

# What a Day of ThanksLIVING Looks Like

“Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father . . .” (Ephesians 5:20). That’s a pretty tall order: *all the time?* for *all* things? Seriously?

When I was first challenged to obey this scripture, some 44 years ago, I thought that surely it wasn’t translated properly. Or maybe there was a footnote. Or an asterisk. Surely *some* kind of loophole, right?

Nope. It means just what it says. We can continually give thanks for all things because if God is truly in control, then everything He allows us to experience comes with His permission-and thus He has a plan. For everything He allows. Even if we can’t see it.

It became a way of life for me, and has been a habit for over four decades. With the celebration of Thanksgiving looming next week, I paid attention to what that long-standing habit sounds like in the course of a day.

[Upon waking] “Oh, it’s morning. Thank You, Lord, that my radio came on at the right time. That means we had uninterrupted electricity all night.” Alternatively, “Oh, it’s morning. Thank You so much for the blessing of being able to sleep till I woke up, with no alarm! What a blessing!”

[Upon turning over in bed] “Lord, thank You so, so much that I can shift position without pain now! Thank you again for the stem cell treatment that made it possible!”

[Upon getting out of bed into my mobility scooter] “Lord, {ouch ouch ouch} I thank You that the pain of moving from the bed to my scooter will dissipate quickly. And thank You again

that I have a scooter for getting around.”

[Standing up to transfer from the scooter to the commode] “Owwwww! But Lord, I thank You for the grab bars to lean on, and thank You for the new tall handicap toilet. It is so much easier to use this than the regular ones everywhere else.”

[Riding to the kitchen] “Lord, thank You for speed and painlessness! I love being the fastest one in the house!”

[Making coffee] “Lord! Bless You for creating coffee! Thank You for caffeine! Thank You for my coffee maker, and half and half, and sweetener. Thank You for mugs. Thank You for Central Market and the wonderful flavored coffees I can get there. Thank You for blessing [our son] Kevin in the coffee world—Lord, order his steps today in Nepal while he’s investigating becoming coffee partners with farmers there, and use him to help fight sex trafficking through coffee instead.”

[Moving to the couch] “Oh Lord, owwwww—thank You that the pain will subside quickly, and thank You for our couch and the table to hold my coffee while I read Your word. Thank You for a Bible in English and the ability to read. Thank You for the Holy Spirit to illumine its meaning to me. Thank You for an online Bible reading program from my church that allows me to join with thousands of people worldwide in reading the same passage and then reading a devotional from one of our members. Thank You for the technology that allows me to affirm the devotional and share my take on today’s reading.”

[Preparing to take a shower] “Thank You again, Lord, for this magnificent roll-in shower You gave us in the recent renovation to make our house handicap-friendly. Thank You for the grab bars and for the bench seat that lets me sit down. Thank You for the hand-held shower. And for hot water. And for clean hot water! And for 24/7 clean hot water! Thank You for the blessing of being able to take it for granted, but Lord, I don’t want to take it for granted.”

[Getting in the car] "Thank You, Lord, for [our son who lives with us] Curt's availability to help me get in and out of the car and take care of the scooter. Thank You that the barometric pressure is stable today so my pain level is lower. Thank You that no rain is forecast. Oh, there's our trash bin at the edge of the driveway; thank You for helping Ray remember to get it out before the garbage truck came by. And thank You for garbage pick-up, Lord! Thank You for people willing to take care of that for us!"

[Driving] "Thank You for paved roads, Lord. And for traffic lights. And for the engineers who set all that up. Thank You that everybody drives on the same side of the street. And thank You for everybody honoring that red lights mean stop and green lights mean go. Thank You that I can read all the road signs and street sights because they're in English. I remember sounding out the Cyrillic letters in Belarus like a kindergartner, and thank You for helping me do that when I was able to go, but today I'm thankful to be surrounded by English!"

[Arriving at church for Bible study] "Thank You, Lord, for the growing number of friends in 'Sue's Scooter Army' who are trained to help me by getting the scooter out of the car and bringing it to me at the driver's seat. Thank You for their sweet joy in genuinely being glad to help. Thank You for making my love language acts of service, so it makes me feel so loved!"

[Riding into the church] "Lord, thank You for electricity, and comfort because of the heating and air conditioning. Thank You there's nobody threatening to arrest or persecute us for coming to church. Thank You for the freedom to study Your word publicly . . . and Lord, today I am so very very grateful for the privilege of teaching Your word to precious women who are so teachable and so appreciative. Thank You for the ramp that allows me to ride my scooter onto the stage. Thank You for the face mic that lets me keep my hands free. Thank You for the

lights, and the padded chairs, and the audio system, and for Powerpoint that's working so everybody can see the slides I prepared. Thank You for the other leaders who helped me do my run through the other day so I could make my lecture even better. Thank You, Lord, for your Holy Spirit to empower me to speak Your truth in Your strength, to Your glory."

And that takes me to 10:30. That's what thanksLIVING looks like.

This blog post originally appeared at [blogs.bible.org/engage/sue\\_bohlin/what\\_a\\_day\\_of\\_thanksliving\\_looks\\_like](https://blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/what_a_day_of_thanksliving_looks_like) on November 14, 2017.

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## It's Not Rubbing the Genie's Magic Lamp

*Oct. 25, 2011*

Recently I heard a young man share his story of battling his unwanted same-sex attractions. Though Ben's dad loved him very much, he felt like he was everyone else's dad and *then* his dad. He also didn't connect with the masculine that his dad represented. He ended up with longings for deep connection with males. What helped him turn the corner was when he found people with whom he could be completely honest about his shameful desires and feelings, who also helped him develop his relationship with God.

He shared that he slowly realized his heart was looking for three things in other men. First, he longed for someone who was unquestionably a "Capital M-A-N" who made that intangible

connection with him that his father didn't make, leaving him with a father-shaped hole in his soul. And he realized that he was also looking for a rescuer, to pull him out of his own wretchedness. And finally, he wanted to be comforted by someone, he said, "who's there when I come back down, when I'm lost, when I'm troubled; I would fantasize about a guy who could just say the right things, do the right things, and comfort me any time I needed it."

Optimally, he told us, it would really great if he could find someone who would be all three of those things at one time, wrapped up in one person. That would be the "Mr. Right" he longed to find and be loved by.

The major "lightbulb moment" of his journey came when he realized that what he longed for was a Father, a Savior, and a Comforter. . . and that perfectly describes who God is—three in one, Father, Son and Spirit. And because he had trusted in Christ at an early age, that very God was already indwelling him! He realized that the triune God was everything his heart was longing for but he had been too blind to see. God, in giving Himself to His beloved son, was ready to meet Ben's heart's needs and longings, but would not force Himself on him. When Ben opened his heart to receive the Fathering, the Saving, and the Comforting of the God who loved him, everything shifted inside.

God connected some dots for *me* when hours later, our pastor observed that Psalm 37:4 is one of the first Bible verses that people memorize. . . and one of the most misunderstood.

*Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.*

Sounds like a magic formula, right? Delight yourself in the Lord, and you get what you want? Just a religious-sounding way of rubbing the genie's magic lamp to get your wishes granted? But that's not what it means.

When we delight ourselves in the Lord, He gives us Himself, and *He* is what our hearts desire. Uncover all the surface, temporary things we think we want, and underneath are the true desires of our heart: to be loved, to be known, to be valued, to be safe, to *matter*.

And as Ben showed us, to be fathered, to be rescued, to be comforted.

Yes, we want all those things—and our marvelous God delights to give them to us as He gives us Himself.

He is so good!

This blog post originally appeared at  
[blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue\\_bohlin/its\\_not\\_rubbing\\_the\\_genies\\_magic\\_lamp](https://blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/its_not_rubbing_the_genies_magic_lamp)

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## **“Trusting God a Joke Since Wicked Prosper, Godly Suffer”**

I write to you feeling perturbed about God. At times I really wonder the question of His existence.

I would appreciate if you could enlighten me in the area of trusting in God. I find it hard to trust Him nowadays. I trust in Him to provide financially, but instead I receive more financial problems. I see sinners who are ruthless and despicable earning tons of money, curse Him with the very breath He gave them. What a joke! His children suffered in hunger and He dared to claim that He will not allowed the righteous to suffer hunger. Sometimes when I see how He blessed those rogues, I told myself where is His logic? Of

course He hopes that by showing mercy, these crooks will repent, then how about His children who are suffering hunger? You mean God enjoys people cursing Him so that He could bless them? Then I think His children will begin to curse and swear at Him.

I poured my hope on Him in several areas of my life. He said that whoever called upon the name of the Lord shall not be put to shame. I trusted Him time and time again in some areas of my life such as my career, my family problems etc. But none of them came true for me. Instead my feeling right now that He is a cheat and I feel more ashamed trusting Him. What a joke!

I thought to myself, if He cannot even keep up His promise as Jehovah Jireh, our providence, that can meet our needs on earth, how can we trust Him for our salvation?

My pastor emphasized a lot on His grace and prosperity. I believe wholeheartedly but now I feel very cheated by such messages. I felt worse than Job, he suffered but at least God restored him eventually. I felt like a fool believing in a book that was claimed to be written by Him.

Jesus came to give us life so that we can have life more abundantly. Now instead of having life more abundantly, I guess it should be read as a bum's life. A life that is cheap and useless comparable to the fate of a bum.

I winced when I read that your pastor emphasizes prosperity. If it's the same kind of prosperity theology that some preach here in the U.S. that God wants to lavish good stuff on His kids, including health and lots of money and whatever our hearts desire then no wonder you are disillusioned with Him. We believe this is a false gospel and it leads believers to stumble because it teaches a lie about God.

God is concerned about His glory, and about us having a close, intimate relationship with Him (the second produces the first). Making us or keeping us comfortable usually doesn't

result in God getting the glory or in a close, dependent relationship with Him, because it's so easy to cherish the gifts instead of the giver.

So, because of false teaching, it is quite possible that you had unrealistic expectations of a God who is not the same God of the scriptures a God who is holy, just, righteous, sovereign, and not at all committed to jumping through our hoops. And then you blame God for not being faithful or good, correct?

But because God IS good and because He loves us so much, He only acts in our best interests. If our prayers are for things that are not in our best interest, He will not grant our requests (or our demands). Which is why I think Philippians 4:6-7 is so incredibly important: God wants us to let our requests be made known to Him *with thanksgiving*. However He chooses to answer, when we give thanks, we are relinquishing our illusion of control and expressing our belief that He is sovereign and He knows what He's doing.

I learned this important (and now precious to me) lesson the hard way when He kept saying "no" to the huge prayer of my heart for physical healing. I invite you to read my story, [How to Handle the Things You Hate But Can't Change](#).

Blessings,

Sue Bohlin

[Editor's Note: The inquirer shares the frustrations of the psalmists in seeing the rich and ruthless get off apparently scot-free, seemingly unnoticed by a God who promises justice and blessings. This quandary is nothing new, but it is significant that a sovereign God would allow it into the Scriptures it would make God look bad if there were no bigger, truer picture as explained briefly above. See for reference: Psalm 73: 2-12.

Regarding the inquirer's reference to Psalm 37: 25-2 about the righteous never being forsaken or their children begging for bread, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and others, explains, "David must surely have seen good people in great difficulties! But this misses the psalmist's point. He did not question that the righteous may be temporarily forsaken, needy and poor. Rather, he observed that nowhere can it be shown that the righteous have experienced continued desertion and destitution.... The point is this: in the long haul, God does not forsake his own whether they have little or much; their children will be blessed! (pages 267-268)." *Hard Sayings of the Bible* also addresses the issues of why the godly so frequently suffer and the ungodly seem so prosperous related to Psalm 73. For another Probe perspective on how Psalm 73 helps us deal with the problem of evil, please see Dr. Ray Bohlin's article ["Where Was God on September 11?"](#)]

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