

## 360 Degree Thanksgiving

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- 1 Thessalonians 5:18— *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*
- Ephesians 5:20 — *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

Someone said, “Thanksgiving is when millions of Americans get together to talk, laugh, eat, and go home again. It’s known as the four G’s of Thanksgiving: Gabble... Giggle... Gobble... and Git!”

Another noted, “Thanksgiving is one day when families all sit down to dinner at the exact same time: HALF-TIME.”

One grandmother said, “As our family was enjoying a delicious Thanksgiving dinner, my four-year-old granddaughter stopped chomping on her drumstick long enough to look at me, smile, and say, “Grandma, I really like this TURKEY ON THE COB.”

While I am not an advocate of psychology, I believe the psychologists got it right on this one: Hans Selye, who is considered “the father of stress studies,” said that sincere gratitude, thanksgiving, is the healthiest of all human emotions. Gratitude produces more positive emotional energy than any other attitude in life.

Thanksgiving draws people together. A thankful attitude will endear others to you and you to others.

We must be **exhorted to be thankful** because thanksgiving doesn’t come naturally. Our natural tendency is to be ungrateful. That is why children need to be taught to say “Please,” and “Thank you.”

This story bears out this truth: One man gave a young boy an orange. His mother prompted her son, "Now, George, what do you say?" The boy then handed the orange back to the man and said, "Peel it."

➡ Our text verses describe what I call “**360 Degree Thanksgiving.**” Everywhere you turn you should find something to be thankful for!

**I. Giving thanks IN everything.** 1 Thess. 5:18— *IN every thing give thanks.* In every situation... in every circumstance... in every place.

➡ Consider the ups and downs in the life of JOSEPH.

1. Things looked great for Joseph—The favorite son of Jacob. Daddy gave him a coat of many colors and God gave him a glorious dream. How thankful he must have been for God’s blessings!
2. But trouble was brewing: The multicolored coat and his dreams made his brothers jealous. They stripped Joseph of his coat and threw him in a pit to die to put an end to his dreams. Take back that thanksgiving prayer; nothing to be thankful for in the pit.
3. An unexpected blessing: Joseph is rescued by his big brother Judah. Joseph’s life is saved! Thanksgiving is again in order.
4. But wait... Joseph is sold to a company of Ishmaelite traders heading to Egypt. Joseph’s *“feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron”* (Ps. 105:18). His heart ached worse than his feet. His dream is over. Nothing to be thankful for now.
5. In Egypt Joseph was sold to Potiphar, a high muck-a-muck in Pharaoh’s entourage. ***“And the LORD was with Joseph...”*** (Gen. 39:2-3). Joseph is put in charge of Potiphar’s estate. Let us resume thanking God! God is good!
6. Whoa, hold the phone! Mrs. Potiphar makes seductive advances on Joseph. Joseph does the right thing—He runs! But what does he get for doing the right thing? He is falsely accused and thrown in the slammer.  
 So much for the Lord being with Joseph. Maybe the Jews complaint to the prophet Malachi is somewhat true — *“It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance?”* (Mal. 3:14). Joseph is in prison, and that’s BAD!
7. *No, that’s good.* God brings Joseph into the favor of the keeper of the prison. It isn’t long before Joseph is practically running the joint. Wow! Let’s thank the Lord for the promotion.
8. Not so fast... After Joseph interprets a dream for the king’s baker, the baker promises to put in a good word for Joseph. But you know how it is when you’re back on the outside. The baker forgets for *“two whole years”* (Gen. 41:1). Joseph does not get to collect his “get-out-of-jail-free” card. What shall we call this—be-

trayal #3? Disappointment #13? Joseph called it "count me out for thanksgiving dinner."

9. FREE AT LAST! The king has a dream and needs an interpreter. The baker says, "Oops." Joseph is the only man in town who can enlighten Pharaoh on about his dream. Joseph ends up second in command of all Egypt! Let's thank God—Things are looking up.

➔ DO YOU SEE A PATTERN HERE?

- #1 MORAL of the story: You might as well be **pro-active** in thanking God in everything—Good and “bad,” because the bad things in life keep turning for your good. God knows best.
- #2 MORAL - **Troubles are temporary !**

The Scottish minister Alexander Whyte was known for his uplifting prayers in the pulpit. He always found something to be thankful for. One Sunday morning, the weather was dark and stormy. One of the deacons said, "The preacher won't be able to thank God for anything on a day like this. It's absolutely miserable outside!" But to his surprise, Whyte began the service by praying, "We thank thee, O God, that it is not always like this."

➔ Remember when storms of life come, it will not always like this! There are far more days without storms than with them!

## II. Giving thanks **FOR** everything.

➔ Ephesians 5:20 — ***Giving thanks always FOR ALL THINGS unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;***

### A. Thankful for **the BLESSINGS of Life.**

How many of you ladies stand before a kitchen sink stacked high with dirty dishes and say, "Thank You Lord for all these dirty dishes! You are so good to me!" Probably not many. But you should. Why? Because a sink full of dirty dishes usually means that we have been blessed by God with plenty of food to eat! [The same could be said about a pile of dirty laundry, taking out the garbage, or having a flat tire on your car!]

➡ Don't worry about what you lack—Thank God for what you have. Do you realize two-thirds of the world will go to bed hungry tonight?

- "If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the six million who will not survive the week.
- If you have never experienced the danger of warfare... the loneliness of imprisonment... the agony of torture... or the pangs of starvation, you are better off than 500 million people in the world.
- If you can attend a church service without fear of persecution, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than 3 billion people in the world.
- If you have food in the fridge, clothes on your back, and a roof over your head, you are richer than 75% of the world.
- If you have money in the bank, money in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy."

➡ Never forget how much God has blessed you. And that **things could always be worse.**

## B. Thankful for **the BURDENS of Life.**

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A young Hindu named Sadhu Sundar became a Christian and was called to be a missionary to India. Late one afternoon Sadhu was traveling on foot through the Himalayas with a Buddhist monk. It was bitterly cold and night was approaching. The monk warned they were in danger of freezing to death if they did not reach the monastery before darkness fell.

As they traveled along a narrow path above a steep embankment, they heard a cry for help. Down the embankment lay a man, fallen and badly hurt. The monk told Sadhu, "Do not stop. The universe has brought this man to his fate. Let us hurry on before we also perish."

But Sadhu answered, "God has sent me here to minister. I cannot abandon this man."

The monk continued down the path leaving Sadhu behind to help the fallen man. Sadhu climbed down the embankment. The man's leg was broken and he could not walk. Sadhu took his blanket and made a sling. He tied the man on his back and struggled back up to the pathway.

With the heavy burden on his back, he made his way through the deepening snow. It became dark and he could barely see the path. But, He drudged on faint with fatigue.

Finally he saw the lights of the monastery ahead. Just then he stumbled in the darkness over something in the snow. It was the body of the monk, frozen to death.

Years later Sadhu was asked, "What do you consider to be life's most difficult task?" Without hesitation Sadhu answered: "To live with no burden to carry."

➡ Many of our burdens are BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE.

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As most of you know, Michael J. Fox, star of the "Back to the Future" movies, has Parkinson's disease. He posed this question in his biography: "If you made a deal with God that he would take away my Parkinson's disease and cancel out the last ten years of my life, I would tell you to take a hike. My life is so good now. I'm helping a lot of people cope with the stigma of this disease. And it makes me appreciate life as a precious gift."

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### III. Giving thanks **WITH** everything.

➡ Whatever you do, with everything you have, give thanks to God.

Col. 3:17—*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

➡ Somethings that accompanied thanksgiving in the Scriptures.

#### A. With our **SUBSTANCE**.

- Leviticus 7:12 (regarding the "peace offering")— *"...he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mingled with oil..."*
- Jonah 2:9— *I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed.*

B. With our **SONGS**.

- Psalms 69:30— *I will praise the name of God **with a song**, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.*

C. With our **SHOUTING**. Ezra 3:11— *And **all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD...***

D. With your **SERVICE**.

- 2 Chronicles 31:2— *And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites... every man **according to his service ... to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the LORD.***
- 2 Chronicles 5:13— *...as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in **praising and thanking the LORD... with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD...***

➡ Pull out all the stops and give God thanks WITH EVERYTHING YOU'VE