

# Giving Thanks Even When Life is Less Than Perfect

## Action Guide



Giving thanks in all circumstances, especially when life is less than perfect feels like a huge ask. Actually, it is not so much an ask, as it is an expectation. Paul states this expectation very clearly to the persecuted Christians of Thessalonica when he writes, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Often times we find it difficult to find the energy and drive to do certain things because we lack a sense of direction. We engage in the existential pursuit with the question, “What is the purpose/meaning of my life? Why do I exist?” For Christians, we pose this question by asking, “What is God’s will for my life?” Paul tells us that God’s will is for you and me to “give thanks in ALL circumstances.” Paul tells us in Romans that we can test this, we can discover if what he is saying is true. We do this by “Offering our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”

Describe in your own words what it means for you to offer your body as a living sacrifice:

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Paul then instructs us to “No longer conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” (Romans 12:1-2).

Imagine you were talking with a friend who was not a believer and was experiencing a lot of hardship in their life about this idea of “giving thanks in all circumstances”. What do you suppose their reaction might be?

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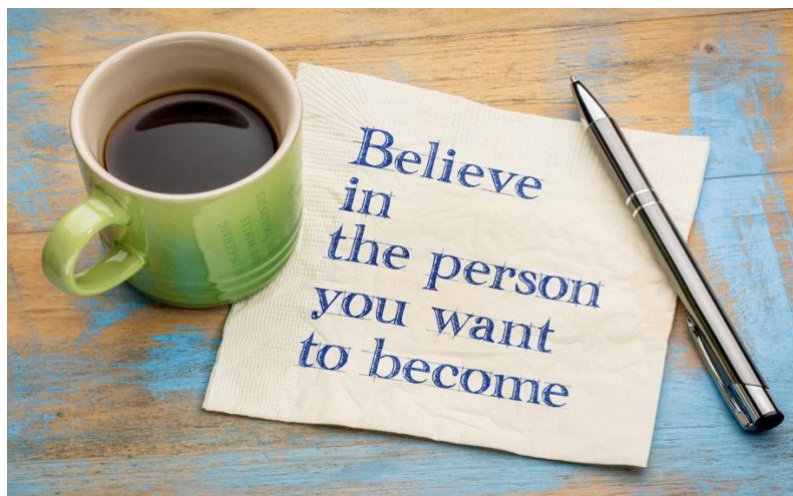
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How would you consider their reaction to be attractive or rational?

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It is difficult for us to give to others what we do not firmly believe ourselves. In other words, it is hard to invite others to give thanks in all circumstances if it really is not a part of our own daily walk. How do we develop the habit of giving thanks in all circumstances?

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We can develop the habit by counting our blessings. Paul writes in Ephesians 1 the following:

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with*

*every spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ; He chose us in Him, before the*

*foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He*

*predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure that He planned in Him. In Him we were also made His inheritance, predestined according to the purpose of the One who works out everything in agreement with the decision of His will."— (Ephesians 1:3-9, 11)*

Read through this passage again, but this time underline all the spiritual blessings that God provides to you.

List the blessings below:

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What are some additional blessings you have received from God over the years?

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When we recognize the blessings God has promised and that God has delivered on a regular basis it becomes more natural for us to give thanks to God in all circumstances. The primary reason we are able to give thanks even when life is less than perfect is because we have grown in our ability to trust God. God has proven to be trustworthy in the good days as well as the less than perfect days.

Giving thanks to God in the less than perfect days, in the all circumstances, is an expression of God reliance. The habit we are attempting to develop is the habit of God reliance.

**Gratitude is a response not only to what God does but also to who God is.**

Who do you say God is when you are experiencing circumstances that are quite difficult?

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**"All things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose." – Romans 8:28**

In your words write out what this verse means to you when you are trying to give thanks in all circumstances:

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We are able to solidify the habit of giving thanks in all circumstances when we are willing to remember that God's nature is good. God desires the best for you. God does not want to bring

harm to you. Recall some experiences where what looked bad turned out to be good because God provided you a new perspective to consider. If you need some help consider reading the story of Joseph starting in Genesis 37. Of course you can also just spend time reflecting upon the life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus 😊.

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Additional Biblical reflections to consider while developing the habit of giving thanks when life is less than perfect.

"Riches and honor come from You, and You are the ruler of everything. In Your hand are power and might, and it is in Your hand to make great and to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, we give You thanks and praise Your glorious name" ([1 Chronicles 29:12-13](#)).

"You turned my lament into dancing;  
You removed my sackcloth  
and clothed me with gladness,  
so that I can sing to You and not be silent.  
LORD my God, I will praise You forever" ([Psalm 30:11-12](#)).  
"We give thanks to You, God;  
we give thanks to You, for Your name is near.  
People tell about Your wonderful works" ([Psalm 75:1](#)).  
"LORD, I am indeed Your servant;  
I am Your servant, the son of Your  
female servant.  
You have loosened my bonds.  
I will offer You a sacrifice of thanksgiving  
and will worship the LORD" ([Psalm 116:16-17](#)).

"We thank You, Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was,  
because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign" ([Revelation 11:17](#)).

### **Daniel's Prayers of Thanksgiving**

"I offer thanks and praise to You,  
God of my fathers,  
because You have given me  
wisdom and power.  
And now You have let me know  
what we asked of You,  
for You have let us know  
the king's mystery" ([Daniel 2:23](#)).

## **Jesus' Prayers of Thanksgiving**

"I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to infants" ([Matthew 11:25](#)).

"Jesus took the loaves, and after giving thanks He distributed them to those who were seated—so also with the fish, as much as they wanted" ([John 6:11](#)).

"Jesus raised His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank You that You heard Me'" ([John 11:41](#)).

## **Paul's Prayers of Thanksgiving**

"I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers" ([Ephesians 1:16](#)).

"I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, appointing me to the ministry" ([1 Timothy 1:12](#)).

## **A Call to Thanksgiving**

"Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name;  
proclaim His deeds among the peoples" ([Psalm 105:1](#)).

"Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;  
His faithful love endures forever" ([Psalm 107:1](#)).

"Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" ([Philippians 4:6](#)).

"Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" ([1 Thessalonians 5:18](#)).