THE PRACTICE OF THANKSGIVING

Bible Study Guide • October 10–11, 2026

Main Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

When you think about Thanksgiving, what tradition, memory, or part of the weekend do you especially enjoy? Have you ever noticed how easy it is to become accustomed to something you once prayed for? Share an example if you are comfortable.

READ TOGETHER - 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 • Psalm 103:1–5

Discuss: What stands out to you in these passages? Why do you think Paul describes giving thanks in all circumstances as God's will for us?

1. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH US ABOUT THANKSGIVING?

A. Thanksgiving Begins With Remembering - Psalm 103:1–5.

David tells his own soul, "Forget not all his benefits." Biblical gratitude is rooted in remembering who God is and what He has done.

- Why do you think we tend to remember disappointments more easily than blessings? _____
- What are some ways God encouraged Israel to remember His faithfulness? _____
- Looking back over the past year, where have you seen God's faithfulness in your life—even in something small? _____

B. Thanksgiving Is an Act of Worship - Psalm 100:4 and James 1:17.

Thanksgiving acknowledges that God is the source and we are the recipients. Gratitude humbles us and reminds us that every good gift ultimately comes from Him.

- What is the difference between simply enjoying a blessing and recognizing God as its source? _____
- How can thanksgiving become part of our worship rather than something reserved for special occasions? _____
- What ordinary gift from God have you been taking for granted lately? _____

C. Thanksgiving Is Possible Before the Outcome Changes - John 11:38–44

Jesus thanked the Father before Lazarus came out of the tomb. Faith can thank God before we know how the story will end.

- Why is it harder to give thanks while we are still waiting for an answer? _____
- What is the difference between giving thanks FOR every circumstance and giving thanks IN every circumstance? _____
- Is there an unresolved situation in which you need to trust God's faithfulness while you wait? _____

2. WHAT STEALS THANKSGIVING?

Comparison - John 21:20–22.

Comparison shifts our attention from what God has entrusted to us toward what someone else has.

- Where do you see comparison affecting people most today?
  _____
- How can comparison turn another person's blessing into our discontent?
  _____
- What helps you stay focused on what God has entrusted to you? _____

Entitlement - Luke 17:11–19.

Ten men received healing, but only one returned to give thanks. Familiarity can turn yesterday's miracle into today's expectation.

- What do you notice about the one man who returned to Jesus?
  _____
- Why can blessings we once prayed for eventually become things we complain about?
  _____
- Complete this sentence: "Something I never want to take for granted is..." _____

Pain - Read Job 1:20–21.

Pain can narrow our vision until the difficulty becomes all we can see. Biblical thanksgiving does not deny grief. We can weep and worship; we can grieve and still trust God.

- How can lament and gratitude exist together? _____
- Why is the statement "Gratitude does not erase pain; it refuses to let pain erase God" important?
  _____
- How can we help someone who is hurting without pressuring them to pretend everything is okay?
  _____

3. THREE PRACTICES THAT CULTIVATE THANKSGIVING

If thanksgiving is more than an attitude, we must practice gratitude. The sermon gives us three simple practices.

REMEMBER — Count God's Faithfulness

Take a quiet moment. Write down one prayer God answered, one difficult season He brought you through, and one lesson He taught you during the past year.

An answered prayer:

_____

A season God brought me through:

_____

Something God taught me:

_____

RECOGNIZE — Look for Grace in Ordinary Things - Lamentations 3:22–23.

Name three ordinary gifts in your life that you want to notice and appreciate more intentionally.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

RELEASE — Turn Gratitude Into Generosity - 2 Corinthians 9:6–12.

Paul connects generosity with thanksgiving to God. When gratitude moves from our hearts into our hands, it becomes generosity.

- Why do you think generosity helps cultivate gratitude in the giver? _____
- How does generosity challenge entitlement and scarcity thinking? _____
- Besides money, what are some ways Christians can practice generosity? _____

THIS WEEK'S THANKSGIVING CHALLENGE

Perform one intentional act of generosity this Thanksgiving week. Ask the Holy Spirit, "Who can I bless?" Keep it simple and personal. It might mean inviting someone to your table, helping a family, encouraging someone, giving financially, sharing your time, or calling someone who may be alone.

Who is God placing on my heart?

_____

What intentional act of generosity will I take?

_____

When will I do it?

_____

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Complete these three statements:

REMEMBER — Today I thank God for _____

RECOGNIZE — One grace I want to notice more is _____

RELEASE — This week I will bless _____

CLOSING THOUGHT

"When gratitude remains in our hearts, it can feel sentimental. But when it moves into our hands, it becomes generosity."