

THANKSGIVING

November 2023

The Thanksgiving holiday affords us the opportunity to engage in one of the healthiest human behaviors – the giving of thanks. Thankful people are in some ways mentally, emotionally, and relationally healthier than their unthankful counterparts.

Understanding Thanksgiving

Gratitude journaling and thankful meditations are both excellent ways to exercise thankfulness. Why does the simple act of giving thanks have so much human benefit? The answer perhaps lies in its architecture. The mental, emotional, and relational health we receive from giving thanks is because a deeper orientation is achieved. An orientation very much “in step” with God’s architecture for the human being.

To unearth this deeper architecture, we will start with understanding thanksgiving as the outward expression of an inward character. Gratitude is an orientation we have with others, our circumstances, and God. It can be better understood in contrast with its opposite – entitlement. Entitlement, like gratitude, is a posture we have with this world. Entitlement has itself at the center of the world’s order - all things being owed. Gratitude on the other hand sees itself as the beneficiary of this world and is deeply indebted. Entitlement does not see favors because all things are deserved. Rather, gratitude sees all benefits as favors. Gratitude can detect what entitlement cannot – grace. Undeserved favor. In fact, gratitude is fueled by grace. The world owes them nothing. Everywhere they turn, all advantages are understood to be a gift. So, we see that thanksgiving springs from gratitude which is fueled by grace.

The Foundation for Thanksgiving

There is a human attribute that this architecture rests on. That foundation is humility. The humble human receives grace. Grace fuels gratitude, and gratitude elicits thankful expression. This is the architecture of thanksgiving. This is why the Thanksgiving holiday is largely beloved by everyone. There is a purity, an authenticity, an honesty that permeates the holiday because the expression of thanksgiving orders us with the world and each other as we ought to be ordered. As God created us to be oriented.

1st - We are beings with needs.

2nd - Needs are met outside of us and based on grace.

3rd - This continual consumption of grace puts us in a continual disposition of gratitude.

4th - In opportune times, this gratitude bubbles forth into the expression of thanksgiving.

Thus, to become more thankful, it would be an advantage for a person to spend time in the foundational elements of the thanksgiving architecture. Paul uses thoughtful questions to generate humility and detect grace in *1 Cor 4:7* “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” Paul provokes our thinking by asking us how we are different from others. Does that difference lie in our own efforts or was it a means of grace? Consider a few prompts below to detect the existence of grace in your own life:

- What makes you different than another of God’s creation who is under the tyranny of an oppressive government? Are your conditions self-created?
- What makes you different than another of God’s creation who is an addict or making poor choices on the streets? If life circumstances were different, might you have made poor life choices?
- What makes you different than another of God’s creation who is without work, discouraged and without motivation? Is your success self-made? Is your financial situation made possible by circumstances outside of your control?

While we “sow what we reap” and our choices matter, we must also acknowledge that most of our blessings come by way of grace, and not effort. If you can put your finger on what you have received, and the manner that you’ve received it, you will have put your finger on grace. A favor from the outside...undeserved. This will fuel gratitude. Moreover, that gratitude will be a continual reality. A character quality that shapes your life.

The Christian Posture of Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving can be employed, with human benefit, to the believer and the non-believer alike. However, the Christian will find thanksgiving knit into his or her being as a son or daughter of God. This is because the Christian has taken advantage of the surpassing grace that God has blanketed over mankind. A salvation that lies outside of us and comes to us through the gift of Christ. The Christian’s heartbeat beats with the heartbeat of thanksgiving. It is the heartbeat that follows the pattern of humility, grace, gratitude, and thanksgiving.

Practice Thanksgiving

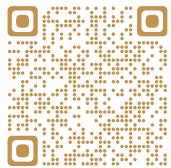
In conclusion, consider adding a rhythm of daily thanksgiving for our need for grace and the reception of it. It can be as structured as journaling or as familiar as the simple act of breathing. Take in a deep breath... let it out slowly... now hold the exhale until you feel your body burn. Listen to your body cry out for a savior outside of yourself. Can you sustain your life? Will it require a gift outside of yourself that you cannot create or provide? Now bring in a saving breath and rejoice in the life your body receives. Go on today - breathing in grace and giving thanks.

RESOURCES

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**ACCFS offers 12
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Check out the ACCFS website for more information regarding courses and to enroll in a course today.

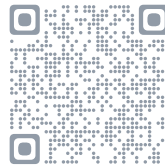
- Basic Counseling Skills
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- Emotional Intelligence
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- Healing from Sexual Betrayal
- Identity
- Lessons on Grief
- Sexual Integrity 1.2.3.
- Spiritual Formation
- Telling Myself the Truth
- Way of Purity

Thank you!

Your continued support of our ministry enables us to provide *help, hope, and growth* to others. **Thank you** for blessing us with your ongoing prayers & funding.

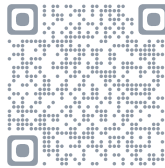


UPCOMING EVENTS



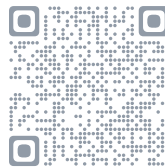
Cultivating Connections Marriage Conference

ACCFS hosts Cultivating Connections Marriage Conferences annually to help strengthen marriage relationships. **Registration is now open** for the 2024 Marriage Conference held on February 2nd & 3rd, 2024 in Rittman, Ohio.



Abide Discipleship Training

The Abide Discipleship Training is May 11-31, 2024 in Peachtree City, GA. **Registration opens in December.**

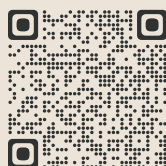


Discipleship Conference

Discipleship is a call of the church. Our annual Discipleship Conferences are intended to equip, encourage, and challenge those in the local church who are embarking in the call of discipleship. Our next Discipleship Conference will be April 20th, 2024 in Tremont, IL.



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