



With the enticement of great deals on Black Friday, the excitement of gridiron battles (do the Lions and Cowboys always have to play?), and the stealing of ourselves for sometimes stressful extended family interactions, the meaning of Thanksgiving can get blurred. I'm guessing that we all pause to give thanks for the food, family members, and friends gathered around the table. But, giving thanks isn't a practice reserved for just a single day each year. It has deeper spiritual significance and benefits that linger long after the leftovers are consumed.

Gratitude is a heart tenderizer. It keeps our eyes focused on God, the source of all good. It keeps our hearts open so that the Spirit – pouring in love, joy, peace, grace, patience, humility, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control (challenging when the pumpkin pie makes its debut) - has ample room to grow inside of us.

At the start of each of his letters, Paul expresses his thanks for the people. "First, I want to say that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you" (Romans 1:8). "I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you through Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:4). "I thank God every time I remember you" (Philippians 1:3). "I remember you in my prayers. I thank God because I hear about the love you have for all God's holy people and the faith you have in the Lord Jesus" (Philemon 1:4-5).

There's something about expressing gratitude for a person - not just saying thank you when they do something, but saying thank you for just being - that not only encourages, but also strengthens the relationship. Expressing gratitude acknowledges that we hold that person with the kind of esteem proclaimed by Paul. Indeed, gratitude may be one of the most impactful messages that we can convey to another.

I am thankful for each of you.

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