

# Connect 7

# Daily Devotions



Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;  
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

(Thanksgiving is not just one day a year)





Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

(**Thanksgiving is not just one day a year!**)

Thanksgiving is watching the Macy's Christmas Parade; getting together with family; eating turkey and all the fixings; watching football; and perhaps giving thanks to the one who provided everything. But is that all? North Americans have been blessed with an overabundance of material blessings and religious freedoms. Yet all too often we only spend one day, or just a fraction of a day, out of 365 being thankful. Shouldn't we be thankful 365 days a year? During the month of November we will explore how we can be thankful every day and better manage the gifts God has given us. It is good to give thanks to the Lord!

## **November 10**

**Theme:** *Thankful for the Gift of Light*, Mark 10:51

**Readings:** Isaiah 42:1-7, Mark 10:46-52

## **November 17**

**Theme:** *Thankful for the Gift of Creation*, Genesis 2:5-15

**Readings:** Romans 8:19-23, Matthew 25:14-30

## **November 24**

**Theme:** *Thankful Giving*, Malachi 3:8-10

**Readings:** James 1:16-17, Matthew 6:19-21

## **Thanksgiving Eve & Day Special Worship Services**

Theme: *Thanksgiving 365 in all Circumstances*, Philippians 4:10-20

Wednesday at 7:00 pm

Thursday at 10:00 am

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**Connecting to Worship: November 10**

**Theme:** *Thankful for the Gift of Light*, Mark 10:51 And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And the blind man said to him, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight.”

**Readings:** Isaiah 42:1-7, Mark 10:46-52

## Monday, November 4

### ***Bringing Light into Darkness***

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

In 1989, Vaclav Havel was elevated from his position as a political prisoner to become the first elected president of Czechoslovakia. Years later at his funeral in Prague in 2011, former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who herself was born in Prague, described him as one who had “brought the light to places of deep darkness.”

What Havel’s introduction of light did in the political arena of Czechoslovakia (and later the Czech Republic), our Lord Jesus did for the whole world. He brought light into existence when He created light out of darkness at the dawn of time (John 1:2–3; cf. Gen 1:2–3). Then, with His birth, He brought light to the spiritual arena. Jesus is the life and light that darkness cannot overcome (John 1:5). John the Baptist came from the wilderness to bear witness to Jesus, the light of the world. We can do the same today. In fact that is what Jesus told us to do: “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). In our world today—when good is often considered bad and bad is seen as good, when truth and error are switched around—people are looking for direction in life. May we be the ones who shine the light of Christ into our world.

*Father in heaven, thank You for the light of Jesus that came into the world and for the light He has brought into my life. Help me to remain grateful and to be Your light in the dark world around me.*

## Tuesday, November 5

### ***Go Light Your World***

*“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,”  
says the Lord of hosts.*

Do you feel as if you’re burning out in your service for God? You may want to supply spiritual light to your dark world till the end of your life, but you wonder if you can. You won’t burn out if you understand and apply the truth of Zechariah 4:1-6. The prophet saw two olive trees that supplied oil to a bowl that fed seven lamps on a golden lampstand. As we think about the reality behind this symbolism, we can be encouraged. You and I are not the source of light that enlightens the world. We can only receive the oil of the Holy Spirit that fuels the living flame He produces. If we burn steadily through the long, dark hours, it is because we have learned to yield our lives to the Spirit’s unlimited supply of power and strength. This comes only through continual fellowship with Jesus our Savior. It needs to be said again and again: It’s not what we do for the Lord, but what He does through us that enlightens and enriches others. We must be satisfied to be a bright and shining lamp, drawing from the hidden resources of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Our role is to help others see the glory of His light. And we must remember daily that every demand placed upon us is a demand placed upon Him.

*Help me, dear Lord, to be honest and true  
In all that I say and all that I do;  
Give me the courage to do what is right,  
To bring to the world a glimpse of Your light. —  
Fasick*

*Let your light shine—whether you're a candle  
in a corner or a lighthouse on a hill.*

## Wednesday, November 6

### ***A Great Light***

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.* —Isaiah 9:2

I was driving through the mountains of western Maryland on a cold December night. As I topped a ridge near Rocky Gap State Park, a brilliant sea of lights caught my attention. *What in the world is that?* I wondered as the exit road flashed past. It so aroused my curiosity that 5 miles down the interstate I turned around and drove back to see what it was—a local community's celebration in lights during the Christmas season. At noon, I wouldn't have noticed anything. But at night, the dazzling display couldn't be ignored.

Strange, isn't it, that we complain about the moral and spiritual darkness of our world, yet it is the perfect setting for the radiance of the Lord Jesus Christ. At Christmas, we often read these prophetic words: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined" (Isaiah 9:2).

Jesus said of Himself: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and to His disciples, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14).

In a dark world, people don't see a great light without wondering why it's there and what it means. We get to tell them.

**O Holy One of glorious birth  
Who lives within our heart,  
May we to all men everywhere  
Your wondrous love impart.** —Brandt

*To lead others out of the darkness, let them see your light.*

*You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.* — Ephesians 5:8

A friend of mine has the opportunity each winter to attend the Super Bowl as a journalist. His job is to garner interviews with Christian athletes and National Football League personnel for a faith-based radio program.

When he first started covering the big game a few years ago, he grew disillusioned with the self-serving, pleasure-seeking atmosphere during Super Bowl week. "I found it to be a very dark place," he says.

One day he told a former NFL player, a Christian, how he was feeling. The athlete looked at my friend and said, "Brother, you are being light in this dark place." That comment reminded my friend why he was there, and it helped renew his excitement for serving God in a place where the light of the gospel is needed. It spurred him to shine his light.

Perhaps you work in a setting where God is not acknowledged, faith is mocked, and godless living is applauded. Maybe you feel that you are going into "a very dark place."

Why not be a light (Eph. 5:8)—through your smiles, kind words and deeds, and diligent work. Ask God to bring opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ. You may be the only light a co-worker sees today.

God put us in this darkened world To shine as sons of light; So, help us, Lord, to spread Your Word And keep our witness bright. —D. De Haan

**Our witness for Christ is a light in a dark world.**

**Thursday, November 7  
Be the Light!**

**Friday, November 8  
Shine Through**

Let your light shine before others. Matthew 5:16

A little girl wondered what a saint might be. One day her mother took her to a great cathedral to see the gorgeous stained-glass windows with scenes from the Bible. When she saw the beauty of it all she cried out loud, "Now I know what saints are. They are people who let the light shine through!"

Some of us might think that saints are people of the past who lived perfect lives and did Jesus-like miracles. But when a translation of Scripture uses the word *saint*, it is actually referring to anyone who belongs to God through faith in Christ. In other words, saints are people like us who have the high calling of serving God while reflecting our relationship with Him wherever we are and in whatever we do. That is why the apostle Paul prayed that the eyes and understanding of his readers would be opened to think of themselves as the treasured inheritance of Christ and saints of God (Eph. 1:18).

So what then do we see in the mirror? No halos or stained glass. But if we are fulfilling our calling, we will look like people who, maybe even without realizing it, are letting the rich colors of the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control of God shine through.

**Lord, You are the light of the world. Thank You for wanting to shine that light in our lives. Cleanse me today so that I may let Your light shine through.**

*Saints are people through whom God's light shines.*

**Theme:** *Thankful for the Gift of Light*, Mark 10:51  
And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight."

**Readings:** Isaiah 42:1-7, Mark 10:46-52

**Connecting to Worship, November 10**

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## Connecting to Worship: November 17

**Theme:** *Thankful for the Gift of Creation*, Genesis 2:5-15<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

**Readings:** Romans 8:19-23, Matthew 25:14-30

### Monday, November 11

#### *Investing in the Future*

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. — Matthew 6:20

Jason Bohn was a college student when he made a hole-in-one golf shot that won him a million dollars. While others may have squandered that money, Bohn had a plan. Wanting to be a pro golfer, he used the money as a living-and-training fund to improve his golf skills. The cash became an investment in his future—an investment that paid off when Bohn won the PGA Tour's 2005 B.C. Open. Bohn's decision to invest in the future instead of living for the moment was a wise one indeed.

In a sense, that is what Jesus calls us to do. We have been entrusted with resources—time, ability, opportunity—and we decide how to use them. Our challenge is to see those resources as an opportunity to invest long-term. “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,” is how Jesus put it in Matthew 6:20. Those protected treasures cannot be destroyed nor taken away, Jesus assures us. Think of your resources: talent, time, knowledge. These are temporal and limited. But if you invest them with an eye toward eternity, these temporary things can have enduring impact. What is your focus? Now or forever? Invest in the future. It will not only have an eternal impact, but it will also change the way you view life each day.

**Whatever is done in love for Christ Will one day have heaven's reward; Today let's do what we can for Him, Our loving Savior and Lord.** —Hess

*The richest people on earth are those who invest their lives in heaven.*

### Tuesday, November 12

#### *Creation Care*

The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to mankind. Psalm 115:16

The “big browns” are spawning in the Owyhee River—brown trout beginning their fall nesting ritual. You can see them excavating their nests in the gravelly shallows.

Wise fishermen know that fish are spawning and try not to disturb them. They avoid walking on gravel bars where they might trample the eggs, or wading upstream from the nests where they might dislodge debris that can smother them. And they don't fish for these trout, though it's tempting to do so as they rest near their nests.

These precautions are part of an ethic that governs responsible fishing. But there is a deeper and a better cause.

The Scriptures stress the fact that God has given us the earth (Gen. 1:28–30). It is ours to use, but we must use it as those who love it.

I muse on the work of God's hands: a partridge calling across a canyon, a bull elk bugling up a fight, a herd of antelope far off in the distance, a brook trout and its kaleidoscopic rose moles, a mother otter playing in a stream with her pups—I love all these things, for they have been given to me for my delight, out of my Father's great love.

And what I love, I protect.

**Heavenly Father, You have put us here to enjoy and ponder Your marvelous creation. May everything You have made remind us of Your goodness, love, and care.**

## **Wednesday, November 13**

### ***Remembering My Father***

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord. Colossians 3:23

When I remember my dad, I picture him best outdoors hammering or gardening or downstairs working in his cluttered workroom, stuffed with fascinating tools and gadgets. His hands were always busy at a task or project—sometimes building (a garage or a deck or a birdhouse), sometimes locksmithing, and sometimes designing jewelry and stained-glass art.

Remembering my dad prompts me to think of my heavenly Father and Creator, who has always been busy at work. In the beginning, “[God] laid the earth’s foundations . . . [and] marked off its dimensions . . . while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy” (Job 38:4–7). Everything He created was a work of art, a masterpiece. He designed a breathtakingly beautiful world and pronounced it “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

That includes you and me. God designed us in intimate and intricate detail (Psalm 139:13–16); and He entrusted us with and instilled in us (His image bearers) the goal and desire to work, which includes ruling and caring for the Earth and its creatures (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:15). No matter the work we do—in our job or in our leisure—God empowers and gives us what we need to work wholeheartedly for Him.

In everything we do, may we do it to please Him.

What has God worked out in your life recently? How does it change your view of even mundane tasks to see them as opportunities to serve and honor Him?

## **Thursday, November 14**

### ***Creator and Sustainer***

The Son is the radiance of God’s glory . . . sustaining all things by his powerful word.  
Hebrews 1:3

Working with a magnifying glass and tweezers, Swiss watchmaker Phillipre meticulously explained to me how he takes apart, cleans, and reassembles the tiny parts of specialty mechanical watches. Looking at all the intricate pieces, Phillipre showed me the essential component of the timepiece, the mainspring. The mainspring is the component that moves all the gears to allow the watch to keep time. Without it, even the most expertly designed watch will not function.

In a beautiful New Testament passage found in the book of Hebrews, the writer eloquently praises Jesus for being the one through whom God created the heavens and the earth. Like the intricacy of a specialty watch, every detail of our universe was created by Jesus (Hebrews 1:2). From the vastness of the solar system to the uniqueness of our fingerprints, all things were made by Him.

But more than the Creator, Jesus, like a clock’s mainspring, is essential for the function and flourishing of creation. His presence continually “[sustains] all things by his powerful word” (v. 3), keeping all that He has created working together in all its amazing complexity.

As you have opportunity to experience the beauty of creation today, remember that “in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17). May the recognition of Jesus’s central role in both creating and sustaining the universe result in a joyful heart and a response of praise as we acknowledge His ongoing provision for us.

What in God’s creation has caused you to worship Him? Why? Jesus, thank You for the ways You care for and sustain Your creation.

**Friday, November 15**

### ***Her Father's Zoo***

The righteous care for the needs of their animals,  
but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.

Proverbs 12:10

June Williams was only 4 when her father bought 7 acres of land to build a zoo without bars or cages. Growing up she remembers how creative her father was in trying to help wild animals feel free in confinement. Today Chester Zoo is one of England's most popular wildlife attractions. Home to 11,000 animals on 110 acres of land, the zoo reflects her father's concern for animal welfare, education, and conservation.

Solomon had a similar interest in all creatures great and small. In addition to studying the wildlife of the Middle East, he imported exotic animals like apes and monkeys from far-off lands (1 Kings 10:22). But one of his proverbs shows us that Solomon's knowledge of nature went beyond intellectual curiosity. When he expressed the spiritual implications of how we treat our animals, he mirrored something of the heart of our Creator: "The righteous care for the needs of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel" (Prov. 12:10).

With God-given wisdom, Solomon saw that our relationship to our Creator affects not only how we treat people but also how much thoughtful consideration we give to the creatures in our care.

**Father in heaven, when we think about the wonder and diversity of Your animal kingdom, please help us not only to worship You, but to care for what You've entrusted to us.**

*God is the real Owner of all of us.*

### **Connecting to Worship: November 17**

**Theme:** *Thankful for the Gift of Creation*, Genesis 2:5-15 <sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

**Readings:** Romans 8:19-23, Matthew 25:14-30

## Connecting to Worship: November 24

**Theme:** *Thankful Giving*, Malachi 3:8-10<sup>8</sup> Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions.<sup>9</sup> You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.<sup>10</sup> Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

**Readings:** James 1:16-17, Matthew 6:19-21

### Monday, November 18

#### *The Joy of Giving*

Encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 1 Thessalonians 5:14

It was a dreary week. I had been feeling lethargic and listless, although I couldn't figure out why. Near the end of the week, I found out that an aunt had kidney failure. I knew I had to visit her—but to be honest, I felt like postponing the visit. Still, I made my way to her place, where we had dinner, chatted, and prayed together. An hour later, I left her home feeling upbeat for the first time in days. Focusing on someone else rather than myself had somehow improved my mood. Psychologists have found that the act of giving can produce satisfaction, which comes when the giver sees the recipient's gratitude. Some experts even believe that humans are wired to be generous! Perhaps that's why Paul, when encouraging the church in Thessalonica to build up their faith community, urged them to "help the weak" (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Earlier, he had also cited Jesus's words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). While this was said in the context of giving financially, it applies as well to the giving of time and effort. When we give, we get an insight into how God feels. We understand why He's so delighted to give us His love, and we share in His joy and the satisfaction of blessing others. I think I'll be visiting my aunt again soon.

**Father, You have made me to give to others just as You have given to me. Teach me to give so that I can truly reflect Your character and be more like You today.**

*The giver is the greatest recipient.*

### Tuesday, November 19

#### *Cheerful Giving*

Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. —2 Corinthians 9:7

During World War II this slogan was often heard: "Give until it hurts." Now, that may be all right for the world, but certainly it is not a proper slogan for the Christian who wants to be all that he should be for the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have given to the Lord and it still hurts, my friend, then you have not yet given enough. Our motto must always be, according to Scripture, "Give until it feels good." If it hurts for you to give to Him who gave His all for you, it's a foregone conclusion that you haven't yet given all you should. God doesn't ask you to give for His sake so much as for your own sake. God, after all, doesn't need your gifts. He wants you to give for your own benefit, because "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Our Lord certainly has no need for our gifts, for as Paul said in Acts 17:24-25, "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things." It is for our benefit, then, that He wants us to share the joy of giving. Do you have that joy?

*We give Thee but Thine own,  
Whate'er the gift may be:  
All that we have is Thine alone,  
A trust, O Lord, from Thee. —How*

**Instead of giving till it hurts, keep giving till it feels good.**

## **Wednesday, November 20**

### **Fearless Giving**

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. - Malachi 3:10

When my son Xavier was six years old, a friend brought her toddler to visit and Xavier wanted to give him a few toys. I delighted in our little giver's generosity, until he offered a stuffed animal my husband had searched several stores in different cities to find. Recognizing the high-demand toy, my friend tried to politely decline. Still, Xavier placed his gift into her son's hands and said, "My daddy gives me lots of toys to share."

Though I'd like to say Xavier learned his confident giving from me, I've often withheld my resources from God and others. But when I remember that my heavenly Father gives me everything I have and need, it's easier to share.

In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to trust Him by giving a portion of all He had supplied to the Levite priests, who would in turn help others in need. When the people refused, the prophet Malachi said they were robbing the Lord (Malachi 3:8–9). But if they gave willingly, showing they trusted the Lord's promised provision and protection (vv. 10–11), others would recognize them as God's blessed people (v. 12).

Whether we're managing our finances, our schedules, or the gifts God entrusted to us, giving can be an act of worship. Giving freely and fearlessly can show our confidence in the care of our loving Father—the ultimate generous Giver.

Lord, please help us live with full confidence in Your faithful provision, so we can give freely and fearlessly to You and others.

**Fearless giving to God and others reveals our trust in the Lord's promises and provision.**

## **Thursday, November 21**

### **A Reason For Giving**

Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. —2 Corinthians 8:9

I'm old enough to remember the Great Depression of the 1930s. For several years our family had no car, no plumbing, no electricity. But we had a house, a spring nearby, an outhouse, wood for fuel, adequate clothing, and enough food. Were we poor? Not by standards back then. We would be today, however, if we lived in that same area.

How much money does a person need to be considered rich? And how much money does a person have to give away to be considered generous? It's hard to say, isn't it? In fact, it may be impossible to give a specific answer to those two questions.

The apostle Paul did not set a percentage as a rule for giving, nor did he say that only the rich should give. Instead, he challenged the Corinthian Christians by telling them about the Macedonian believers who gave out of their "deep poverty" and "beyond their ability" because they "first gave themselves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:2–5). He reminded his readers of their Savior, the Lord Jesus, who exchanged the riches of heaven for poverty on earth so that they might be rich for all eternity.

Whether we consider ourselves rich or poor, our love for the Lord should provide us with all the reason we need to be generous in our giving.

*Incline our hearts toward giving  
That we may thus express  
To Thee, the great provider,  
Our love and thankfulness. —Fennema*

**Christ is our reason for living—and for giving.**

## **Friday, November 22**

### ***The Blessing of Giving***

*It is more blessed to give than to receive. — Acts 20:35*

It made no sense for a widow to donate her last few coins to a corrupt institution in Jerusalem, where scribes who were dependent on those gifts “devour[ed] widows’ houses” (Mark 12:40). But in that woman’s act, Jesus saw a moving display of the proper attitude toward money (vv.41-44).

Gordon Cosby, while serving as pastor of the Church of the Saviour in Washington, DC, tells of a widow whose income was barely adequate to feed and clothe her six children. Yet every week she faithfully placed \$4 in the offering plate. A deacon suggested that Cosby go to her and assure her that she could use the money instead for her family’s benefit.

Cosby followed the deacon’s advice—to his regret. “You are trying to take away the last thing that gives me dignity and meaning,” she said. She had learned a key to giving: It can benefit the giver more than the receiver. Yes, those in poverty need financial help. But the need to give may be as important as the need to receive.

The act of giving reminds us that we live by the grace of God—like the birds and the flowers. Those creations don’t worry about their future; neither should we. Giving offers us a way to express our confidence that God will care for us just as He cares for the sparrow and lily (Matt. 6:25-34).

*Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee,  
Repaid a thousand-fold will be;  
Then gladly will we give to Thee,  
Who givest all—who givest all. —Wordsworth*

We disarm the power of money by giving it away.

## **Connecting to Worship: November 24**

**Theme:** *Thankful Giving*, Malachi 3:8-10 <sup>8</sup>Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. <sup>9</sup>You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. <sup>10</sup>Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

**Readings:** James 1:16-17, Matthew 6:19-21

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## Connecting to Worship: November 27 & 28

**Theme:** *Thanksgiving 365 in all Circumstances*, Philippians 4:10-20 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

### Monday, November 25

#### *A New Tradition*

When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. —Luke 14:13

In the United States, Thanksgiving is traditionally a day of feasting with family. But changing circumstances may lead us to rethink our holiday traditions. It happened to Sharon Randall during a year in which her mother died, her father-in-law had to be moved to a rest home, and her husband was undergoing treatment for cancer. As the Thanksgiving holiday drew near, the Randall family decided it was time for a new approach. So instead of preparing a feast just for themselves, they invited people outside their family circle to join them. The next year they expanded the guest list even more. “If your family has changed and you need a new tradition,” says Sharon, “look around. You’re not alone. Invite someone to join you for Thanksgiving. Or volunteer to help serve at a church or shelter or community dinner.” Those are challenging words for every follower of Jesus Christ. Perhaps it’s time to start a new tradition for your next holiday feast by inviting people outside your usual circle, or by serving those in need. In Luke 14:12-14, Jesus said that when we include those who can’t repay us, we are blessed in a special way. Sharing the feast is Thanksgiving indeed!

*Just a "cup of cold water" was given in His name,*

*But the soul of the giver was never the same!*

*For he found that when giving was done with a zest,*  
*Both the heart of the giver and taker were blest.* —

*Anon.*

**Life takes on new meaning when we give ourselves to others.**

### Tuesday, November 26

#### *Be Filled With Thankfulness*

*Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*

— Hebrews 13:15

Throughout history, many cultures have set aside a time for expressing their thankfulness. In the US, Thanksgiving Day originated with the pilgrims. In the midst of extreme hardship, loss of loved ones, and meager supplies, they still believed they were blessed. They chose to celebrate God’s blessings by sharing a meal with Native Americans who had helped them survive. We know we’ve lost the spirit of that original celebration when we catch ourselves complaining that our Thanksgiving Day has been “spoiled” by bad weather, disappointing food, or a bad cold. It’s we who are spoiled—spoiled by the very blessings that should make every day a day of thanksgiving, whatever our circumstances. Billy Graham wrote, “Ingratitude is a sin, just as surely as is lying or stealing or immorality or any other sin condemned by the Bible.” He then quoted Romans 1:21, one of the Bible’s indictments against rebellious humanity. Then Dr. Graham added, “Nothing turns us into bitter, selfish, dissatisfied people more quickly than an ungrateful heart. And nothing will do more to restore contentment and the joy of our salvation than a true spirit of thankfulness.” Which condition describes you?

**A grumbling mood of discontent**

**Gives way to thankfulness**

**When we consider all God's gifts**

**And all that we possess.** —Sper

*Gratitude is a God-honoring attitude.*

## **Wednesday, November 27**

### **All About Gratitude**

*Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.* — Colossians 3:17

For centuries, people in many countries have held harvest festivals to celebrate the bounty of the land and the blessings of life. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln established a national holiday in the United States as “a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father.”

*Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen thinks that most holidays have been corrupted by commercialism, while Thanksgiving Day has retained its intended purpose. He said, “This is a very rare day. It is wholly and entirely about gratitude.”

No matter what others do, we as followers of Christ have the privilege and responsibility to extend the spirit of thankfulness to every day of the year. Paul urged the Colossians to keep growing in Christ while overflowing with thankfulness (Col. 2:6-7). We are to do everything “in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (3:17).

Abraham Lincoln’s proclamation also declared that all our blessings “are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.”

This is a fitting day to express gratitude to God. And so is tomorrow, and every day that follows.

**Worthy is God of our worship,  
Worthy is He of our praise,  
Magnify Him with thanksgiving,  
Gladly our voices we raise.** —Anon.

*The joy of living comes from a heart of thanksgiving.*

## **Thursday, November 28 (Thanksgiving Day)**

### **Game of Thanks**

Whatever you do, . . . do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. - Colossians 3:17

Every autumn we throw a scrumptious Thanksgiving feast on campus at Cornerstone University. Our students love it! Last year a group of students played a game at their table. They challenged each other to name something they were thankful for—in three seconds or less—without repeating what someone else had said. Anyone who hesitated was out of the game.

There are all kinds of things that students might gripe about—tests, deadlines, rules, and a host of other college-type complaints. But these students had chosen to be thankful. And my guess is that they all felt a lot better after the game than they would have if they had chosen to complain.

While there will always be things to complain about, if we look carefully there are always blessings to be thankful for. When Paul describes our newness in Christ, “thankfulness” is the only characteristic mentioned more than once. In fact it is mentioned three times. “Be thankful,” he says in Colossians 3:15. Sing to God “with gratitude in your hearts” (v. 16). And whatever you do, be sure to be “giving thanks to God the Father” (v. 17). Paul’s instruction to be thankful is astonishing when we consider that he wrote this letter from prison!

Today, let’s make the choice to have an attitude of thankfulness.

**Lord, teach me the liberating joy of being thankful!  
Help me to find the blessings that are locked up in  
the things I complain about and to regularly express  
my gratitude to You and others.**

*Choose the attitude of gratitude.*

## **Friday, November 29**

### **Thanks Journal**

Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. - Psalm 117:1

When I was a new believer in Jesus, a spiritual mentor encouraged me to keep a thanks journal. It was a little booklet I carried with me everywhere I went. Sometimes I would record a thanksgiving right away. Other times, I would pen it at the end of the week during a time of reflection.

Taking note of praise items is a good habit—one I'm considering re-establishing in my life. It would help me to be mindful of God's presence and grateful for His provision and care. In the shortest of all the psalms, Psalm 117, the writer encourages everyone to praise the Lord because "great is his love toward us" (v. 2). Think about it: How has the Lord shown His love toward you today, this week, this month, and this year? Don't just look for the spectacular. His love is seen in the ordinary, everyday circumstances of life. Then consider how He has shown His love toward your family, your church, and to others. Let your mind soak up the extent of His love for all of us.

The psalmist added that "the faithfulness of the Lord *endures forever*" (v. 2 emphasis added). In other words, He will continue to love us! So we will continue to have many things to praise God for in the coming days. As His dearly loved children, may praising and thanking God characterize our lives!

**Father, if we were to record all of Your blessings, we could not complete the task in a lifetime. But we can pause this moment to say a simple "Thank You" for Your faithfulness and goodness.**

## **Connecting to Worship: November 28**

**Theme:** *Thanksgiving 365 in all Circumstances*, Philippians 4:10-20 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.