

Living Thanksgiving

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

It seems that some people know how to do life better than others. Certain individuals beam a quality that causes friends and family to want what they have. Others don't. Do you know anybody that shines a light that seems to brighten everyone else around? More than merely animated, these folks seem to have tapped into a sustainable source of vitality that radiates.

When the spirit of the almighty God is abiding inside a person, and specifically positioned at the helm steering the course of it, there will be certain byproducts that will manifest in that person's life. The Bible describes in Galatians 5, the sorts of characteristics found in such individuals: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, patience, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Conversely, when there are darker forces driving, everything will be attributed much differently.

When one is born again by the spirit of God, everything is made new; shackles are loosed, and prisoners of old paradigms are set free. This opens the opportunity to accept the invitation from God to experience his presence in ways otherwise impossible. As it says in Hebrews 4:16: "Let us come boldly before his throne of grace." And like a good host, our loving heavenly Father does not request our presence without instructing how to get there.

Psalm 95:2 exhorts: "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving." And in this simple phrase we are given a key that unlocks doors with seemingly endless possibilities and potential. It's the heart that gives thanks to God that is prepared to experience him, and is becoming a receptacle for his oil, and a lamp for his light. Spending time with citizens of the heavenly kingdom, who are clearly ambassadors of the king himself, gratifies the soul, and causes one to want to experience the same life-giving source. Jesus has given the access, but it remains an un-opened gift for many.

A lot of people are counting blessings this week; it's sort of a tradition along with food, family and football. Some see this as a good thing to do. Others will take a moral position and say it is the right response. Sometimes we resound the emotional benefits of an attitude of gratitude. But Jesus offers us more than just course correction for life-misdirection. He holds out a cup of living water and invites us to drink.

This is a lesson on how to experience God: his presence, power and promises. We are herein taught how to pray

effectively and worship authentically. Humility and honesty in relationship is prerequisite. "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. Be thankful to him, and bless his name, for the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endures to all generations" (Psalm 100:4-5).

The persisting peace and joy that one sees is the manifestation of connection with God. But fear and worries can war against this and choke the life. This is why Philippians 4:6 teaches the follower of Christ how to overcome anxieties: "... by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." So our annual festivity is more than turkey, trimmings and television to the one desiring to answer the call; it is a commemoration of a 24/7 lifestyle of "**Living Thanksgiving.**"

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.

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9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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Mid-Week Study:
7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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