

THE ART OF THANKSGIVING

An insightful program on how to live a life of thanks-giving by thanks-living.

“Thank you, Lord” is best said by Thanksgiving. Gratitude has been called the memory of the heart. It is the song of the soul in the presence of the goodness of God. Little people are rarely thankful. Grateful people are never small.

Yet gratitude has both a subject and an object. What we are grateful for is the subject of your gratitude. The one to whom we are grateful is the object of your gratitude. The supreme object of our gratitude, of course, is the Giver of every good and perfect. The subject of our gratitude is likewise many. We sometimes criticize thanksgiving that expresses gratitude for material blessings. Should it stop there, it would indeed be liable to criticism. Yet gratitude may well start with our bounties of tangibles and economic sorts, but let’s look a little further.

Someone made the statement in a prayer, “for everything that has been, Thank you, Lord.” I happen to think of Paul who said in 1Thessalonians 5:18, “In everything give thanks; for all this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” Now if you can do this, you are really thanks-living. Everything covers a wide area of good and bad, the blessings and the perplexities of life. Can you say you are thankful for the problems and the tests of life? If you can, and use them to your advantage to make your life more meaningful for others and the world is a better place to live, then you are really saying “thank you by thanks-living.” One person who stands out in my mind is Helen Keller. She took her disabilities, and with courage, faith, and determination, overcame them to live a useful life for others. She was saying “thank you by thanks-living.” Dr. Salk took the intelligence God blessed him with and discovered a cure for the dreaded disease polio. He was saying “thank you by thanks-living.” You may not feel you can do something as great or as meaningful in the world as a whole, but think of your world as the place in which you live, Dayton, Ohio. This is your world. You may share time with a shut-in or read to an elderly person. This is saying “thank you by thanks-living.” Thanking God for time by sharing it with someone less fortunate. You may work on a weakness in your own character or personality, taking your life and making the best of it. This is saying “thank you by thanks-living.”

The art of Thanksgiving is thanks-living. It is gratitude in action. It is applying Albert Schweitzer’s philosophy, “In gratitude for your own good fortune you must render in return some sacrifice of your life for other life.”

It is thanking God for the gift of life by living it triumphantly.

It is thanking God for your talents and abilities by accepting them as obligations to be invested for the common good.

It is thanking God for all that men and women have done for you by doing things for others.

It is thanking God for opportunities by accepting them as a challenge to achievement.

It is thanking God for happiness by striving to make others happy.

It is thanking God for beauty by helping to make the world more beautiful.

It is thanking God for inspiration by trying to be an inspiration for others.

It is thanking God for health and strength by the care and reverence you show your body.

It is thanking God for the creative ideas that enrich life by adding your own creative contributions for human progress.

It is thanking God for each new day by living it to the fullest.

It is thanking God by giving hands, arms, legs, and voice to your thankful spirit.

It is adding to your prayers of thanksgiving, acts of thanks-living.

Gail Swafford
Chapter DS, Dayton