

30 Days of Thanksgiving
Cultivating a Thankful Heart

By Jim Liebelt

One of my favorite holidays is Thanksgiving! While great food, friends, family and football make for a wonderful day, taking time out of my fast-paced life to think through the many blessings and to express gratitude to God and to others is really why I love this holiday so much. An attitude of gratitude, of course, shouldn't be a once-a-year deal, and hopefully cultivating a thankful heart goes beyond that one special Thursday in November for all of us. Still, it doesn't hurt to rev up our gratitude "engines" as we get closer to Thanksgiving Day. So, here is a simple 30-day plan for you and your family that can help do just that!

Thanksgiving Season 2009

Day #1 - Sunday, 11/1 – Thank God for Today. All we really have is today. Thank God for giving us this day. “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Psalm 118:24

Day #2 – Monday 11/2 – Floral Thank You. Express your thanks to someone by giving them flowers. This doesn't have to be expensive – you can cut them from your own garden, if you have one.

Day #3 - Tuesday, 11/3 – Thanks for Freedom! Thank God for allowing us to live in a democracy where we are allowed to vote. Sure, we don't live in a “perfect” country, but we can certainly be thankful for the many freedoms we enjoy that many countries don't.

Day #4 - Wednesday, 11/4 – Thank God for Silence. Due to the fast pace of our lives these days, most of us have forgotten the gifts of silence and reflection. Take a few minutes sometime today, find a quiet spot and think of things you are grateful for.

Day #5 - Thursday, 11/5 – Thanksgiving Invitation. Find someone you are thankful for and invite them to your family's Thanksgiving Day celebration. If you're not going to be home for Thanksgiving Day, invite them over for coffee and pie sometime around the holiday.

Day #6 - Friday, 11/6 – Thanks for the Encouragement! Today, think of someone in your past who has helped you to know God better. Mail them a note, send them an email or tell them in person that you are thankful for their help along the way.

Day #7 - Saturday, 11/7 – Thanks for the Pain? We all have hard times, but God is with us even in the worst circumstance. Thank God for His presence, comfort and strength that has helped you get through a rough season in your life.

Day #8 - Sunday, 11/8 – Give Thanks for God's Word. Offer up thanks to God today, for giving us the Scriptures. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

Day #9 - Monday, 11/9 – Laughter Day. There’s just something about laughter that makes it easier for us to be grateful people. So, make today laughter day in your home. Tell funny stories, jokes, watch a good comedy together and thank God that He gave us the gift of humor.

Day #10 - Tuesday, 11/10 – Reminder Day. Have a hard time remembering to be thankful? Put reminders up around your house, a note on your refrigerator, for example, that says “Give Thanks”.

Day #11 - Wednesday, 11/11 - Thank a Veteran Day. Regardless of your views on war, there is no doubt that in our country we are surrounded by brave men and women who have served their country with honor. Find a veteran today, and say thank you. If you know of a World War 2 veteran, call one up to say thanks. These WW2 veterans are dying at the rate of over 1,000 per day. So, take advantage of saying thank you to them while you still can!

Day #12 - Thursday, 11/12 – Wake Up and Smell the Coffee Day. We all get so busy that we can ignore the wonders all around us – like the smell of coffee when we get up, the roses in the backyard, or a friend who drops by to say hello. Today, take time to notice your surroundings and thank God for the things we often take for granted.

Day #13 - Friday, 11/13 – Little Things Make a Difference. We often ignore the little things in life that make life easier and better for us. Today, make a list of ‘little things’ that you appreciate. For example, my list will include indoor plumbing, refrigerators and my laptop computer.

Day #14 - Saturday, 11/14 – Positive Thoughts Only! Okay, this one will take some work, but strive today to think only positive thoughts about other people and the situations you find yourself in. You’ll be amazed at how this improves your day – and you’re likely to find how your positive attitude affects others as well!

Day #15 - Sunday, 11/15 – Knowing Jesus. I cannot explain to you how thankful I am that I have been blessed with the opportunity to know Jesus. The difference He’s made in my life – through knowing Him as Savior and Lord – cannot be measured. Today, give thanks for knowing the Savior!

Day #16 - Monday, 11/16 – Quick Thanks. Today, jot a quick note, email, or text to someone in your life whom you wish to thank for something they’ve done.

Day #17 - Tuesday, 11/17 – Thank Therapy Day. Make a list of 10 people you are thankful for. Call, email, or text one of them and tell them they are on your top 10 list!

Day #18 - Wednesday, 11/18 – Prayer Path Day. Today, say a quick prayer of thanks for everyone who crosses your path – like the cashier at the Burger King or the person delivering your morning paper.

Day #19 - Thursday, 11/19 – Experience the Moment! Too often, we focus more on what we need to do tomorrow or next week than we do on what’s happening today. Today, live in the present and be thankful for it – from raking the leaves to planning your Thanksgiving dinner.

Day #20 - Friday, 11/20 – Thank God for Learning! Something often overlooked in our lives is that God created us with the ability to learn. So, whether you are in school now, are learning a new hobby, or have learned a lesson from a poor decision, thank God today for the capacity to learn.

Day #21 - Saturday, 11/21 – What I Like About You... Today, take a few minutes and make a list of the things you like about your immediate family members. Share your list with your family sometime during the day – and thank them for those things!

Day #22 - Sunday, 11/22 – Heritage Sunday! Today, thank God for the long line of Christ-followers who have gone before us as well as those who share in and encourage our faith these days. Their faith and faithfulness to share it with us is a tremendous heritage!

Day #23 - Monday, 11/23 – Thanksgiving Phone Call. Call a relative or friend who will be away from you on Thanksgiving Day. Thank them for their presence in your life.

Day #24 - Tuesday, 11/24 – Food, Food, Food! As you begin to think about that great Thanksgiving Day meal you'll be eating in a couple days, take some time to thank God for food and the abundance most of us experience. Pray for those who will go without this Thanksgiving Day. Do something for someone less fortunate than you, if you are able.

Day #25 - Wednesday, 11/25 – The Blessing of Family and Friends. Tomorrow is T-Day! Make a brief list of why you are thankful for these people. Thank God by name for each person you will be spending tomorrow with. Tomorrow, tell each person why you are thankful for them.

Day #26 - Thursday, 11/26 – Thanksgiving Day. Enjoy your celebration! Take time to reflect on the meaning attached to this day. Perhaps you can read one of the 'Thanksgiving Proclamations' that were written by our past Presidents, such as George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. They are easy to locate on the Internet. In fact, they are posted on HomeWord.com.

Day #27 - Friday, 11/27 – Take a Trip Down Memory Lane. You probably have photos or videos from Thanksgiving celebrations from the past. Take some time today to remember Thanksgivings gone by and thank God for the loved ones you've spent these holidays with.

Day #28 - Saturday, 11/28 – Exercise! After the past few days, you're probably in need of burning off some calories. Enjoy a walk, take a hike, or do whatever you can do and like to do. Thank God for your physical abilities. We might not be in the best physical condition, but we can still give thanks for the capabilities we do have!

Day #29 - Sunday, 11/29 – God's Work in You. It's not uncommon to overlook the difference God is making in your own life. Take a few moments to make a list of things you appreciate about yourself. Remember, God is at work in your life – so thank Him for it! "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, you will abound in every good work." 2 Corinthians 9:8

Day #30 - Monday, 11/30 – Thanks for the Service! Today, make a special effort to say thank you to anyone who provides you with a service. The barista at Starbucks, for example, might be pleasantly shocked when you tell him or her how great a job they've done preparing your pumpkin-spice latte.

Jim Liebelt is Senior Editor of Publications for HomeWord, and the Senior Writer, Editor and Researcher for the Center for Youth and Family at Azusa Pacific University.

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