November 23, 2025
Sea Change Church
**Thanksgiving: The Other Spiritual Discipline**
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**1 Thessalonians 5:12–24 (ESV)**

**12** We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, **13** and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.**14** And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. **15** See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.**16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing,18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19** Do not quench the Spirit. **20** Do not despise prophecies,**21** but test everything; hold fast what is good. **22** Abstain from every form of evil. **23** Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24** He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

KEY WORD: Thanksgiving (Hebrew): *Todah* (תּוֹדָה)

> "Thanksgiving is one of the most powerful spiritual practices we have—because a grateful heart changes how we see God, how we see ourselves, others and ultimately how we see the world."

**The Health Benefits of Gratitude**[1]

- Gratitude seems to reduce **depression** symptoms.
- Gratitude can be a coping tool for **anxiety.** Regularly practicing gratitude combats negative thinking patterns.
- "In one controlled study, two weeks of simple gratitude journaling led to about a 2-point drop **in blood pressure**
- Thinking positive thoughts before falling asleep promotes better **sleep.**

**Digging Into The Word:**
**Vs. 1** 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing,18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

- A **spiritual algorithm** for life change.

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[1] https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/health-benefits-gratitude?utm_source=chatgpt.com

- “When joy and prayer are married their first born child is gratitude.” (Spurgeon)

- Thanksgiving is more than a **command**.

The thought isn’t “this is God’s will, so you *must* do it.” The thought is rather “this is God’s will, so you *can* do it.” It isn’t easy to **rejoice always, pray without ceasing**, and **in everything give thanks**, but we can do it because it is God’s will.

“This is not duty demanded; it is grace supplied. Not obligation, but empowerment.”

**In Jesus time, Thanksgiving was Sacrificial and Public:**

1. Leviticus 7:11–15 — The law for the peace offering “for thanksgiving”.
   Psalm 50:14–15 — “Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving…”
   Psalm 107:22 — “Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving…”
   Psalm 116:17 — “I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving…”
   Amos 4:5 — “Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened…”

**What Happens When God’s People Give God Thanks?**

**1. Thanksgiving brings God’s peace Philippians 4:6–7 (ESV)** *“…with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

**2. Thanksgiving is the doorway into God’s presence Psalm 100:4 (ESV)** *“Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!”*

***3.*** **Thanksgiving Wins Battles: Psalm 50:23 (ESV)** *“The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!”*

**Practical Takeaways: Thanksgiving is by nature expressive:**

In Scripture, thanksgiving is always an **act of expression**—spoken, sung, prayed, declared, or written.

- *“I will give thanks with my mouth”* (Ps 109:30)
- *“I will tell of your wondrous deeds”* (Ps 9:1)
- *“Let us offer the sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips”* (Heb 13:15)

**Small Group Discussion Questions:**

1. How do “rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances” challenge your view of hard seasons?
2. The Hebrew *todah* means expressed gratitude—how does that reshape how you practice thanksgiving?
3. Which outcome of thanksgiving do you need most right now—peace, God’s presence, or spiritual victory?
4. Why do you think giving thanks “in all circumstances” is God’s will *for* us, not just a command *to* us?
5. What is one simple thanksgiving practice you could add to your daily rhythm this week?