

Thanksgiving | Preparing for Your First Time

Psalms 95 and 100**I. Thanksgiving is impossible without God.**

- Hebrews 12:18; Psalm 118:28-29; Hebrews 13:15
- It makes sense that unbelievers have angst concerning Thanksgiving. There's really no reason they shouldn't love it just as much as Christmas, but they kind of ignore it in many ways in their decorating and how much time they invest preparing for it and in their songwriting and the like because Thanksgiving requires something no other secular holiday experience requires. Thanksgiving requires someone or something to which we must be thankful.
- Thanksgiving requires humility and dependence.
- We can exploit Christmas time in prideful arrogance, entitlement, and greed. But we can't truly appreciate Thanksgiving without being able to humbly acknowledge that someone or something has given us something that we don't deserve and couldn't have given to ourselves. And — in a much bigger way — without the humble acknowledgement that we are nothing and God is the provider of *everything*, there can be no true gratitude.
- Truly celebrating Thanksgiving is impossible without God.

II. Thanksgiving is not about us.

- Thanksgiving is not just inspired and empowered by God, it's all about God.
- Yes, the Lord is pleased when we rest and revive ourselves for His glory. He is pleased when we entertain guests and show hospitality in His name.
- He loves play and festivities that enhance our redemptive relationships, but — did you notice — that each of those events I described carried an important descriptor.
- When we rest to satiate our own laziness, God is not pleased. When we entertain people to make ourselves feel good, manipulate them into liking us and returning the favor, or to engage in inappropriate relationships, God is not glorified. When we play in order to fulfill our own desires with no thought to God . . . He is not magnified.
- Ultimately, our life choices can only find meaning and satisfaction when they aren't made for us.

III. Thanksgiving is not about what we're thankful for.

- Psalm 7:17; I Thessalonians 5:18; Philippians 4:6; Ephesians 5:20
- How many people are thankful for things like God's righteousness?
- Most of the praises that fill our lips are things that we like and wanted and prayed for and received.
- But did you realize that thanksgiving is actually commanded of God's people. It's not about us trying to remember what happened this year that we liked, it's about being thankful for everything because we're commanded to be so.

IV. Thanksgiving is not about a 20 minute time of testimony on the 4th Thursday of November.

- Colossians 3:17; Ephesians 5:20
- For the Christian, Thanksgiving is a lifestyle. Not only does it follow that if we're thanking God for all of the comfortable things in our lives *and* all of the uncomfortable things in my life that I'm going to continually be thankful, but God also directly commands a spirit of continual thanksgiving.
- Just because we praised God on Thanksgiving Day doesn't make our Black Friday complaints any less sinful.
- What kind of message are we sending to our students when we encourage thankfulness in November, but we complain when we didn't get that snow day we were expecting?
- We aren't discipling our congregation for the Lord when we preach on gratitude and then spend the rest of the year griping about our president.
- Our families are the ones who know us the best. How incongruous does it seem when the person who complains the most in the family is calling everyone to be thankful right before we go outside to play football . . . a time when that same person will probably complain about the all the fumbles more than anyone else?
- Preparation isn't just about preparing our hearts, it's about preparing our disciples.
- Take time to read, study, and meditate on the Scriptures we provide. Share them with your congregation, your students, your youth group, your friends, family, and coworkers. Encourage others to meditate and prepare their hearts for Thanksgiving as well.
- For those of you with Celebration Walls, I invite you to print out a key verse or two to display there so that your mind is drawn back to a spirit of thankfulness every time you see it.
- Commit to God in prayer to make Him the focus of this year's Thanksgiving.

God
podcast