

**Text:** 1 Chronicles 16:8-36

**Title:** Have a Healthy Thanksgiving

**Truth:** Thanksgiving is Healthy

**Date/Location:** November 23, 2022 at FBC

## I. The Medical Side of Healthy Thanksgiving

I gleaned several interesting thoughts from reading about the health of thanksgiving. And I don't mean about whether it is healthy to stuff yourself like a turkey is stuffed for the big meal tomorrow!

[https://www.comforcare.com/blog/Power-of-Thanksgiving--The-Health-Benefits-of-Gratitude\\_AE115.html](https://www.comforcare.com/blog/Power-of-Thanksgiving--The-Health-Benefits-of-Gratitude_AE115.html)

According to a recent study,<sup>1</sup> “Grateful people experience fewer aches and pains and report feeling healthier than other people. Also, grateful people are more likely to take care of their health. They exercise more often and are more likely to attend regular check-ups, which is likely to contribute to further longevity.

Gratitude also improves psychological health. It reduces a multitude of toxic emotions, from envy and resentment to frustration and regret. According to [Robert A. Emmons](#), professor of psychology at University of California, Davis and a leading scientific expert on the science of gratitude, “the practice of gratitude can have dramatic and lasting effects in a person’s life. It can lower blood pressure, improve immune function and facilitate more efficient sleep. Gratitude reduces lifetime risk for depression, anxiety and substance abuse disorders, and is a key resiliency factor in the prevention of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23139438/>

suicide.” Emmons believes gratitude works because it allows individuals to celebrate the present and be an active participant in their own lives. By valuing and appreciating friends, oneself, situations and circumstances, it focuses the mind on what an individual already has rather than something that’s absent and is needed.

Gratitude is also associated with higher levels of good cholesterol (HDL), lower levels of bad cholesterol (LDL), and lower systolic and diastolic blood pressure, both at rest and in the face of stressful situations. Being grateful also has positive benefits on sleep quality. According to a study conducted in England<sup>2</sup> with 400 participants, 40% of whom had sleep disorders, gratitude was related to having more positive thoughts, and fewer negative ones, at bedtime. This, in turn, was associated with dozing off faster and sleeping longer and better.

All the above is secular research. But what is God’s wisdom on the matter?

## **II. The Biblical Side of Healthy Thanksgiving**

But gratitude for specific things in the specific direction of God amplifies the benefits listed above. Thanksgiving in Scripture is associated with rejoicing and being glad. Being happy in turn is, according to Prov. 17:22, like medicine.

Gratefulness toward God draws us closer to God in our relationship with Him. This can never do the soul nor the body harm, only good.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19073292/>

Gratitude promotes overall health because it reduces the morally and sometimes physically dangerous pursuit of inordinate desires.

Those are true benefits of thanksgiving. But of course, the first and highest reason is that gratitude is holy. It is godly. It is urged upon us by God Himself. It is modeled by Jesus Christ. “I thank You, Father...” (Matt. 11:25). It is the expressed desire of God for us.

Lack of gratitude is a morally repugnant and shameful character trait. This is why we train our children to say “thank you” even before they “feel” the thanks. We hope it will help them be socially acceptable, and more importantly develop in them an ability to stop and think that what other people do for them, and what God has provided to them. This is external training which aims to develop inward character traits. But it is insufficient in itself to accomplish that goal because the inward takes teaching and thought and a change of heart. This is *critically* important.

Giving thanks induces your memory to be active in thinking of God’s goodness. This adapts and changes your entire frame of mind because it is changing about what and how you think.

Thanksgiving means you have less time to complain and gripe about things that are not right in your life. There are plenty of those things, we all have them, and complaining won’t do anything to help. You might object, “Well, thanksgiving won’t help either.” Except it will—it will help your mindset as we saw from secular science and also Biblical theology. That mindset shift will in turn mean that you look at the imperfect things in a different

way. You manage them differently in your mind. You approach them with a different attitude. You solve them with gratitude instead of anger or dissatisfaction.

Giving thanks gets your eyes off yourself and points them outward, toward others, toward God. This is why being grateful reduces depression and similar negative feelings, because it turns your focus away from self. It may even help you see the need of others which outstrips your own perceived needs.

### **III. A Bad Kind of Thanksgiving?**

Jonah 4:6 records Jonah was thankful for the plant that grew up to provide him shade. But his gratitude was self-centered because the plant provided him comfort from the heat and blazing brightness of the sun. If you are grateful for a thing, but not the giver of the thing, then you could fall into a sort of selfish thankfulness.

“I am thankful that I have a plant to protect me...” If both subject and object are about “me” with no one else mentioned, then I wonder about that kind of thanksgiving. Or if the subject is me and the object is a material thing, we should also pause.

### **Conclusion**

Christian theology reminds us that God is infinite. He is so big that He is under, over, in, and through everything. Whatever good and right thing we are thankful for must be associated somehow with Him.

Gratitude affects our mind, our speech, our attitude, our bodies, our health, our sleep. Let’s be thankful!