

A Real Thanksgiving

We don't have to look hard to find an eternal priority to focus on this month – the grocery stores have turkeys and cranberries on sale, the ever-lasting “seasonal candy aisle” has rejected pumpkin wrappers for gobblers and leaves, and school kids are bringing home stories about the Mayflower.

We've dedicated a National holiday to giving thanks, but are we really that thankful? Are we sure of who to thank? Do we even know what to be thankful for?

I challenge you to go beyond turkey and football this year; I'm asking you to embark on a 16-day journey of thankfulness that will change your everyday practices to reflect your eternal priorities. I'm talking about going beyond just saying thank you for the stuff that we think is good and coming instead to the place where we live out thankfulness to our Lord in every situation of every day. I'm talking about the kind of thankfulness that only comes from knowing who we are and who our Lord is.

I'm asking you to give the Lord 30 minutes a day to do these lessons. When you consider the 1440 minutes He gives you each day, 30 isn't too much to ask. Sorry, but I'm praying for Him to convict you on this. I'm asking that He prick your heart with guilt if you pick up a newspaper or novel or turn on the TV between now and Thanksgiving without first giving Him 30 minutes. I'm praying that He will make you so miserable that you will have no choice but to give Him your time. If you're doing the lessons, I'm asking you to pray in agreement with me for all the people who have this lesson in their hands.

Let's get going! No more excuses. Let's prepare our hearts to give real thanks when November 27 arrives.

Yearning for a life - not just a holiday - of giving thanks,
Jennifer

16 Days of Thanksgiving (Part One)

Grab your notebook and Bible and get ready to explore. **Don't rush through!** Take your time to wander through the scripture and let God speak to you.

But First...

1. What did you learn or apply from the last lesson?

If you didn't do the lesson, you can print it at

http://www.hopeinthelord.org/Downloadable_PDF_Bible_Study_Files.html

In the last lesson (question 5) you were asked:

- a. Do you believe serving others is an eternal priority?
- b. What do you need to change in your life so your everyday practices will reflect this eternal priority?
- c. Be ready in two weeks to record the adjustments you have made to live out this eternal priority.

Well, it's been two weeks; how are you doing? What changes have you made? Where do you still need to make adjustments? Pray, thanking God for your progress and asking for His future help.

Day 1 – Wednesday, Nov. 12

1. Pray, asking God to open your eyes and heart to His truth.
2. Let's start at the beginning. Read Genesis 1:1 – 2:3.
 - a. List all the things God created.
 - b. Note which things God called good.

- c. Next to each item, give a reason you are thankful for that creation of God.
- 3. Read Genesis 1:27. What does this passage make you thankful for?
- 4. Some people find these passages difficult to believe. Do you? Explain.
- 5a. Read Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 again, this time making a conscious choice to focus only on the word of God, believing it to be wholly true. Take time to imagine God's purpose and plans as He worked on His creation.
- b. What new thoughts do you have?
- 6. Write a prayer expressing praise to God and thankfulness for His creation.

Day 2 – Thursday, November 13

- 1. Pray, asking God to open your eyes and heart to His truth.
- 2. Read Psalm 8, written by King David.
 - a. What do you think might have prompted someone to write such glorious and wondrous praise?
 - b. How does your view of God compare to David's view?
- 3. a. What do you think David was thankful for?
- b. What has God done for you that would cause you to sing out like David?
- 4. Read verse 4.
 - a. What does that mean to you?
 - b. How does it make you thankful?
- 5. Write a prayer to God, first expressing your view of how awesome and glorious He is and then giving Him thanks based on verse 4.

Day 3 – Friday, November 14

- 1. Pray, asking God to open your eyes and heart to His truth.
- 2a. Read Psalm 139:1-16, written by King David.
In Psalm 8, David praised God's glory and wonder. Psalm 139 reflects how God focused His glory and wonder on His creation.
- b. List all the things you learn about yourself in this passage.
- 3a. Where can you hide from the Lord?
- b. How well does the Lord know you?
- c. What specific things does He know about you?
- 4. a. Based on verse 14, how can you describe yourself?
- b. Do you believe you are wonderful?
- 5. a. Does God make mistakes (see 2 Samuel 22:31)?
- b. Do you know that God made you specifically and intentionally and that you were not created by mistake? (*We make mistakes, but He covered that also – with Christ's blood. We'll learn more tomorrow. For more information, [email me](#) and ask for "What Matters Most."*)
- 6. Pour out your thanks to God for creating, knowing, and seeing you and your true beauty.

Day 4 – Saturday, November 15

1. Pray, asking God to open your eyes and heart to His truth.

2. As beautifully as God created us (see Day 3), there is still ugly in our closet that we sometimes wear. Read Galatians 5:16-25.

(I base these studies on the NIV, New International Version, but this particular passage really hits home in the NLT, New Living Translation. If you paste this link in your Internet browser, you will be able to see this passage in the NIV, NLT and The Message:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians%205:16-26;&version=31;51;65;>

a. From v. 19-21, what actions make us ugly?

b. What is the source of this ugliness (v. 19)?

c. From v. 22-23, what actions show the beauty God created in us?

d. What is the source of this beauty (v. 22)?

3a. From v. 24-25, what is the difference? What allows us to live in the beauty of God's Spirit rather than the ugly of our sinful nature?

b. What additional insight do you get from Romans 13:12-14?

4a. Thinking back over the time since you gave your life to Christ, how have you shed your sinful nature and clothed yourself with Christ?

b. What sins are you continuing in that you need to banish and flee from?

c. Read 2 Corinthians 10:5. What additional help does this give you to banish and flee from sin?

5. Based on today's passages:

a. Describe how you think a person living by the sinful nature would feel, think, and act.

b. Describe how you think a person living by the Spirit would feel, think, and act.

6. Write two prayers today:

a. First, confess to God where you are still living by the sinful nature and ask Him to help you banish and flee from that sin.

b. Second, thank God for the wide, expansive place He brings you when you live by the Spirit, clothe yourself in Christ, and take your thoughts captive, making them obedient to Christ. Thank Him that in all these things He is doing the work and providing the grace you need. Thank Him for "wooing you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction" (Job 36:16).

Day 5 – Sunday, November 16

1. Pray, asking God to open your eyes and heart to His truth.

2. Read Joshua 23:14.

List everything you learn about God in this verse.

3. Read Joshua 23:15-16.

a. Does this passage upset you? Explain.

b. What actions of God in this passage might we describe as "bad"?

c. What good results might come from these actions of God?

4. Read Joshua 23 in its entirety.

a) List:

1) The good God gave His people.

2) The instructions/commands God gave His people.

3) The consequences God gave for disobeying His commands.

b. Why is it necessary for parents to have rules and consequences for their children?

c. Why do you think God gave His people commands and consequences?

5. What is challenging or difficult for you in this passage?

6. Read Joshua 23 again, pausing to meditate on each sentence and listening for God's wisdom.
7. Write two prayers:
 - a. First, a prayer expressing all your questions, concerns, and doubt, and asking God for understanding.
 - b. Second, a prayer thanking God for what He does even though it is beyond our understanding and asking for peace and an ability to trust Him in that which we don't understand. Thank Him for being mightier and wiser than our understanding. Thank Him for caring enough to lead you to His best for you.

Day 6 – Monday, November 17

1. Pray, asking God to open your eyes and heart to His truth.
2. Read Nehemiah 9:16-21.
 - a. List the descriptions of Israel and their actions.
 - b. List the descriptions of God and His actions.
 - c. When we mess it all up and get it all wrong, why can we still be thankful?
- 3a. Where in your life have you become arrogant and stiff-necked - disobeying God's commands, refusing to listen to Him, and failing to remember the miracles He has performed for you?
 - b. According to v. 19, has the Lord abandoned you to your disobedience? Why not?
4. According to v. 20, what three things will the Lord give you?
- 5a. Based on Day 4, what is the result of the Lord's gift of His Spirit?
 - b. Have you accepted this gift?
- 6a. Based on John 6:30-40, what is the result of the Lord's gift of Manna?
 - b. Have you accepted this gift?
- 7a. Based on John 4:1-14, what is the result of the Lord's gift of water?
 - b. Have you accepted this gift?
8. Read Romans 6:1-4.
 - a. What do you learn about the results of truly accepting these gifts?
 - b. How does that relate to Day 4's lesson?
9. Read Acts 2:36-41.
 - a. Using a dictionary, define "repent."
 - b. Using a dictionary, define "regret."
 - c. What is the difference between repenting from your sins and regretting your sins?
 - d. Do you simply regret your sins, or have you truly repented from them? Do you feel sorrow and remorse for disobeying God, or do you regret the consequences you experienced? Do you truly want to turn from your sin, or just not get caught again?
- 10 Again, two prayers today:
 - a. First, ask God to help you understand the difference between repentance and regret. Ask Him to show you where you knowingly sin and abuse His grace.
 - b. Second, read Nehemiah 9:19-20 again, reflecting on the Lord's great compassion and 40-years of desert manna. Refocus on the knowledge that He has not abandoned you to your sin. Ponder the gracious miracle of His three gifts to you. Express your praise and thanks.

Day 7 – Tuesday, November 18

1. Pray, asking God to open your eyes and heart to His truth.
2. Read Psalm 16:1-11.
 - a. According to v. 2, where does all the good in our life come from?
 - b. Do you attribute the good in your life to the Lord, or other sources (your knowledge and skills, luck, coincidence, good fortune)?
3. What facts do you learn about God and what He does for you in this Psalm?
4. What is the psalmist (author of this Psalm) thankful for? Why is he thankful?
5. Read verses 5-6.
 - a. Are you thankful for your portion and your cup, or are you always looking at other people's portions and cups?
 - b. Do you feel your boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places?
5. Read verse 7.

What reason do *you* have to praise the Lord today?
6. Read verse 8.

Where do *you* put the Lord in *your* life?
- 7a. What is the path of life that saves you from the grave (v. 9-10)? See John 14:6.
 - b. Have you chosen the path of life that saves you from the grave; will you be filled with joy in His presence and experience eternal pleasures from His right hand?
 - c. If you have not accepted Christ as your Savior, [email me](#) and ask for "*What Matters Most*."
 - d. If you are saved by Christ's blood, read this Psalm again, knowing every word of it is true for you.
- 8a. Looking at your eternal portion and cup, and focusing on the eternal boundary lines, can you now read verses 5 and 6 with confidence and joy, knowing the Lord has a "delightful inheritance" for you?
9. End with a prayer of thanks to God for all you have, asking Him to show you the glories of the riches He has given you and to give you a full and satisfied heart for your portion and cup.



Good work!! You've made it through the first week. That's all the lessons for this week. The remainder of the lessons will be sent Tuesday, Nov. 18. You don't need to wait though; you can download the second set of lessons at http://www.hopeinthelord.org/Downloadable_PDF_Bible_Study_Files.html



My friend, I am so grateful for the opportunity to study God's Word with you. Every minute we spend with Him is a minute in which we only gain and never lose.

We may not understand His plans, but we will trust in them and be thankful for them.

Thankful for the storms and valleys as well as the sun and fun,
Jennifer