

Thanksgiving | Celebrating & Discipling

I. Pray before engaging in any task or activity.

- Acts 11:23; II Corinthians 9:7
- Prayer is the tissue fibers of The Celebration of God. It's what holds the framework together and enables us to consciously worship God without ceasing.
- Praying before and during all of our Thanksgiving activities helps us remain intentional.
- This isn't a magical incantation that will guarantee all we do to be to God's honor and glory, but it focuses our motivation.
- We do this because we don't accidentally glorify God. We need to purpose in our heart to cleave to God.

II. Talk to your community about purposefully celebrating God.

- It's one thing to be intentionally celebrating God on your own, but what about the rest of the people with whom you spend Thanksgiving?
- Is it going to be good enough for you to celebrate God on Thanksgiving if no one else is doing it with you? Well, between you and God — that's great! But remember, God wants us to actively be making disciples. That means that we've been purposefully placed in our community's life in order to introduce them to Him and help them become more like Him.
- Imagine if we took a little time before our activities to speak briefly about the best way to please the Lord and prayed — asking the Holy Spirit to give us the strength necessary to think right, speak right, feel right, act right, desire right, and believe right.
- That alone could transform your holiday!

III. Read God's Word.

- Schedule some time to read and maybe even discuss some or all of the passages from the Thanksgiving Bible Reading. You could have one person read. You could have a number of people read different passages.
- You could ask for people to respond to the passage read. You could do all of the reading and discussion in one setting, but you can also spread it out over the course of the day.
- Remember, it's not the schedule, it's the motivation. Do it however will best serve your disciples; just remember the purpose is to give God the preeminence by allowing Him to speak into our day. God talks to us through His Word. Are we going to invite Him to Thanksgiving? Are we going to allow Him to speak to us? Are we only going to allow Him to talk to us for 20 minutes, or are we going to give Him free reign to speak into all of our activities?

IV. Share Praises.

- Praise and thanks times are fantastic ways to see a person's heart. If the only things for which we're thankful are the things which we would choose for ourselves, then we don't understand what God is doing in our lives.
- One of the sections on the Thanksgiving Bible Reading page is dedicated to being thankful for all things including the uncomfortable.
- In addition to praising God for the comfortable things He allows us to enjoy, engage people in your group by asking them what uncomfortable things they can thank God for.

- That might be difficult for some people to understand, so make sure you read the passages first so they understand the beautiful Truths that should motivate our gratitude.
- And be prepared to explain it if there are any questions.

V. Talk about the Gospel.

- Technically the Gospel encompasses all of life. It's not just in the moment of justification. When we talk of the Gospel, we're also talking about our sanctification — the moment by moment transformation into the image of Jesus.
- So, any time we're discussing God and His Word and applying it to life, we're being Gospel-centered,
- However, this is specifically about evangelism — introducing people to Christ who do not already have a relationship with God.
- Since we're not God, we can't know for sure if a person is truly born again, and it's possible that there may be people who we think are saved, but who don't have a relationship with God.
- For this reason and more, we're suggesting you schedule a time to talk about the Season of Mercy and our desperation — our need for salvation.

VI. Overview the Celebratory Year.

- Anticipations are when we take time to look forward to two things: A. a future holiday when we are looking forward to celebrating a characteristic of God or one of His deeds, or B. a future event on God's prophetic timetable like the Consummation.
- But the further we get in the year, the more and more holidays we have behind us and there are fewer holidays for us to Anticipate.
- But the Celebration of God was designed so that all of the holidays interact with each other. Every one of them grows from the holidays that came before and look forward to the ones to come. They all interact with each other like every point of a spiderweb is connected to every other.
- So, when we step back to view the Celebratory year, we get an amazing overview of God and His goodness. It's a perfect way to talk about the Gospel regardless of whether our community members have a relationship with God yet or not.
 - "Back in September we celebrated God's mercy and power and majesty when He created the World. We reveled in the fact that He created us in order to have a relationship with us. But then the Day of Atonement reminded us how mankind chose and chooses to sin. It started with Adam and Eve and continues to us. We all choose to reject God by doing what we believe is best. And Halloween very perfectly illustrated some of the terrible consequences that come from sin. But today we thank the Lord that — from eternity past — He had a plan to reconcile us to Him. He had a plan to send the Messiah Who would take our sin and gives us His righteousness. So, we thank the Lord today for loving us and having a plan to save us even when we were rebelling against Him. And we look forward to Christmas when we celebrate Jesus' coming to earth — the day He put God's redemptive plan into motion. After that comes Easter when we excitedly anticipate celebrating Christ's triumph over death and the fulfillment of salvation's plan. But that's not all, we're also looking forward to praising God for His gift of the church, His Word, sharpening relationships, and the coming day when our salvation is completed and we no longer have to endure sin and its consequences. We will finally experience what God intended from the beginning — a perfect relationship with Him for all eternity!"