

Giving Thanks in All Things



The first Thanksgiving is said to have been an autumn harvest celebration between European colonists in Massachusetts and the Wampanoag people in 1621. The pilgrims' ship arrived the previous year, and their first winter in North America was harsh. Half of them died. In Spring 1621, Native Americans taught the colonists how to survive in that land. Because of the bounty provided that spring and summer, they held a fall celebration to give thanks.

The idea of making a federal holiday to give thanks had been discussed since the nation began. In 1863, amid the ravages of civil war, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed that the last Thursday in November would be a national holiday to give thanks. In his proclamation, he asked Americans to pray that God would "heal the wounds of the nation," a nation divided by war, and he asked them to give thanks. That must have been difficult for Lincoln and the nation to do. But our country endured, and we celebrate this holiday even today.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, it says, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." God asks us to rejoice, to pray, and to give thanks in ALL circumstances.

What does it mean to give thanks? The Hebrew word for thanks is "*yadah*" (יָדָה). It is interpreted in a variety of ways in the Hebrew Bible. It can mean to give thanks, to give praise, to confess, or to acknowledge. In English, "to give thanks" means to express gratitude; "to praise" means to exalt or admire, "to confess" means to "tell or disclose something," and "to acknowledge" means to admit, recognize or take notice of. *Yadah* can mean all of those things.

Listen to these verses. I'll recite them using the Hebrew word instead of the translated word.

Psalms 107:1 - "Oh give YADAH to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!"

Psalms 119:7 - "I will YADAH you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules."

Psalms 32:5 - "I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will YADAH my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."

In your groups, discuss how these verses can help you "*yadah*" the Lord this Thanksgiving season.