



Prayer Changes Things

Be Thankful!

Thanksgiving Day is a beautiful time to call to mind some of the blessings for which we are to be grateful. As we gather with loved ones, whom we may not have seen for an extended period, it is quite natural to reminisce about the past. In relating stories about such things as family gatherings, vacations, funny experiences when growing up, and other stirring memories, we want to be thankful to God for these many blessings in our lives.

It is important to remember that Thanksgiving is not the only day that we are to be grateful. We are encouraged in Scripture, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thess 5:18) We are to be thankful even in difficulties, which can be tough, especially for people who are in constant pain, have recently lost a loved one, been diagnosed with cancer, lost a job, have children who left the practice of the Faith, or experience other struggles.

God must have a good reason for calling us to actually “give thanks in all circumstances.” One thing that we all notice in the people around us is that those who cultivate the habit of thankfulness in their hearts, experience true Christian joy. And isn’t this something that we desire?

One of my brothers related to me a situation in his life that follows this Biblical principle. At a certain point, my brother was going through a very difficult time in his life, in which he was experiencing

discouragement and sadness and he felt like he was sinking in a pit. He turned to prayer and this idea came to him—Go back over your life and make a list of anything for which you can be thankful. As he wrote down everything that he could think of, and then went back over it slowly, there was a shift in his attitude. He found himself being raised up out of the pit of discouragement, into a place where he started thinking; life is not so bad after all. And “this too shall pass.” This simple exercise caused a change in which his spirit lifted, opening him to receive encouragement and interior joy through the grace of God.

St. Paul instructs us with this very idea: “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.” (Phil 4:8) My brother did this very thing in a practical way.

There is an important distinction to be made: Thinking about or making a list of things for which we are thankful to God isn’t some sort of self-help technique or “happy talk” or simply being a “Pollyanna” and acting like everything is wonderful, when in fact we are hurting terribly. As we follow the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit becomes involved in a powerful way, stirring us to move forward, moving us from discouragement and sadness to a realistic peace and joy and a place of inspiration, with a

renewed sense for doing good things for others.

During this season of Thanksgiving, let us become more aware, throughout each day, of the things for which we can be thankful, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. Make a mental note, or make an actual list if possible, and then turn to God and thank Him. Or make a resolution to thank God for 3 things every night.

We have every reason to be thankful. Jesus gave His life for us, experiencing the worst possible pain on the Cross, so that we can have eternal life with Him forever. And the Cross is in the shape of the letter “t” which reminds us of the word “thanksgiving.”

Let us also consider being more thankful to others. The more we hear “thank you” come from our mouth, the more we notice what people are doing for us and it can help to shift an attitude of discouragement as well. This Thanksgiving, consider a person in your family you need to verbally thank for something specific; or thank a family member for who they are and what they mean to you. Growing in the habit of being thankful to God and others is well worth the effort.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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