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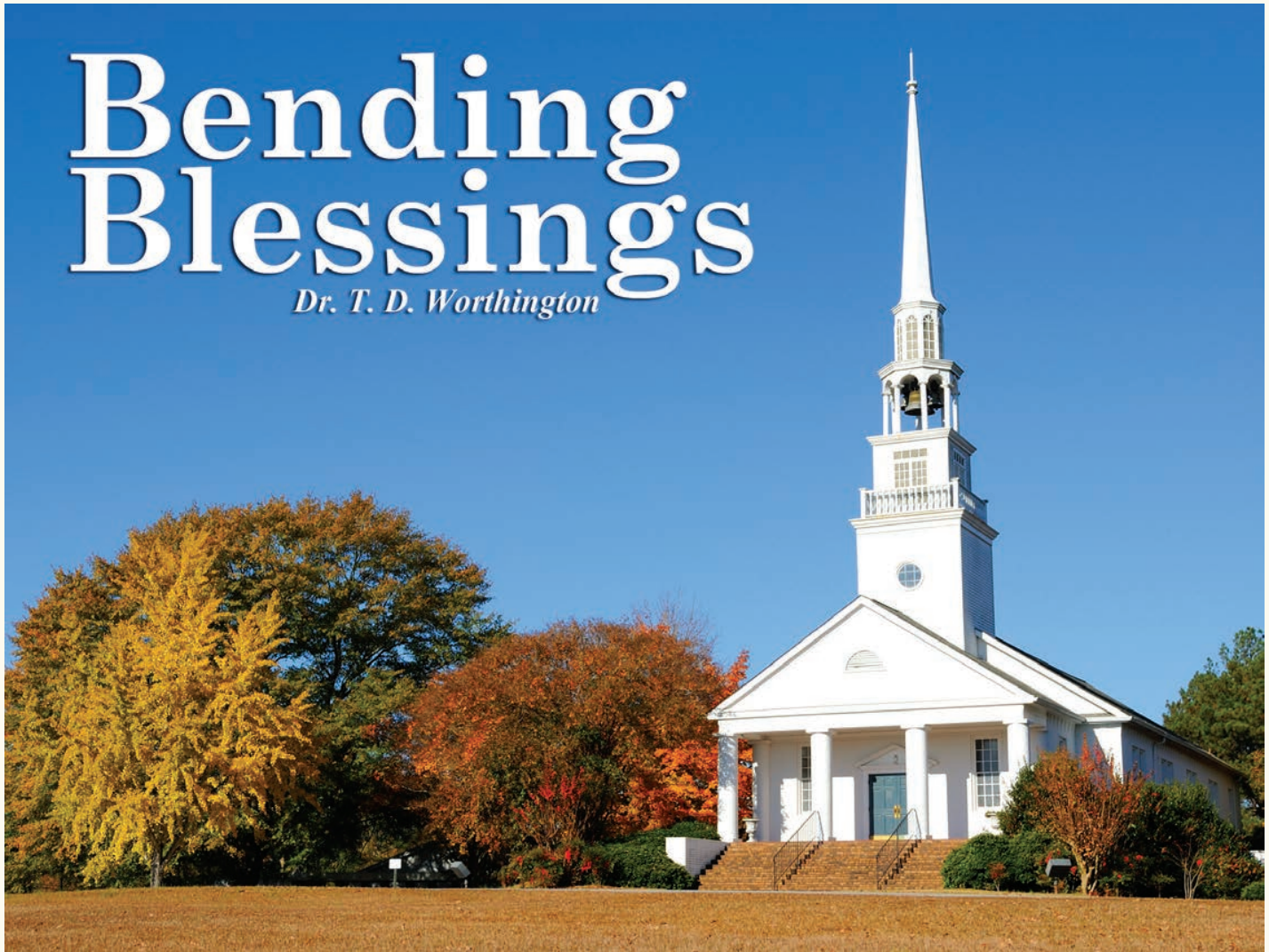
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# Bending Blessings

Dr. T. D. Worthington



*“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”*

**James 1:17**

God delights in helping us grow in the priceless grace of thanksgiving and gratitude. Sometimes we go through difficult seasons, and when we do, the Bible instructs us to still praise our Lord—maybe not *for* the problems, but certainly *in* the problems. Just as Paul would learn to glory in his infirmities, many of us have been assigned the same lesson. However, more often than not, I have discovered that God uses blessing and pleasure to provoke us to a spirit of thanksgiving.

This is often illustrated in the table blessing as we thank our Lord for the food He has provided. We may pray: *“Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful.”*

Learning to trace every blessing back to its source reveals the truth about God’s goodness. Sometimes as the river flows downstream toward the sea, it may get muddy and polluted, but if you trace it back and taste the sweet pure water at the fountainhead of the stream you will see the true nature of the water. If I take a thin piece of aluminum, I will be able to easily bend it in any direction I choose. But, sometimes events in my life are not like pliable aluminum, they are more like hardened steel. They

cannot be easily bent. In such cases, I may need the wise counsel of a Christian friend to help me bend it toward God. Such is the nature of the victorious Christian life. We are to bend every blessing, every pleasure, back to God. *This was part of the original function of church steeples, to constantly point us toward God.* Our Lord wants us to praise Him, but He does not do so by forcing us to our knees. He does not do it by some divine decree coupled with a harsh threat of punishment. God is not the *“hard man”* described in **Matthew 25:24**. God’s preferred way is to bestow manifold blessings upon us. Then, it becomes our responsibility to trace every blessing back to its source, back to the fountainhead of blessing.

When we go through hardship we might be tempted to think of God as an austere overlord, who, when He commands us, ***“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (I Thessalonians 5:18)***. In this Scripture we might assume that God is expecting His poor, oppressed children to manufacture thanksgiving out of their miserable existence. This, makes the act of thanksgiving about as pleasurable as having a tooth pulled.

While it is true that God wants us to be thankful, and sometimes that will come in the midst of hardship, but more often God draws gratitude out of us with blessings. These pleasures are always designed to be traced back to their source. As we learn to bend them in the direction of God, each blessing then becomes a tutor, instructing us to be thankful.

What kind of blessing am I talking about? What kind of pleasure? Any pleasure, any blessing will work. Dozens of them every single day of our lives. No pleasure is too small to be a reminder of the kindness and mercy and goodness of God. This means we are bombarded by blessings all the time. All around us is fuel for the fire of thanksgiving, if we will but open our eyes.

You might say, *“wait a minute preacher, the Bible says that sin can be pleasure for a season, certainly that pleasure should not be bent back to God.”* Sure, we all know, there are sinful pleasures. These are pleasures achieved by sinful acts. But we still must not discount the pleasure, even if achieved by sin. I am not saying that makes it right, but let me explain. If

I steal an apple from your tree, that would obviously be wrong. Stealing is wrong. But, does that mean the stolen apple will not be sweet? Of course not! Stealing is wrong, but the sweetness is still a blessing from God. Now, this does not make stealing good, actually it makes it worse. I have not just stolen an apple, I have also stolen the pleasure within that apple, pleasure that did not belong to me. God desired to bless me through legitimate means, but just like in the story of Jacob and Esau, I chose an illegitimate route.

We learn very early in our Christian life that Scripture commands us to be thankful. Very often, as young Christians, we learn this before we really understand how thanksgiving works. So, we try to work up a sense of thankfulness and worship over abstract things like God’s beauty, or goodness, or blessings, or love. The problem is, we can’t emotionally connect broad generalities that are not sufficiently grounded in specifics.

That is why it is important to bend every blessing that comes into our lives back to God.

We learn that God is good, but if we have not taken the opportunity to personally ***“taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psalms 34:8)***, we will miss the true meaning of thanksgiving. A blind man can have the best teachers in the world teach him about the sun and the life-sustaining light that it gives our planet. But, if he were able to walk outside and actually see even the smallest patch of sunlight, it would teach him more than all his worthy teachers.

Pleasures teach us about God like patches of sunlight penetrating through the canopy of a thick forest teach us about the sun. The happy laughter of a beloved child, the rainbow after the summer storm, feeling good after being sick, small blessings that must be bent back to God. Holding the hand of your loving mate, seeing your children and grandchildren grow up to serve







God, waking up to a new day and hearing the birds sing their song on a cool autumn morning; these are all patches of light, blessings that must be traced back to the fountainhead. And what do we find when we bend our blessings back to God?

We find the sweet pure water. The blind man who could suddenly see the small patch of light from a sunbeam reaching the floor of the shaded forest looks up and traces that small ray of light back to the sun. Can you imagine? Such are our blessings. When we start to finally see the little patches of blessing, then we trace them back to where they originated, and we stand in awe of what we see.

That's the key to understanding the pleasures God gives us as teachers of gratitude and thanksgiving. Our goal should be to trace every blessing, bend every blessing, back to God. Our blessings aren't always

apparent. Ask yourself, "*What do I take for granted?*" When you look in the rear-view mirror of your life, can you recall blessings that you were too blind to see at the time?

As we count our blessings this Thanksgiving season, may we consciously attempt to bend every blessing back to God. Some of us who are going through the deepest of trials, may need the help of a caring friend to help us see our blessings and trace them back to the fountainhead.

Does God command our thankfulness? Of course He does! But it is not the arm-twisting command of a tyrant. It is the loving command of a father whose desire is that his children experience blessings beyond compare. Our Lord has designed gratitude to be one of the keys that will unlock the door to a fuller life. It can turn what we have into more than enough. It

can turn confusion into clarity. It has been said that God desires us to be thankful because it is often the only way to make sense of our past, bring peace for today, and create a vision for tomorrow.

When we are blessed with good fortune, we might be tempted to trace the blessing back to our hard work, our education, or even our good luck; however, the wise man will wisely trace it back to God. For it is God's nature to draw gratitude out of us with blessings; blessings that to achieve their full potential, must be traced back, bent back to God.



*Dr. Worthington has been in the ministry for over forty five years and serves as President of Pathway Ministries and Christian Bible College.*

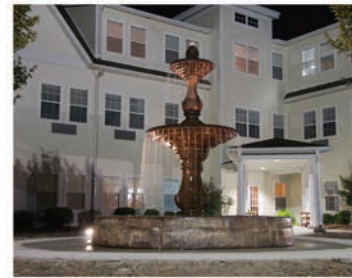


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## Share-A-Thon Update

The recent economic picture has not been pretty. We have seen prices increase dramatically which has drastically affected our family budgets. On occasion, we have even seen shortages of some of our most basic commodities.

It has been said that economics is the study of the use of scarce resources which have alternative uses. We can see this in the choices we have in spending or investing our limited supply of money. Resources can

be utilized in many different ways. We can buy things, we can save, we can invest to make a profit, we can give them away, or we might invest in the Kingdom of God. Eternal ventures always deliver the greatest return on our investment. Such was the decision hundreds have already made during our **Fall Share-A-Thon**.

How we steward our limited resources (*our time, energy, money, talents, etc.*) is a moral endeavor. And economics, when rightly conceived, is a way of looking at God's world that calls us to use those resources well. When we rightly consider the subject, economics is a way of thinking about God's world and our place in it that calls us to wisely invest in things eternal.

Our **Share-A-Thon** has been a tremendous success. Although we are close to our goal, there is still work to be done. We have scheduled **November 8th-10th** as the victory days to complete the fund drive. If you have not given yet, please consider a generous tax-deductible gift to support your local Christian radio station.



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*Made for Greatness*

I want to be great! Who hasn't said that before? It's a natural feeling for us to want to do more and to be more than what we are. As children, we dream of being ball players, ballerinas, and even superheroes. As adults, we want to leave a mark on the world and be remembered. We all want to be remembered in some way for something great.

Maybe you think about great preachers like Charles Spurgeon or Billy Sunday, and think, "I'd sure like to be that great for the Lord!" Maybe music is your passion, and you long to leave behind a legacy like Fanny Crosby or Isaac Watts. Maybe you wish you could be the one to find a cure for cancer or some other disease just as Jonas Salk did with Polio. Regardless of your dream, the best time and place to start is here and now.

*"There are many of us that are willing to do great things for the Lord, but few of us are willing to do little things."*  
D. L. Moody

Are you willing to do the little things? Are you willing to work behind the scenes if you never get any credit here on earth? After all, doesn't our Heavenly Father do that each and every day in our own lives? Think of all the ways He has blessed you just over the past week. As Thanksgiving approaches, we often think of our blessings more and more. Chances are He's done a lot more for you than you have given Him credit for. He seems to work behind the scenes a lot, too.

So, maybe you worked really hard cleaning the church, and no one noticed. It could be you stayed late at work to finish a project, and you didn't get a "thank you" or a "good job." Possibly you have gone above and beyond to help someone else through a struggle with

no recognition whatsoever. Regardless of the event or the outcome, were you faithful? Were you obedient to the Lord with the little things? If so, it sounds like greatness in the making. If not, it's never too late to start!

*Christmas Instrumental Favorites*

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# Gratitude

*Mrs. Sherry Worthington*

**W**hen I walk around today, I hear so much complaining. I realize that there are lots of things to complain about. Prices are going up, our shelves are bare at the stores, the lines are long wherever we go, and many of the things we need are unavailable. Our leaders don't seem to care and are far removed from the American people. The moral fabric of America is deteriorating. Unfortunately, in most cases, complaining doesn't change anything. We need to do some constructive repair in our

nation, but in the meantime, we need to take a long hard look at what we need to do from here. How can we make a bad situation better?

I was in the Dollar Tree the other day and overheard a customer speaking to a worker at the store. This lady was complaining about the coming price increase at Dollar Tree. She said, "There is no way I am going to pay \$1.50 for this, and I will shop somewhere else. Prices better not go up." First, I wanted to say, "What planet are you from?

Why do you think that the rest of the world can go up on prices, but the Dollar Tree can't?" I am pretty amazed they haven't gone up already. At a time in our country where businesses are having a hard time getting people to work, a little gratitude to the worker might have been much better. She was working hard to stock the shelves so we could have something to purchase. The store had a "Help Wanted" sign up, just like most others in our community. Perhaps a "Thank you for all you are doing," would go a long way.





Years ago a lawyer helped us with a difficult situation. We sent her a thank you note for all she had done for us. She told me that was the first thank you note she had ever received. She did an exceptional job and was very personable. She deserved a thank-you. She still has that note.

Nurses are overworked right now. It is a thankless occupation. I am sure some patients are kind, but many are not. We were at the emergency room with my mom a few months ago. The poor nurse looked like she

was going to cry. I asked her if she was okay, and she said that we were the only nice patients she had that night. The others were impatient and demanding. I know that all nurses are not great, but we have had very few that were not caring and compassionate over the years. Each nurse is only one person, and we treat them like we were the only patient in the hospital. A “*Thank you*” would go a long way when they come in to give us medicine, change our bandages, or any of the various things we may need. We need to thank the people that bring our trays and ask about their days. One day one of our nurses seemed troubled, so we asked how he was doing. He was going through a tough time, and he needed someone to talk to. He thanked us for listening. There are so many times when we can make things better just by being grateful and kind.

Our policemen have really gotten a bum rap. Again, I know all policemen are not great, but most of them are putting themselves at risk every day to protect us. I am so thankful that we have police in our area. It makes me feel safer to know they are riding around keeping an eye on things. When people want to defund the police and call them names and turn their backs on them when they need help, it must be very discouraging. I would not want my son to be a policeman in our country. Why would anyone want to be a policeman to be spat upon and degraded? Can you imagine if we had no police? What would our world be like? We need to show some gratitude.

I have a great group of parents at the academy. There have been

many times when a parent has said thank you. They may send notes, send goodies, or just tell me how much I have helped their children. Many times those encouraging words come at just the right time. However, I understand it is not that way everywhere. I have some friends that teach in other schools, and they get fussed at quite a bit. Let your child’s teacher know how much you appreciate them. It may brighten his day.

In a society where many people do not want to work, there are lines and aggravations everywhere. There are signs in stores that say, “*Please be patient. No one wants to work.*” The people that are working need to be given a little patience and appreciation. Every person in every occupation needs to feel appreciated. Make it a point to show gratitude wherever you go. We can make someone smile with just a little patience, kindness, and a large dose of gratitude.

Share a smile and be grateful today.

***“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”***

**I Thessalonians 5:18**



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



# Light

Evan. Lee Mills



*“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*

**Matthew 5:14-16**

God will set us in a place where our light cannot be hid. We are to let our light so shine before men that they see our good works (*ordained works*) and glorify our Father in Heaven.

In **John 9:5**, Jesus said He is the Light of the world. He also said we would be the light of the world. Those that do the works of Jesus Christ would have this honor given to them. What a glorious honor to share this testimony with the One who is the true Light! As light, we are being sent forth to be light to the believer and the unbeliever. For the believer, we give light for their edification. For the unbeliever, we

give light for their salvation. The lives we live and the doctrines we embrace should be a Godly witness to the light we share. There must be evidence that we are indeed followers of Jesus Christ. The world observes and looks for reasons to reject your light. We must have confidence, boldness, and courage to intensify our light. We are to use the spiritual understanding and insight we receive from God so our light cannot be ignored or denied. God is the Fountain of Light. As we drink from that fountain, we become vessels on a journey to carry His light to a world filled with darkness.

*“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.”*

**John 12:46**

Our light is to shine light forth with God’s mercy, grace, promises, and love. We are to show the ones in darkness there is a way that leads to certainty and truth.



*“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”*

**Acts 26:18**

Do we cherish the opportunity to be light? Are we up to the task? Does the testimony we have of when we first saw the light and how it changed our life make others realize there is a better way? Does our light have the power to open the eyes and hearts of unbelievers?

*“For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.”*

**Psalm 36:9**

Most of what has been shared up to this point is on being light to those in darkness. It is important and necessary that we take being light serious. We also need to remember in His light we shall see light. The believer must always be looking for God’s light!

*“O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.”*

**Psalm 43:3**

God’s light illuminates the truth which helps us to be partakers of His divine nature. His light shows the way of righteousness, godliness, and holiness. The Holy Bible is light to see the will of God and the truth of God. It teaches us to be made in His image, which means the believer must be a person of integrity and character. To walk in light we must be faithful, obedient, and submissive to our Lord.

*“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”*

**Psalm 119:130**

Light gives the believer wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. God’s instruction and counsel puts us on a path that leads to insight and sensitivity to His Holy Spirit. The way of humility, sincerity, and meekness opens many doors to God’s light. We find love, joy, and peace in His light. There is comfort, reassurance, and hope for those who turn to His light in their time of need. When you face your biggest



mountain, greatest storm, deepest valley, and are at your wits end, God’s light will move your mountain, still your storm, remove your fear, and quiet your soul.

*“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”*

**Psalm 27:1**

Where there is light there should be no fear. God sends His grace and His strength to remove our fear. We find salvation in his son, Jesus Christ. His light also reminds us that we are His children, and one day we will be with Him in Heaven. The promise of Heaven is everlasting. We will spend eternity with our Father and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. That is why God sends us into the world. We are to be a light to nonbelievers. We are to shine light on the One who died for their sins and show them His promise of eternal life. Will you be that light?

*“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”*

**Isaiah 6:8**

God wants His light to be your portion in life. It is in His light we find meaning and purpose for life. May the light of God shine in your spirit and soul. May it burn in your heart. May your whole body be filled with His light!



*Evan. Lee Mills is with Open Arms Evangelistic Ministries and can be heard each weekday on GoMix Christian Radio at 7:45AM.*



# And Finally...



## Thankful...

*I can't say enough how thankful I am for family and friends. These past few years have been tough on us all. We've all seen heartache and grief. We've all experienced loss. We've all had to adjust our way of living. Through it all, my family and friends have remained constant. We never know what tomorrow will hold or when the next breath may be our last. I am thankful for every day I have to experience the love of those around me.*

**A. J.**

*I'm thankful for everything. I'm thankful for the good, bad, scary, beautiful, harsh, and wonderful. I am thankful I get to wake up each day and make it whatever I want it to be. I am thankful that every year my list continues to grow. Though my daily struggles may just seem like stressors, they are actually reasons to be grateful. Whether I look at them as lessons or as reasons to appreciate the next day, I am more than grateful to endure. Thanksgiving may be a single day to give thanks and appreciate these many things, but I can only hope to do a better job at appreciating these things every day. Life isn't about the things we receive, but also the things we can give to others.*

**K. H.**

*I'm thankful for family, life, health, strength, and a job in these difficult times. I'm also thankful for Jesus and that He died so that I might live. He gives me hope that things will eventually get better.*

**M. R.**

*I'm thankful for imagination. I know. It's a weird thing to be thankful for. I live with my four grandchildren and their mom while my son is serving overseas. My grandchildren love playing and watching them makes me so happy. They love playing "make pretend" with Grandma. So far, I've been shipwrecked, adopted two baby dragons, attacked by jackals, and I've hatched an egg that turned out to be a Tyrannosaurus Rex. Now, I ask you, could I have handled this grandchild gig without an imagination? Despite the stretch it is to this grandmother's brain, laughing and pretending with these little ones has made me young all over again.*

**S. M.**

## "New Year Hopefulness"

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

Write to us in 150 words or less and tell us what you are hopeful the New Year will bring.

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