

November 19, 2018
By Robert J Tamasy

Giving Thanks - For Everything

Traditionally, the observance of Thanksgiving Day in the United States takes place on the fourth Thursday in November. That means this year it is being celebrated on Nov. 22, the earliest it is ever held. That means two things: the so-called "Christmas season," which spans Thanksgiving to Christmas day, is at maximum length; and the formal holiday gives us a head start on considering those things for which we should feel and express our thanks.

Typically we tend to focus on the enjoyable things we have experienced - good health; happy events such as getting married, having a child, finding a new job or receiving a promotion, moving into a new home; being able to pay our bills and having some money left over. You can probably think of other positives about the past year, our "blessings." They all deserve our expressions of thankfulness.

But what about those things we did not perceive as "good": business or career setbacks, financial struggles, health challenges, discord within our families, or similar hardships? The past year has had natural disasters, and perhaps you or someone you know were victims of one of those. How are we to respond concerning those - how can we "give thanks" for difficult times like that?

We often hear people ask things like, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" And that is a very relevant question - one that countless articles and books have addressed. Simplistic answers and platitudes fail to supply satisfactory responses. And yet, for those of us who follow Jesus Christ, we find no admonition that suggests we limit times of thanksgiving only to pleasant experiences.

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As we prepare for Thanksgiving Day later this week, or whenever a similar event is celebrated where you live, it might be useful to consider what the Bible teaches about the giving of thanks:

No exceptions. Sometimes we might be tempted to think, "Okay, God, I will be thankful when good things come my way. But do not expect me to be thankful for hardships!" In the Scriptures, God does not give that option. *"Be joyful always ...give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).*

Take a hard look at difficult times. Why would God expect us to express thanks to Him even during times of struggle? Because if we consider them honestly, we can realize those are often the times we grow the most and develop, personally, professionally and spiritually. *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4).*

Trials separate the genuine from the counterfeit. One way we can prove we possess certain skills or abilities is to demonstrate them in action. In a similar way, how we respond to difficult times - including our willingness to be thankful for them - reveals the genuineness of our faith and trust in God. *"In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Peter 1:6-7).*

© 2018. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace; Tufting Legacies*; coauthored with David A. Stoddard, *The Heart of Mentoring*, and edited numerous other books, including *Advancing Through Adversity* by Mike Landry. Bob's biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

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Reflection/Discussion Question

1. What are your general thoughts about Thanksgiving Day - or another similar event when a time for expressing thanks is observed?
2. When you assess the past year, things you have experienced in your business, at work, and various areas of your personal life, do you feel thankful - or some other emotion? Explain your answer.
3. How do you express thanks for what God has done - or is doing - in your life?
4. Do you think it is reasonable to be expected to feel thankful for difficulties you encounter in life and work? Why or why not?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Psalm 34:1-9; Ephesians 5:20; Hebrews 12:11; 1 Peter 4:12-13, 5:10

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