield yourself to Him and to pursue this lifestyle.

The Bible reveals many reasons for developing a lifestyle of giving thanks to God. *The most basic reason to do this is because it is God's demand for your life (1 Thessalonians 5:18)*. The Bible declares that this is God's will for you as a believer. This is what God longs for from you. He wants you to develop the ability to give thanks to Him continually through all the circumstances of life. He has saved you so that you can give thanks to Him continually. This is why you were called into the body of Christ (**Colossians 3:15**).

Next, you should give thanks to God because it glorifies God. By giving thanks to God, you are declaring the greatness of His love, His faithfulness, and His goodness. You exalt these qualities of God by thanking Him. The blessings and the provision that you have in your life are due to these characteristics of God. It shows Him to be a loving, faithful, and good Father. He is worthy of this glory and exaltation.

Another reason that you should give thanks is because this is the only right way to approach God. The Bible declares in **Psalms 100:4**, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise." David is announcing that when he entered the Temple, he would do so with thanksgiving. God had placed His presence at the Temple. David is actually saying that he would enter into God's presence with thanksgiving. This is the way that you must approach God. God is constantly blessing you with good and perfect gifts (**James 1:17**). He is daily loading you with His benefits (**Psalms 103:2**). The only right and proper way to come into His presence is with overflowing thanksgiving. David also "blesses" the Lord (**Psalms 104:1**). The word "bless" means to adore God for His goodness and faithfulness. As you enter God's presence, it should be with the giving of thanks and adoration of God. God is good and when you approach Him through prayer it needs to be done with thanksgiving and blessing (**Psalms 103, 104, 105**).

A lifestyle of giving thanks is the only right response to the grace of God. It is only because of the grace of God that anyone receives anything. Everything that you have is due to the grace of God. God's blessings are poured out on your life moment by moment. The only proper response to this is a lifestyle of giving thanks.

The Bible reveals that being ungrateful and not giving thanks is a characteristic of lost people (Romans 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:2). This is what characterizes the lives of those who have not surrendered to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Even when God pours out His goodness on the lost, they are unthankful and ungrateful (Romans 3:2). They ignore God's goodness. The person who has surrendered his life to Jesus Christ should be just the opposite. His or her life should be characterized by acknowledging God's goodness and expressing thanks to Him. An offering of thanks should be continually on the lips of the believer.

Giving thanks to God strengthens your faith in God. When you give thanks to God, you are rehearsing God's goodness to you and His specific blessings in your life. You are actually remembering how God has provided and blessed. As you look at how God has blessed and provided in the past, it strengthens your faith for present provision and for future blessing. This is why there is an emphasis on remembering God and what He has done (Psalm 63:6, 77:10-12, 143:5). When the people of God needed faith to take the land of Canaan, Moses called on them to remember what God had done to Pharaoh and Egypt (Deuteronomy 7:18). By developing a lifestyle of giving thanks, it will make you sensitive to how God has provided and blessed. This will enable you to remember more easily and with more detail what God has done for you. As you give thanks to God and remember His blessings, it strengthens your faith to face present difficulties and struggles. Your faith is dependent on your giving thanks for and remembering God's blessings. The greater the depth of your thanksgiving, the stronger your faith will be.

A lifestyle of giving thanks can also protect you from rebelling against the Lord. In Deuteronomy 8, Moses is warning the people not to forget the Lord (8:10-17). When the people entered the land and experienced its abundance, they could easily forget the Lord. The abundance of the land and the depth of their blessings could blind them to God's goodness and faithfulness. This could lead them to rebel against the Lord and chase after other gods. The key in preventing this would be remembering the Lord. They had to remember that God blessed them. This would humble the people and cause them to seek the Lord. How could the people keep from forgetting the Lord? They could do this by realizing that it was God who was blessing them. They had to remember continually that God was the source of the blessings and continually thank Him for these blessings.

By living a lifestyle of giving thanks, it protects you from forgetting God. This guards against you rebelling against Him. When we forget God's power and blessing and give in to a lack of trust and grumbling, it is often because we are not thanking Him for His power and blessings. When we thank God, it is a constant reminder of God's power and blessing. This does not allow us to forget God's goodness and faithfulness which is in turn a hedge against rebellion toward God.

Giving thanks is a powerful testimony of your faith in Jesus Christ. When you give thanks in all things, it testifies of the power of a relationship to Jesus Christ. It is easy to give thanks when things are going well and when there is abundance. A lost person can feel thankful in this type of situation. Yet, when life is difficult, it is hard to be thankful to God. Yet, the person who knows Jesus Christ can do this. When you give thanks in all things, it reveals your faith in Christ. It shows the power of Jesus Christ to sustain and strengthen you. A lifestyle of giving thanks reveals the genuineness of your faith in Christ along with the power of Jesus Christ to sustain His people through the circumstances of life.

Giving thanks can prepare the way for the faith of your child (Psalm 145:4). As you thank God throughout your life, your child is given constant reminders of God's power, faithfulness, and goodness. As you live a lifestyle of giving thanks before your child, he or she sees what God can do and how God acts. This lays the foundation for your child to trust and thank God himself or herself. When you continually thank God, it is a powerful testimony to God's faithfulness and goodness. And, it shows your child the necessity of thanking God and remembering Him.

A lifestyle of giving thanks has the potential to make you into a bold intercessor (John 11:41, 43). As you thank God for answers to prayer, it will create a boldness to ask with more intensity for greater blessings. As you thank God for His faithfulness in answering prayer, it prepares you for bolder intercession. This is why it is important to record answers to prayer and then thank Him for these. Giving thanks for answered prayer reminds you of God's power and faithfulness. This in turn should cause you to be more bold and filled with faith in your own intercession. Thanksgiving adds power and boldness to making requests of God (Philippians 4:6).

How Should You Give Thanks?

As you strive to grow in the ability to give thanks to God, there are some basics that you need to keep in mind. First, you must strive to give thanks **continuously**. This is the desire of God as revealed in the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20). **Are we always to be receiving and never returning thanks?** Since God is continuously blessing you, you must be striving continuously to thank Him and to bless Him. You can do this by offering spontaneous offerings of thanks throughout the day and by

having a time of thanks during your regular prayer times.

Another basic that you need to keep in mind is to give thanks **specifically**. When you give thanks to God you need to labor to be specific. God provides you with specific blessings. You need to be detailed when you give thanks to God. This helps you to remember God's past blessings. The more detailed you are, the better your remembrance of them. This will also help prevent your giving thanks to God from becoming a boring routine or a dead ritual. Giving thanks to God can be monotonous if you simply recall and announce your blessings in a general or vague way. Your giving of thanks needs to be a rehearsal of God's great mercy and work in your life than simply a roll call of what God has done. This is the great enemy of a lifestyle of giving thanks. In order to have a vibrant lifestyle of giving thanks, you need to be specific.

A final basic that you need to keep in mind is to give thanks **sincerely**. When you give thanks to God, it must be from the heart. Thanksgiving has to flow out of a heart filled with gratitude to God for what He has done. You need to be careful so that your giving of thanks to God does not become a dead routine. A person can go through the motions of giving thanks to God and it be a lifeless, empty ritual. You need to guard against this type of dead religious practice. Before and as you give thanks, focus on God's power, goodness, and faithfulness. Meditate on your helplessness and hopelessness apart from God. As you do this, it will give you a tool to battle against the allowing the giving of thanks from becoming a ritual rather than a delight. Thanksgiving which pleases God and which is accepted by Him is that which flows from a heart filled with gratitude to God. It is a sincere expression of thanks to God who is always good and faithful.

How Can You Develop An Attitude of Gratitude?

Throughout this article, I have emphasized the necessity of developing a lifestyle of giving thanks. Your goal should be to thank God on a continual basis. You should aim at the discipline of being able to give thanks to God all through the day and in all of the circumstances of life. Yet, this is not something that is natural to us. This is a goal that you must pursue. How can you develop this attitude of gratitude that will express thanks to God on a continual basis?

The first step that you must take in developing an attitude of gratitude is to seek the filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). This is an absolute necessity in developing a lifestyle of giving thanks. It is the Holy Spirit who creates in the believer the ability to give thanks in the varied circumstances of life. The Word of God states in **Ephesians 5:20**, "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Two verses earlier, Paul commands us to yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit so that He can control us. As you yield yourself to the Holy Spirit, He enables you to adopt a radically transformed attitude toward all things.

It is not our nature to give thanks to God. At best, we fail to remember God's goodness and faithfulness to bless. These things are often taken for granted by believers. Because of this we fail to give thanks to God. At worst, many of us tend to take the credit for the good things that come into our lives and blame someone else for the bad things. However, the Holy Spirit changes this. Using the Word of God, He works to overcome our short-sighted, distorted viewpoints by teaching us to see things from God's perspective. This means looking beyond the apparent to the real. It means looking beyond life's joys, beyond life's difficulties and struggles, to see God's glorious purpose for both the present and the future.

It is the Holy Spirit who enables you to do this. As you yield yourself to Him, He changes

your perspective on your circumstances. He enables you to keep God's perspective in mind through the circumstances of life. He also enables you to trust God's good purpose even when things seem to go wrong. He creates a spirit of thankfulness in the believer. You will never give thanks continually apart from being continually filled with the Holy Spirit. He is the One who can empower you to develop a lifestyle of giving thanks. This is why you must seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit on a daily basis.

Another step that you can take to develop an attitude of gratitude is to keep a catalog of God's blessings. You can either devote part of your journal to this or you could start a separate notebook to keep up with God's blessings in your life. Now, you may be thinking, "There is no way I could list all the blessings that God gives me. There are so many." On one hand, this is a very true statement. God's blessings flow into our lives moment by moment. They are innumerable. On the other hand, this can be a colossal copout. This could be an excuse for being lazy in giving thanks to God. I would challenge you to list at least five or ten blessings that God is giving you on a daily basis. Take a couple of minutes daily, or however you want to schedule it, to write down some specific blessings that God is giving you. You might want to consider doing this three or five days a week. Whenever you do this, your list needs to contain specific blessings that God has given you during the day or night. This will help you to be specific in your giving of thanks to God. The reason that you should consider doing this is because it makes you sensitive to what God is doing in your life. It causes you to look and examine how God is blessing you. Our main problem concerning giving thanks to God is that we often take His blessings for granted. By disciplining yourself to keep a record of God's blessings, it puts you in a position to consider what God is doing and to become sensitive to His blessings. It will be of great help in developing a spirit of giving thanks to God. **Ask God to open your eyes to His faithfulness and goodness in your life!**