

Eph 5 vs 20-21 Give Thanks

"always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"

Thanksgiving "the act of giving thanks; or a prayer expressing gratitude"

How do we give thanks?

In the Old Testament, thanksgiving was fundamental in the life of God's people. The temple liturgy offered offerings of thanksgiving and praise and sang psalms regularly of thanksgiving to God. We see this in Psalm 100 **"Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the LORD Himself is God..."** In the New Testament, the word eucharist means thanksgiving,

As Christians should be thankful for everything! We receive everything with thanksgiving, because we know that we have nothing except what we have received from God. As John 3:27 says **"A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven."** God desires to give us good things. The goodness contained in All of God's provision was illustrated by Jesus in Matthew 7:7-11 saying **7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what person is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? 11 So if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"** God is going to give you good, gifts that perfectly satisfy the need! He is the Great I AM, the all-becoming One who is whatever is needed at the time. And all of His gifts are wonderful, because God knows how to give us exactly what we need. **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."** As it says in James 1:17.

The Bible is filled with commands to give thanks to God. I Chronicles 16:34--**Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!** Thanksgiving and praise always go together. We cannot adequately praise and worship God without also being thankful. Feeling and expressing appreciation is good for us. Like any wise father, God wants us to learn to be thankful for all the gifts He has given us. It is in our best interest to be reminded that everything we have is a gift from Him, so that we don't become complacent. 1 Thess 5:18 says, **"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."** We are to be thankful not only in pleasant situations, but in the circumstances we don't like. When we purpose to thank God regardless of what comes into our lives, we keep bitterness at bay. We cannot be both thankful and bitter at the same time. It's not that we are grateful for tragedy, but we can be thankful for who God is, even in the midst of tragedy. He sustains us and gives us strength to endure (James 1:12; 2 Corinthians 12:9). We thank Him for His promise that **"all things will work together for the good, to those who love God and are called according to His purpose"** (Romans 8:28). Even when we don't see the purpose, and find ourselves asking God "why?", God gives us the faith to know that even if we don't understand it now, someday we will. We can have thankful hearts toward God even when we do not feel thankful for the circumstance. Those whom God has brought from death to life should offer our bodies to him as instruments of righteousness. Rom 12:1-2 **Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.** Those whom God has saved from death and hell should be grateful, and give Him thanks by changing the way that we live from our old ways to living as a New Creation in Christ. Rom 6:13 **13 and do not go on presenting the parts of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your body's parts as instruments of righteousness for God. in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.**

As we pray and give thanks, it is that we, filled by the Spirit, should give thanks to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's because of Jesus that we have access to God the Father through Jesus atoning for our sins, and justifying us before God. And, so we pray to God the Father, always in Jesus' name, acknowledging that we owe all to what He has done for us on the cross. So, how do we give thanks, in faith to God the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus when we're not feeling it, or when we're struggling?

1. Look to God First--The most important thing we can do to uncover a Christian meaning in Thanksgiving is to look first to the Lord. God is the source of all things: life, land, and all that sustains us. When God chose to reveal his glory to little children rather than the wise and learned, Jesus also thanked him, saying, **"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do"** (Matthew 11:25-26). God is at the root of everything we experience.

2. Focus on Gratitude--Focusing on gratitude is another critical thing we can do to uncover a Christian meaning in Thanksgiving. When times are difficult and we experience illness, death, poverty, or oppression, sometimes it's hard to count our blessings. Thankfulness keeps our hearts in right relationship to the Giver of all good gifts. Giving thanks also reminds us of how much we do have. As the song says, "Count your many blessings; Name them one by one; and you will be surprised, just what the Lord has done." Counting our blessings gives us the opportunity to stop and consider what God has done for us, and give thanks.

3. Read Thanksgiving Stories in the Bible--Sometimes it can be helpful to read about the way God's people thanked God throughout history, even during times of trouble. For instance, Deuteronomy 26:1-19 describes the Israelites' first Thanksgiving in the Promised Land. The apostle Paul gave thanks to God in the middle of a storm, just before their shipwreck (Acts 27:35).

4. Sing Songs of Grace and Thanksgiving to God--The Bible tells us over and over how much God loves singing. Psalm 7:17 talks about how the psalmist will "sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High." Psalm 100:1-3 urges, **"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture."**

5. Pray --Giving thanks through prayer is so important. Prayer is intended to be conversation with God, not a list of requests. Part of that conversation should be understanding God's goodness and expressing gratitude for this. We're not owed anything by God. We don't deserve the blessings we experience. These are gifts. Thanking God helps us remember this. We can freely ask God for His divine help to meet needs, solve problems, work in our life, or someone else's., etc. Ephesians 6:18-- **Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,** 1 Timothy 2: 1-4--**First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**

²¹**and subject yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ.**

We submit to one another--the word literally means "to order oneself under" a leader" or to place oneself in humility under others, considering their needs as primary. Not an easy thing to do. As Spirit-filled believers, we are to submit to one another in the body of believers, caring about other's needs, as we care about our own.