

When Do You Thank God? - Thanksgiving Devotional

By: Anne Peterson

Today's Bible Verse: *Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* - **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

God tells us godliness with contentment is great gain, but being content is not always easy to do (**1 Timothy 6:6**). It's often difficult because we're looking around at others, wondering if what we have compares with what they have.

Paul said he learned how to be content in whatever state he found himself (**Philippians 4:11**). Paul didn't just talk about it, he showed us. There he was in prison, all shackled up, and what was he doing? Having a pity party? No, he was singing praises to God. Too often we choose to praise God *after* has answered our prayers. And while there's nothing wrong with thanking God for answered **prayer**, we miss out, if that's the only time we praise him with thanksgiving. **God is good**. It's impossible for God to be anything less than good. It's his character.

I often think of when Jesus visited Mary and Martha after their brother, Lazarus died. Even though Jesus went there after Lazarus was already dead, he still had a plan.

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." - **John 11:41-42**

I always found it interesting that Jesus thanked God for hearing his prayer *before* Lazarus took one step. Years ago, I made a mental note of that. God is worthy of praise. We don't have to wait to see if God delivers on something we ask him before we thank him. And if God chooses to say, "No," that doesn't mean God is less worthy of our praise.

God's Word tells us it's impossible to please God without faith (**Hebrews 11:6**). When we choose to be thankful and praise God at all times, we are exercising faith. We are praising God because we know God is capable of doing everything we ask and then so much more. When we thank God, we are pleasing our heavenly Father.

God is worthy of praise. Just because he's God. It pleases God when we praise him ahead of time because we're saying, God, whether or not you choose to answer my prayers, I praise you for who you are. I thank you for all you've given me. And Lord, even when you

choose to say “no” to my requests, I know you have your reasons. You know the beginning from the end. Your thoughts are much higher than my thoughts and your ways are higher too (**Isaiah 55:8-9**). And Lord, if you withhold something I’m asking you for, then maybe the thing is not good for me, or the timing is not right. I know it’s not good because you’ve said you will not withhold any good thing from me (**Psalm 84:11**). God, I trust you.

We can choose to be thankful in all things. Simply because God is all wise and he allows what he does with his wisdom. And when things look like they will never work out, those impossible times are God’s specialty. The things that are impossible with man are possible with God (**Luke 18:27**). I love it when God does what seems impossible, because there’s no question at all who did it. And when we get discouraged because of our circumstances, God promises that in all things he can work for the good, for us (**Romans 8:28**).

We can rejoice always because we know the Almighty God, the everlasting Father. We can pray continually, because he invites us to bring our cares to Him, because he cares for us (1Peter 5:7). And we can give thanks in all circumstances because it is God’s will. We also know none of God’s plans can be thwarted (**Job 42:2**). I’m pretty certain that when Paul sang to the Lord from behind bars, it was one of the most beautiful praises ever heard. And we can do the same.

Safely Through

*“I don’t know which way to go,”
I told the Lord, today.
He answered, “That’s the problem,
You keep trying to find your way.
My thoughts are different than your thoughts,
My ways are higher, too.
So you just need to take my hand;
I’ll see you safely through.”*