

LifeWay Family Bible Series for Nov. 21: Thanksgiving should be a regular occurrence_111504

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Thanksgiving should be a regular occurrence

Psalm 65:1-13

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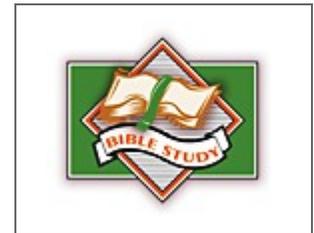
First Baptist Church, Lewisville

David wrote this thanksgiving psalm. Most likely, the Israelites would sing it when they gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths. This feast was a harvest festival.

After the harvest had been gathered, the Israelites would hold a great festival in Jerusalem. They would make booths out of branches and live in these booths seven days. These booths would remind them of their temporary shelters when they were traveling in the wilderness to Canaan. During these seven days, the Israelites would give special thanks to God for his goodness in rescuing them, giving them land and the good harvests from the land.

Psalm 65:1-4

The opening verses of this psalm establish a personal dimension of the people's relationship to God. God is the one who answers their prayers, forgives their sins and enjoys their worship. God does the same thing for us—he answers our prayers, forgives our sins and enjoys our worship. These three things alone should cause us to have a heart of gratitude for all God does for us.



Psalm 65:5-8

David wrote about the mighty power of God evident in nature. These verses celebrate the role of God as Creator. God did not merely create matter and put it in order; he established order out of chaos. God formed the mountains and quieted the raging oceans. The psalmist described these actions as the awesome deeds of God. The awe and wonder of God create a spirit of worship.

Psalm 65:9-13

The concluding verses of this psalm remind us God cares for the land by sending rain which produces an abundance of crops. David tells us the hills, meadows and valleys shout and sing to God for joy. It is God who provides all we have.

A grateful spirit

Psychologists tell us a grateful spirit is the healthiest of all human emotions because a spirit of gratitude produces more positive emotional energy than any other attitude in life. Gregg Easterbrook writes, "People who describe themselves as feeling grateful to others, and either to God or to creation, in general tend to have higher vitality and more optimism, suffer less stress and experience fewer episodes of clinical depression than the population as a whole." Thanksgiving enables us to have a proper perspective of ourselves and of God.

Practical ways to develop thanksgiving in our lives

One of the first things we can do to practice thanksgiving is to remember everything we have is from God. Everything we own or receive is ultimately from God, and we need to give him thanks. James 1:17 reads, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

Second, we need to eliminate the art of complaining in our lives. Complaining is the enemy of thanksgiving. It spreads discontent and discord, which causes us to take our eyes off of God. God's word tells us to do everything without complaining or arguing (Philippians 2:14).

Last, we need to be intentional, continually giving thanks to God. Thanksgiving must be a daily habit. My dad always tells our family we celebrate Christmas every day. I think we could put his saying into being thankful—we should celebrate thanksgiving every day. One practical way of incorporating thanksgiving into our lives is to keep a gratitude journal. In an experiment with college students, those who kept a "gratitude journal," a weekly record of things they should feel grateful for, achieved better physical health, were more optimistic, exercised more regularly, and described themselves as happier than a control group of students who kept no journals but had the same overall measures of health, optimism, and

exercise when the experiment began. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 encourages us to give thanks in all circumstances.

Robert Bruce describes the following incident: “While walking along a busy street one day, I heard someone singing. His sweet voice was distinguishable even above the noise of the traffic. When I located him, I noticed he had no legs and was pushing himself through the crowd in a wheelchair. Catching up with him I said, 'I want you to know, friend, that to hear singing from a person in your condition gives everyone a lift.' He answered with a grateful smile, 'When I stopped looking at what I had lost and began concentrating on all I had left, I found much for which I could rejoice and be happy.’”

May we do the same.

Discussion questions

- ◆ What are some personal ways you can live out a grateful spirit?
- ◆ How can you make this Thanksgiving more meaningful for you and your family?

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