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My Favorite Teacher...

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Thanksgiving

Dr. T. D. Worthington

Thanksgiving is more than eating mashed potatoes with gravy, watching football, and taking a wonderful turkey-induced nap. Thanksgiving is an essential concept in Scripture. And although it is good to set aside a Thursday each November to cultivate a heart of thanksgiving, the Scriptures have more to say about giving thanks than *one day a year can handle*.

First, We Were Lost by Forgetting Thanksgiving.

A misplaced spirit of Thanksgiving contributed to the first sin. Perhaps if Satan had tempted Eve on Thanksgiving Day, she would not have fallen for his trickery. Satan of course hasn't been grateful for a long time. He wanted more; more power, more glory. Ultimately, in his essence, Satan is an ingrate. And he sinks his venom into the heart of Eden. Satan's sin becomes the first sin of humanity: the sin of ingratitude. Adam and Eve are simply ungrateful for what God had given. That became the catalyst of their sin of eating the forbidden fruit.

Our fall was, and has always been, that we are not satisfied in God and what He gives. We seem to always be hungering for something more, something other than what we have. So, Satan the master ingrate, spawns this unthankfulness in Eve, who passes it along to Adam, and then to the rest of us. Thus, we are unthankful people, often even after our salvation.

Second, We Were Redeemed By Thanksgiving.

God himself, in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, entered into our thankless world, lived in flawless appreciation of His Father, and died in our behalf, for our sin, including our sin of ingratitude. It is Jesus, who has manifested the perfect life of thankfulness.

Third, Thanksgiving Is About the Complete Godhead.

We see the Trinity in our call to give thanks. The typical pattern of thanksgiving in the New Testament

is that God the Father is the object of thanksgiving, God the Son is the person through whom thanksgiving flows, and God the Holy Spirit is the source and contact point of thanksgiving.

And whatever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Colossians 3:16–17

The very presence of thanksgiving points to the work of the Holy Spirit as the source of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving flows to God the Father, through God the Son, from God the Spirit.

Fourth, Thanksgiving Replaces Sin.

Just as the Apostle Paul admonishes Christians to put away sin from their lives, he also commands them to put thanksgiving in its place.

Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient

(out of place), but rather giving of thanks.

Ephesians 5:4

Paul knows that we either go through life with sinful, thankless hearts which leads to foolish talk and crude jokes, or we act with thankful hearts and thereby please God with our words.

The key to unlocking a heart of gratitude and overcoming bitterness and ugliness and disrespect and violence is a strong belief in God, the Creator and Sustainer and Provider and Hope-giver. If we do not believe we are deeply indebted to God for all we have or hope to have, then the very spring of gratitude has gone dry.

Fifth, Thanksgiving Sanctifies Creation.

How should Christians think about God's marvelous creation? Paul says that it should be received with a heart full of thanksgiving:

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

I Timothy 4:4

Paul teaches that creation is good and should be received with thanksgiving because it is made holy through the word of God and prayer. It almost seems as if the Scripture is implying that the differing taste of food is a reminder of the diverse goodness of God. And when we taste food, it is a communication of God's goodness, so we thank Him for the food and for the lesson in being grateful.

Sixth, Thanksgiving Brings Us Close to God.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote that if the stars came out only once a year, everybody would stay up all night just to behold them. We have seen the stars so often that we don't bother to look at them anymore. We have become accustomed to our blessings. And sometimes, we altogether forget that we have them.

During the Thanksgiving season, we often recall the story of ten lepers, nine



Jews, and one Samaritan. The story tells us that they asked Jesus for mercy and He tells them to "go" and as they do, all ten are healed. However, only one, the Samaritan, returned to say "thank you" to the Lord. Ninety percent of those treated with love, compassion, and grace were never heard from again. So, Jesus voices the question, where are the nine?

If that were to happen today, we might answer Jesus by saying it is because they come from a culture of entitlement. They think they deserved good health all along. They believed that finally they were getting what

they were entitled to. Furthermore, even though Jesus helped them, that's what He should have done—it was His job. Actually, He should have come and done it sooner. Such is the culture of entitlement.

However, entitlement culture misses the real blessing of this story. In telling this story, Luke says, all the lepers "*kept their distance.*" That's what they were supposed to do. Lepers lived near the cities so they could beg, but by law they were required to stay at a distance so as not to infect others. But something changed for number ten when he was healed. He came right up to Jesus with his praise and thanks. He lay at the feet of Jesus. What gave him that right? Was it his healing? Sure, that was part of it, but there was more.

It was **healing plus gratitude.** That's what brought this leper closer to Jesus. That's what brought him back. That's what brought him to his knees. Gratitude is what brought him closer to God. This is just like our salvation allows us to come to the feet of Jesus, but it is our gratitude that will actually bring us there.

Without gratitude we not only lose the full taste of our food, and the full blessing of our healing, we also lose the full taste of our relationship with God.

Happy Thanksgiving!



Dr. Worthington has been in the ministry over forty years and serves as President of Pathway Ministries.



He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

Psalm 40:2-3

I would have to say that if I have learned anything in this life, regardless of what I face, I can always trust God. Even when I cannot trust anything or anyone else, I can still trust God. Why is it we can always trust Him no matter what we face? Because He is faithful and true at all times. God keeps His promises and performs His Word. He never changes regardless of all that changes in this world. He is the one constant we need in every decision we make.

People give many excuses for not trusting in God, but all are unjustified. While I fully understand not trusting in ourselves, that is not a valid reason for not in trusting God. Satan loves

to convince believers not to trust God because of their past failures. But praise God, our Lord remains faithful and trustworthy. Once we more fully understand how much God loves us, the more we can learn to trust Him. God desires that we trust Him, and He will greatly reward us when we do. Please allow me to share some benefits of trusting God found in His Word.

He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay...

Psalm 40:2a

The Benefit of Deliverance.

There are many pits in life. Sin is a big one. God delivers us with His loving salvation. He delivers us also from sickness and disease. He delivers us from Satan's attacks and lies. Death, hell, and the grave cannot hold us because of His deliverance. Thank God He even delivers us from ourselves!

... and set my feet upon a rock...

Psalm 40:2b

The Benefit of Security.

The rock is Jesus. Not only does God deliver us through His Son Jesus, He also keeps us secure in Him as well. Jesus is our rock and our hiding place. We can stand firm in who Jesus is and who we are in Him. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. As we submit to God, the enemy flees. We are more than conquerors in Jesus. God has sealed us with His Holy Spirit who has become our Comforter, Teacher, and Strength.

... and established my goings.

Psalm 40:2c

The Benefit of Guidance.

As we trust God, we also trust His Word and His Holy Spirit. No matter what we face, God has given us all we need to succeed and overcome. His Word is full of promises of what He will do. Our Teacher, the Holy Spirit, will guide us with the Word through every decision we have to make. Whether it is our finances, health, relationships, or spiritual life, we have His guidance to show us the way when we trust Him.

He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God...

Psalm 40:3a

The Benefit of Joy.

When we trust God, our lives are filled with joy unspeakable and full of His glory. We have joy because we know that ALL things work together for good to those who love the Lord. We have joy because we have all the answers to life's problems in Jesus Christ. Even when we may sometimes weep through the night, joy comes in the morning because we trust God.

While I only mentioned four benefits, I know there are others. I pray you search your heart



and see if you are fully trusting God every day and in every way. Keep a journal of your prayer items and check off each item as God faithfully answers. Study His Word and allow it to build your faith. Listen to and follow the Holy Spirit as He shows you how faithful God is. Listen to the testimonies of others who proclaim the faithfulness of God. The more we trust Him, the greater the benefits.



Dr. Glenn Mills is a full-time Evangelist with the Open Arms Evangelistic Ministry. He can be heard each weekday morning on GoMix Christian Radio.

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We all want to be blessed. We all want to be joyful. We all want to find fulfillment in what we do every day. In **Psalm 1**, we see in just six short verses the secret of the life God blesses. This is God's prescription for happiness.

As we study this psalm, we discover that blessedness relates to the choices we make. It depends on the kind of people we are, and the kind of people we choose to associate with. From God's point of view, there are only two ways to live because there are only two kinds of people in the world, and each has made a personal choice. There are the righteous and then there are the wicked. Everyone in the world falls into those two categories. **Psalm 1** shows us how the righteous live and

why they are blessed. It also shows us the end result of both ways of life. If we want to be blessed by God, we need to pay attention to this psalm.

Psalm 1 surprises many people because it begins with a negative. The blessing begins with what the righteous person does not do. He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. He does not stand in the way of sinners. He does not sit in the seat of scornful.

So, blessings come not only from what we do, but also from what we don't do. Blessed people avoid certain things. They avoid certain people and certain situations. They don't hang out just anywhere, and they don't quickly buy into every line of thinking. They are very careful not to join themselves to the company of those who do not love the Lord. Going to church a couple of times a week will not undo the damage that hanging around the wrong people will cause.

This is one of the ministries of **GoMix Christian Radio**. We want

to give you a safe and Godly place to hang-out for a while. When you listen to much of the world's music and programming, you are hanging out with the ungodly, the sinners, and the scornful. You electronically invite them into your car, home, or business. Christian radio provides you with an alternative.

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The Four In Christ Quartet is a Southern Gospel Group, based out of New Bern, NC, that began singing and sharing the Gospel in 1970. For nearly 50 years, they've been dedicated to winning the lost for Christ through the ministry of music and testimony.

Since formation, the group has had a number of talented singers and musicians and recorded dozens of albums, CDs, and videos. Between 1974 and 1976, they enjoyed producing their weekly TV program which aired every Sunday morning on WCTI-TV12 in New Bern.

Beck Bennett is the bass singer and manager for *The Four In Christ Quartet* and has been with the group since the start. He is a native of New Bern and is married to his high-school sweetheart, Patty. They have two sons and are members of the Antioch FWB Church in New Bern, where Beck serves as a deacon and adult Sunday School teacher.

Steve Thompson sings lead and is no stranger to Southern Gospel Music. He has been a fan since he was 13 years old after hearing **The LeFevres** in the church he attended in Virginia. He has sang with **Crossing Jordan** and also managed and sang for **Southern Harmony**. Steve has one son, one daughter, one granddaughter, and another "proclaimed" granddaughter. Steve is a member of Jackson Heights OFWB Church in Kinston.

Dale Ormond sings baritone and has sang and followed Southern Gospel Music his whole life. From a young

age he traveled and sang with his family, **The Singing Ormonds**. A native of New Bern, Dale still makes his home there with his wife Becky and two sons.

Donnie Avery joined *The Four In Christ Quartet* to replace long time tenor, Doug Strange, after traveling for nearly 30 years as an original member of **The Boys From Bethlehem**. Donnie is a native of Onslow County, and today he and his lovely wife, Julie, make their home in Richlands, NC. He is a member of the Bethlehem Baptist Church in Jacksonville.

Todd Andrews is the sound and stage manager. Todd is a native of New Bern where he lives with his wife, Tonya, and two daughters. They are members of Antioch FWB Church in New Bern where Todd serves as a deacon and the Chief Sound Manager.

Blake Davis is the newest member of the group. In addition to playing the piano, Blake also loves to sing. At the age of 2, he would sit beside his mother on the piano bench watching her play and remembers singing as she played for their church. Blake, makes his home in Richlands, NC, and attends Shiloh Baptist Church in Chinquapin.

The Four In Christ Quartet will be having their Annual Anniversary Sing in November! (Details in photo above.) For a more information, tour dates, or other details about *The Four In Christ Quartet*: 252-229-3859, email@fourinchristqt.com, or www.fourinchrist.com.



Being Thankful

Mrs. Sherry Worthington

Do you ever have trouble controlling your thoughts? I guess that is a dumb question if there ever was one. At least it is for me. I really do well sometimes, but there are times when I fail miserably. I don't have to tell you that those are the times I get my eyes off of Christ. I lose sight of all He has done for me. I forget to be *thankful!*

Sometimes I start trying to tell God how to run things. If that isn't the height of pride, I don't know what is. I found myself during Hurricane Florence having a conversation with God. I talked to Him quite a bit about this last hurricane. I know hurricanes have a purpose, but I wanted to tell Him where the hurricane should go. You see, I have a new respect for hurricanes since Hurricane Matthew.

I never worried about the weather, and I slept like a baby through previous hurricanes.

I honestly didn't fear the storm as much as I did the aftermath. Well, Hurricane Florence changed that. When she seemed to grow and grow, it actually put some fear into my heart. It is good to be concerned, but fear is *not* of the Lord. I prayed it would go out to sea, but if I was honest with myself, I thought, "We've had our turn, Lord. Can't she go somewhere else?" How selfish is that? In my defense, I did not want anyone hurt.

As the storm came closer and all the predictions began to occur, we began to prepare for the worst. The path kept changing. The meteorologists did the

best they could, but they have the job of predicting the unpredictable. They catch a lot of flak sometimes, but they honestly do a very good job. I am *thankful* for the job they do! We must remember that in times past, there was no warning. We would not have had time to buy supplies, and prepare our homes and businesses. Because of their work, many lives and homes were saved.

We knew the storm was predicted to be a category 4, and it was supposed to stall over land. It was not only a strong storm, but it was huge. *Thankfully*, Hurricane Florence got some wind knocked out of her sails. Right before our eyes, the storm was reduced to a category 2 before it hit land. I believe God just squeezed some of the wind

out of her sails. I know the devastation was great, but think of what it would have been if she had hit at a level 4. As I thought of the many lives that were saved because of that one miracle, I was so *thankful*!

I thought maybe we will be spared. You see, it doesn't take long for me to start thinking of myself. I tried to convince myself that I was thinking of others, too. I just couldn't stop thinking, "Not again." We had prepared as much as possible for flooding, but we were hoping it would not happen this time. We had put everything up high at the academy. We had learned from the last one. We worked for a week putting things up and moving them to higher ground. We let out early from school the day before so we could raise everything off the ground. We did everything we knew possible to prevent the devastation of Matthew. Unfortunately, we could not put the transmitters on higher ground so there was no way to prepare for the flooding at the station sites. We did have the generators checked out ahead of time, but one of them failed anyway. So we prepared as we could in all facets of the ministry. At our house, we are fortunate. Our home is on a hill, so we did not have to worry about any flooding. We did batten down the hatches and made sure we had the needed supplies. Then the hard part came... waiting!

As the storm hit and the winds blew, I was *thankful*. It didn't seem to be such a bad storm. This will be OK. However, it seemed to rain forever. Florence was like an unwelcome house guest, she just lingered. The more it rained, the more concerned I got. Isn't it amazing how quickly we forget about being *thankful* and move on to a new problem?

We kept watching the river water gauge. As far as the academy was concerned, the Neuse River is the one we watch. We knew that the Neuse River had gotten to 29.74 feet after Matthew, so we knew how much flooding we experienced from that level. We also knew that the Neuse had gotten to 24.9 a few months after Matthew and the academy was spared. So we were watching carefully! We waited at home anxiously as the river was rising.

The only problem we had at home was we lost electricity for a few days. We had plenty of food and water. The food wasn't my first choice, but I never was hungry. As soon as I watched the news, I realized how much flooding

had occurred. There were so many hurting people. Wilmington had been slammed. This was just the flooding from the rain; the rivers had not even flooded yet! I became *thankful* for my small problems, and ashamed for worrying. I was sitting in my comfortable home watching the news, while so many were displaced.

We finally got into the academy. When we opened the doors and all I saw was wet carpet, I was relieved. We began to look around and knew the water had gotten in the building, we just didn't know how much. There were water lines in some places, but we didn't know if it was from seepage or if the water had risen that high. We had high hopes that we could be in





the academy in a few days. I was so *thankful!*

Well, the building inspector came and said we had to cut out the walls, spray bleach, and go through the whole process again. Mind you, we didn't have to do nearly as much, but I knew that meant we weren't coming to school in a few days and that also meant more expense. It meant we would need to procure a temporary site and be in two places again. Was I *thankful?* You would think so, but I knew it would be a lot of extra work, and I didn't want to do it. We also had three stations off the air, and we needed to take care of the people who were unable to get our signal. We needed to take care of our people. I just didn't want to do this again! You notice I keep using the word I and we.

Well, praise the Lord! We only had to be at a temporary site for two weeks, and we were only out of our building for about a month.

The three stations are back on the air, and we are back in the business of ministering to all of our people.

So you see, I have trouble controlling my thoughts. One minute I was *thankful*, the next I was fretful. Oh, I don't like that word. Me, fretful! What else would you call it? That is not normally my nature. I was worried about the future instead of leaving things in God's hands. I put everything in His hands, and then I took them out. I was like a Yo Yo. Up and down-up and down. Of course, my husband was the only one who saw this. I did a pretty good job of hiding it from others. So why do I share it with you now? I hope you can learn from my mistake! The only time I worried was when I forgot to be *thankful!*

How to win over worry? Take the advice our Lord gives in I Thessalonians 5:18. *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning*

you! This verse doesn't teach that you are thankful you have cancer or your home is flooded. It teaches that we are to be thankful in all circumstances. Our Heavenly Father sent His Son that we could have a home in heaven someday. If we are saved, His Spirit lives inside us, we have a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and He promises to be with us in every situation.

In all of the trials that come our way, we must look for what we can learn from them. We must allow ourselves to grow from them. If we fail to be *thankful*, we will not learn or grow. How do we control our thoughts? Being *thankful* is a great place to start!



Mrs. Worthington has five children and eleven grandchildren. She serves as Principal of Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro.



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And Finally...



My Favorite Teacher...

My favorite teacher was my Sunday School teacher when I was about 12 years old. She taught the junior class for girls and boys. She loved us all and taught us the Bible. Her love for God's Word was evident. She wanted us to learn the books of the Bible in order. If we memorized them all, she would give us each a little handmaid "pajama bag". I so wanted one of those bags! My mother helped me learn the books of the Bible. I studied hard and did them all in order. I got my bag! I am now 74 years old, and I still know all the books of the Bible because of Mrs. Nannie Lee Cox, her love for children, and her special love for God's Word. She is in heaven now, but her son is a dear friend to me and my husband.

S. D.

I have had so many great teachers throughout my life, it's hard to write about just one, but I'll try. Have you ever heard someone talk and even though you might not completely understand everything they are saying, you could still sit and listen to them for hours because the way they speak gives you a desire to learn? Well, that was me listening to one of my professors, Dr. Will Honeycutt, in college. It was an ethics/worldview-type class at a well-known Christian university long ago where we talked about many of the current issues of the day. He taught us how to think through things and question details and situations from different angles, all while maintaining a Christian worldview. Some subjects seemed silly at first and some more serious. For example, is it stealing to let a 3 year old eat a few French fries off of a buffet plate you purchased for yourself? After all, you did only pay for yourself to eat, right? Is it

okay to sacrifice a few innocent lives in exchange for the safety of many others? What's considered the "greater good?" Where do you draw the line? We were taught that although we can't always have the perfect answers to every situation, every situation is worth taking the time to think through and seek God's guidance through.

T. J.

My favorite and best teacher was and is my wife. About 50 years ago, she took on a young punk with a little bit of potential and a lot of rough edges and tried to teach him how to be a decent human being. The result is still far from perfect, but I'd hate to think where I'd be without what she has taught me. I am so thankful she's been in my life all these years and for the example of God's love she shows with her life.

L. N.

"God's Blessings"

We'd like your help for an upcoming edition of "And Finally..."

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