

# “Thankfulness in All”

## By Brother Andy Giebler

### Sunday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014

I know I’m not worthy of all that, but our God is. We serve a great God. I’m thankful for that question you asked this morning: “How great is it...?” and I just wanted to scream, “It is great to be in the House of God.”

I’m going to start off with a praise:

**1 Chronicles 16:34-35** *O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise.*

Can we bow our heads for prayer? God Almighty, I thank You. I thank You for Your mercy, for Your grace, for Your salvation. God, for the ability just to speak to give glory to Your name. I pray for this message, this morning, God that I would be Your vessel, that I would be—that the words that I would speak would not be my own, but that You would guide me this morning. Bless each person here this morning as they hear these words. We thank You, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

I’m thankful this morning for all the many things that God has done, I’m thankful for this ministry. I look back at our pastors, from Pastor Davis, preaching and leading from behind this pulpit, for Pastor Paine, for Pastor Wilson, and Pastor Saniatan, and for many of the brothers that come up here and preach, and, if I’d start to name them all, I’m sure I’d miss somebody. To be able—after sitting on that side for many years, I’m thankful. I count it a privilege to be on this side, to be able to deliver the Word, because I don’t take this lightly. I don’t think any of the men who have come before to do this have, either. It’s a powerful thing to speak the Word of God. We’re coming into our Thanksgiving timeframe—actually, let me back up. One more thing that I want to say I’m thankful for is sanctuary. We come into this room today, and we call this our sanctuary. There’s nothing special about this building, except the fact that you are here. It’s our sanctuary because of the God that we serve. I’m thankful for—we talk about our military, and our country, and I’m thankful for that. I’m thankful for being in a place where I can serve my God; I can serve openly. But, that’s not guaranteed to us. It’s not guaranteed; there’s many countries where people aren’t free. There may be a day when we may not have that privilege. But, I still thank God, because, when we talk about sanctuary, because of the gift of Jesus, who is in our lives, we have our sanctuary, whether we’re here in this building or not. You know, the woman at the well, Jesus told her, “You must worship in Spirit and in truth.” Not in the mountain, not in the Temple... It’s good that we come here; it’s good that we get fellowship. It strengthens us; it’s very needful. But, this isn’t the place where God dwells. This is where God dwells (pointing to his heart). I thank God that, in the sanctuary, I can call on God’s name, anytime 24-7. My God is there. I don’t have to go find a priest. I don’t have to go kill an animal; I don’t have to do anything but present myself a living sacrifice to God.

We’re coming into this holiday season; I’m driving on my way to church this morning, and I’m seeing people putting up Christmas lights already. We have poinsettias, beautiful flowers, this morning. It’s just a reminder—we turn on the television and we see advertising, just a reminder of the holiday season. A reminder of what the world is about. Before I get too deep, I just want to hit, look at: (This is all for free; this isn’t what I planned on preaching...)

**Romans 14:5-6** *One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he*

*that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*

We have a lot of people that celebrate different holidays. We just finished Hallowe'en, we have Thanksgiving, Christmas, and everything in between; celebrate unto God. Yes, I said Hallowe'en, and I'm not digging too deep into that, but there's always part of that. If you're going to do something, do it unto God. Let everyone know that, whether it's Hallowe'en, Christmas, any of it, that we're celebrating it unto God. With that, I do want to give an encouragement: We're coming up to Christmas. Don't get caught unawares, come Christmastime, when you start hearing the Christmas stories, and you start seeing the cards, and hearing the verses that come out, "I need to go back and study that." Start studying now. Start going back and looking over that Christmas story now. It gives it something—as we go into it, it makes these holidays so much more—we get so much more out of the holidays if we look ahead now, and start looking at those Scriptures, and start looking at the Christmas story. There's some people, that the only thing they know of Christmas is what they see on a Hallmark card; what they see on television. Every year, as generations go, that gets even further and further away from people knowing the Christmas story, so we need to know it, not just for ourselves, and I learned this from Pastor Paine on studying and learning, learn it to teach somebody. Learn it so that as we go to celebrate these holidays, we celebrate them unto God, that people know it, and we can enlighten them as well. Amen.

At Thanksgiving, we talk about the original settlers, and they came over, the Pilgrims, and I'm not a big historian on that, but that's kind of the basics on where we start our Thanksgiving celebration. I look back, and they talk about how they gave thanks. I look back, and I say, "Okay, they gave thanks, but what were they giving thanks for? When they came to this new land, what were they looking for?" They're giving thanks for something they came to get. They didn't get here by chance; they were looking for something. They sought something. They made a plan. They had to make alliances with people. You know, they didn't just say, "Hey, let's get on a boat and go across the ocean." That was kind of fairly unheard of at that point in time, and a pretty scary thought. You might go out on a boat and never come back. So, they made preparations; they sought for it. I look at us in our different stages of our life, whether it's age or careers, or whatever we're doing in life, whether it's an infant—the want something: they may want to be fed; they may want to have a diaper changed; they want to be warm; they want affection—as a child grows up, at every stage of life, they want and need something a little different. When I was in the military, I had just left home, at eighteen, and I was looking for something. I had needs; I had things I wanted; I had things I was seeking for. I thank God that He met me there. I thank God that He gave me the needs and the desires of my heart. As we get older in our careers, we change. And, we all have things that we seek for. The question is, how do we get it? Well, we seek God. You know, in this country that we live in, we hear a lot about asking and receiving, and, "Just ask God! He's going to give it to you!" But there's not so much talk about, "Okay, what are we going to do to receive it?" How are we living? I want to look at a Scripture:

**James 4:1** *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn,*

*and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

We sang a song this morning, “Call Him Up.” I asked for a blessing; I asked for direction; I asked for the Holy Ghost; I asked for salvation. “Ye have not because ye ask not.” Parrish was sharing with some people and he was talking about making a list, writing things down. Saying, “God, these are things that I put before Your throne. Now, that’s a double-edged sword in itself. Sometimes we put down these things on the list, but we leave some things off. We stay away from some areas in our lives. We say, “God, here’s my list, and this one over here is mine.” We don’t put things on the list because we don’t want God to touch them. We don’t want God to get into that area of our life. We have not because we ask not. It’s all about—this morning I want to talk about how God rewards faithfulness. That’s our faithfulness to God in everything we do. If we’re not faithful in everything we do, how do we expect God to bless us? We have to realize, there’s nothing too big for God. Most of us pretty much get that, but, on the other side, there’s nothing too insignificant to bring to God as well. There’s nothing so small that we can say, “God, I got this.” There’s nothing too small that we can’t say, “God, can You guide me on this?” Those are the ones that get us in trouble. Those are the ones that put us to the point where, I guess, you get numb to it. Parrish was talking about how somebody gave him some vitamins, and they made him feel good. He took them for a few days, and then he forgot about it, because he felt so good. You know, sometimes God does things for us and we fail to even recognize that God did it for us. Or, if we do, we let it pass without saying, “God, thank You.” The lepers, ten were healed, one came back. He didn’t just say, “Hey, thanks, Jesus.” No, he turned around and he praised God with a loud voice; he gave glory to his God. He made sure that He knew that he gave glory to the One Who healed him. We have to make sure that it’s all-encompassing, because if we look at James chapter 1 (I’m not going to turn to it, but you can look it up), it says a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). You can’t bring this piece to God and just leave it. That’s not faithfulness to God. God may give you some blessings—because there’s things God gives us that we don’t even ask for, sometimes, and there’s things that we have to go seek His face for. God desires more than just service out of obligation. More than just, “Well, here’s the letter of the law; I’ve got to do it. I can do this; I can do this... Man, I can’t do that!” He wants our love.

**Deuteronomy 6:1-6** *Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. [This was God speaking through His prophet to the nation of Israel] Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:*

This was Old Testament. God wants us to love Him. That was before the death, burial, and resurrection. That was before the Comforter, the gift of the Holy Ghost. That was God speaking to His people there. He wanted to—that has been a statute, you know God has been the same forever. He wants us to love Him; He wants us to commune with Him. He wants us to take time to seek His face. That’s the starting-point of God rewarding us, the starting-point of God’s blessing, because when we go seek His face, then he rewards us.

Thankfulness. What does it mean to be thankful? We talk about the word thankful. How do we show it? We have—we teach our kids. Any one of us, we go to a young person, and hand them a present or a piece of candy, and they turn around and walk off, what’s the first thing we say to them? “What do

you say?" We teach them to say thank you. It's our culture. It's proper; it's what we do. It goes beyond that; that's just the starting of teaching of thankfulness. We teach our kids to be thankful, to be cognizant of who gave them the gift, to realize that someone didn't have to do that for them. So, how do we show that love and appreciation? It's more than just an obligatory thank you.

Let me use an analogy, something that happened in our house: My wife has a job, and she has the privilege of not having to go to her place of employment on Fridays. I've learned not to say that she doesn't work on Fridays, because that gets me in trouble. It's kind of like telling a stay-at-home mom that she doesn't have a job or she doesn't work. That'll get you in trouble. So, she takes the time to clean our home that day. Now, if I'm to come home and find the place clean, and just leave my stuff spread out across the floor, that's not a good thing. I might feel justified, because I've had a long day, and I'll get it later, but, seriously, does that show my appreciation for what she did? That she took the time to clean the house? I walk in the kitchen; there's no dishes in the sink, everything's clean. I walk in the living room, everything's in its place... Now, I have a choice at that point: I can disregard it, or I can respect it. Now, the choices are there, it's why I do it. I can say, "Well, I know she's not going to be happy if I leave things a mess." That's one way to look at it. The other side is, I know that she did something out of love, and I respect that, and I'm going to show here my love by not making a mess. By taking little things that I think are maybe insignificant to me and taking the time to keep things in their place. I can do it out of love. That's what I was talking about earlier, doing things out of obligation, the letter of the law. If I do things out of, "Well, I know God's going to be mad if I do this," or, "It's just wrong," where is my spirit in all that? Am I taking my time to commune with God? Am I doing it out of a heart-felt gratitude for God and the wonders and the miracles and the salvation that He's given me, or, am I doing it out of the letter of the law? If I do it out of the letter of the law, I'm going to be in trouble. If we try to live by the letter of the law, we have to keep the entire law, and we are a debtor to the entire law (Galatians 5:3). I don't think that I'm going to be able to do that, and I thank God for the grace that He gives. The Scripture talks about I do not frustrate the grace of God (Galatians 2:21). I can't just tempt God by saying, "I know I'm covered by grace," and tempt God by saying, "He'll forgive me." That's tempting God. That's putting yourself in a bad place with God.

Serving God means not withholding anything from God. I was reading over the story of Abraham, and God gave him a promise that he would be the father of many nations. He told him that his seed would number as the sands of the deserts, the stars in the sky... Many nations would come from him. When He's telling him this, he has no kids. He has a wife; they are old. She's past the age of bearing children, by biological standards. She's not going to have any kids. God says this is what's going to happen. Abraham goes his own way, and says he'll have children by another wife, and God says no. Ishmael is not the promise; he is not the one for this. Eventually he has a son, Isaac. Then God tells him, "Okay, take your son, take him on a mountain and sacrifice him." Now, He's given him a promise, "You're going to have a mighty nation come out of you." He says, "This is the only son you've got, go put him on an altar, and sacrifice him to me." Abraham does; he gets everything ready to go, takes his son, takes his servants, goes to the mountain, he and his son go up. His son, Isaac, looks at him and says, "Okay, where's the sacrifice?" and Abraham says, "God will provide Himself a sacrifice." Abraham had to be faithful in everything he had, even if it didn't make any sense. God told him this is what's going to happen. All this is going to happen. It was a long time coming just to get to the point to have his first son. Then God says, "Now you're going to sacrifice him." Abraham did not withhold anything from God. I look at my own life, and I realize that I have to say, "God, what am I withholding from you? What do You desire?" We look throughout the Old Testament, and it shows where Abraham and Isaac, and Moses, they were all spoken to; prophets would speak to them. Angels of God came and spoke to them. God spoke to them in dreams. I believe that, today, that God speaks to us. God speaks to our hearts, He pricks our hearts; He shows us things. But they made time to entertain those, and if we don't take time to entertain those, if we don't take time to commune with God, to fellowship with God, take time for servitude to God... How does God

Speak to me, if I don't do that? How do I know that God wants me to go do something? And, if I do, I have to have the faith in God to know that, "Okay, God's going to work this out." I know there's many times I can attest to that God says, "Go do this. Go speak to this person. Have this conversation," and it's just not convenient, but God comes through when we're faithful to make that step, to step out on faith. He'll take that, and He'll show us things that we've never seen before; He'll show us things that we could never imagine. Just because we can't see how things are going to work out doesn't mean that God didn't speak to us. Amen. When we did our coming together moving up; when Pastor Paine and his family moved to Virginia, Pastor Paine stood in the pulpit and said, "This is where God is leading me right now. This is the step that God has told me to take." He stood there with his bare face hanging out and said, "God hasn't given me the next step beyond that, but this is where God told me to go, and this is what we're going to do." I've taken that as a challenge to me, to say, "Okay, I'm going to step out on faith." I had no idea where this was going to go. I had no idea where our fellowship was going to wind up. I'm blessed to see the growth; I'm blessed to see people coming up higher in God; I'm seeing people teach... Just to get a text message on a Friday night or Saturday morning and say, "Hey, somebody's getting baptized!" That's awesome. That tells me that we're about doing what God told us to do. Some of us here have looked at this and said, "What's going to happen?" and we said, "Okay, we're going to move forward." This is where we're at; this is where God has called us to be. We're going to step forward, and we're going to let God use us, here. It's all about sacrifice. It's all about putting what we have before God and saying, "God, it's yours." Obedience is better than sacrifice. We're going to look at a story out of First Samuel (1 Samuel 15). The prophet, Samuel, tells Saul, "You're going to go to the Amalekites; destroy everything. Destroy every man, woman, child, beast, king... Leave nothing." And they go off into battle. King Saul comes back, and Samuel hears noises that aren't from the army; they aren't the soldiers. He didn't do what he said he was going to do, or what he was supposed to do. King Agag, he brought him back alive. He brought back the best of the spoils, the goats and the rams and whatever else. He came back, and he said, "We're going to sacrifice this unto God." It wasn't his value; I don't think he regarded it at all. He said, "We're going to sacrifice it," but that wasn't what God told him to do. He said that God has pleasure in obedience, rather than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). Sometimes we look at, and we say, "Oh, we're sacrificing, we're doing things." Doing things may not be what God wants us to do sometimes. We have to say, "God, what is the sacrifice You would have me to make? What is the thing that You would have me to do?" I don't think God's going to tell us to go destroy a nation. I think the things that we have are not nearly that weighty. It could be giving up of our sleep sometimes, giving up things that we think we're entitled to, giving up a meal, giving up a time of sitting in front of a television program—that time, just sitting there. We get caught up in those things. I know it sounds funny when I say it from up here, but I think many of us will say that there's times when we get caught up in a story; we get caught up in an act... I will admit, there's some online games, and a game in itself is not bad, but, you get caught up in a whole 'nother world, there. It could be in FaceBook, it could be in—and I'm not preaching against anything specifically, but I've found myself sitting on FaceBook, and I'll scroll through a bunch of pictures, and neat, cute things, and, there's an hour of my life that I'll not get back. For nothing, you know? I know some of you use that as a ministering tool, and I am not bashing that at all, but I'm saying we've got to stop and say, "What's between me and God? What am I not giving up? What am I using as an excuse?" As King Saul did; King Saul said, "Oh, it's to sacrifice." What am I using as an excuse, you know?

I like what Bob does, because Bob goes fishing, but I know, if Bob goes fishing, it ain't about the line in the water. It's about fishing—fishing for souls. He may be going to the bank and putting the line in the water, but it's not about the line in the water. It's easy to—fishing could become, "I got to do it every day. I get off work, I've got to go fishing," "I've got to go hunting," "I've got to go play a sport," "I've got to play baseball," "I've got to..." whatever it is. Like I said, those things, of themselves, are not wrong, but what are we putting before God and saying, "This is my sacrifice," when that's not what God wanted us to do in the first place. Later on, in the Book of First Samuel, at this point, Saul has been rejected by

God as the king. Samuel has been sent to the house of Jesse to find who's going to be the next king. It's a pretty wild story; I'm not hardly getting into any of the details here, I'm just making a point out of it.

**1 Samuel 16:7** *But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance...*

He was looking at the sons of Jesse, looking at who was going to be the king.

**1 Samuel 16:7** *But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

He couldn't look at the king and judge him on his outward appearance, either. God had rejected him. On his outward appearance, he was doing what kings do, but God had rejected him. God looks at our heart. God looks at what we're doing from our heart. It come back to loving God. He wants our—okay, we're talking Old Testament here; how does that relate to me, today? How does that come home to me, right here, right now?

I did some re-reading that really did me some good, reading about Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses and how each one of them were rewarded. They were in a land that was not their own, yet each of them were rewarded. Abraham was told, "Get out of the land of your father; go to a land that I will give you." Jacob had to go, when he—if you're familiar with the story of Jacob and Esau, Esau was the firstborn of twins, Jacob and Esau, born to Isaac. Esau was the firstborn; he had a birthright. It was his. All he had to do was to be born first, and it was his. Yet, he despised his birthright, so Jacob took the birthright. Jacob, when he went to take a wife, went to the house of Laban. He served him for a number of years, for a wife, and then more for a second wife, because Laban tricked him, and gave him the wrong wife. Changed his wages ten times... So, he was in a land that was not his own. He was in a land that was someone else's, and God blessed him, and he prospered, and Laban prospered because of him. Laban didn't want him to leave, because when he (Jacob) served God, then he (Laban) was blessed of God. Joseph, when his brothers cast him into the pit, and then later took him out and sold him into slavery. He was taken as a slave, as a servant, accused wrongly, and cast into prison. He still served God. God still gave him the interpretation of dreams, even in prison. He was faithful with it. When his day finally came, that somebody remembered, "Hey, this guy can interpret dreams," when Pharaoh had two dreams that troubled him, the Pharaoh in Egypt, he pulled him out, and he interpreted the dreams. Because he was faithful to God, he went from servant to jail to a governor under Pharaoh. Because of his faithfulness to God, a nation was saved from famine. There was seven years of plenty, and he was in charge of bringing into the storehouses, and saving for those seven years, because God showed him in the dream that the seven years after that would be famine. Egypt was saved because of that; not only that, but the entire nation of Israel was saved because of that. The entire nation of Israel had come to Israel for food, and his brothers were afraid. His brothers were sure, when they finally figured out that's who they were going to for food, "That's our brother; we sold him into slavery!" They were pretty scared at the time, but Joseph said, "No, what was meant for evil, God meant for good." Because he was faithful to God, many people were spared of that, and the nation of Israel was preserved, too. That goes to thankfulness; that goes to gratitude; that goes to serving God. That goes to the fact that God rewards our faithfulness, no matter what situation we're going through. It's easy when things are down, stuck in prison, "Yeah, God's left me here." Joseph didn't do that. His faithfulness to God is why he was blessed.

So, back to us today. Let's look at

**John 14:14-18** *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*

*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*

He said, "I will come to you." Just knowing that we have that Spirit here, that I can go to God anytime and tell Him what I need, and ask Him what He has for me. It go a step further:

**John 15:14-15** *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

In both those Scriptures, He said, "Keep My commandments." Keep my commandments. You look in the Old Testament, especially in the Book of Genesis, you don't see a lot of preaching, you don't see a lot of church, you don't see evangelism, you see men that served God. You see men that kept the commandments of God. Sure, church is good; I won't down that, but, it's more than church. You will find, even in the Old Testament, they were told to rehearse the Law in their ears. You can read throughout the Old Testament what happened when they forgot the Law, when they forgot the statutes, when they forgot the commandments of God. That's when they were in bondage; they were under the thumb of someone else because they forgot who God was. They forgot who their God was. They weren't serving Him because they didn't know Him. They didn't take the time to do what we do here, to sing praises, to worship, to gather in homes that had fellowship. To gather in a coffee shop to just talk about the Word of God. Sure, there's times that you can't, but, if you find that there's times that you can, and you don't, and you find that you're having a rough patch, well... Am I doing the things that help me to serve my God? "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

There's accounts of this scripture in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; I'm going to go to:

**Luke 10:25-28** *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.*

Loving God with all. Seeking God with all. With all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength. That's pretty much everything. We could go into what each one of those means, but, heart, soul, mind, and strength; everything I've got. When you give it to God—He's showing that, when you give it to God, He blesses unconditionally. God wants to be first in everything we do.

So, going back to the question: How do we show our thankfulness? The Scripture says by serving Him, keeping His commandments. How do we show our gratitude to God? by following His statutes. We can see that God has always provided a way for His people. He sees us in our affliction. He sees us in the good times and the bad times; He hears us when we cry to Him. There's nothing too big or too small to take to God. Once again, we lack sometimes because we fail to say, "God, I need this." Or, when we don't know, sometimes, "God, I don't even know how to come to You right now; I don't even know what to ask for. God, show me." God's faithful.

Final Scripture:

**James 1:22-26** *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso*

*looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

A doer of the Word. A seeker of the Word. The Word goes deeper than the words on this page. The Word—in John, it says the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (John 1:14), the Word of God. The manifestation of God. The divine expression of God. The Word was expressed in Jesus Christ. The Word is expressed in our hearts. David said, “I have written Thy Word on my heart, that I might not sin against God.” (Psalms 119:11) It’s more than obeying the letter of the law; it’s about seeking God. One thing that I’ve found, whether it be Scripture, or something on my heart, if they’re of God, they don’t contradict each other. The Bible says, try the spirits, and see if they’re of God (1 John 4:1), and, in the mouth of two or three witnesses, let it be confirmed (2 Corinthians 13:1). When I talk to my brothers and sister, and this is why fellowship is so important—when I read and study on my own, yeah, I get something, but when we get together—men’s fellowship is my perfect example of this, we have times when we kind of do a do-it-yourself Bible study. Someone gives out topics to groups, and we all sit and go over that topic, and God blesses that so much, because, all of the sudden, you’re getting something that God revealed to Parrish, Jesse, Bob, Pete, Mark, Jose... All of the sudden, I’m learning something that I would not learn on my own, because of what God blessed in their lives. Be a doer of the Word, and not a hearer only.

So, as I wrap up, I just want to encourage you in this time of thanksgiving, let it be a tie that people see God in your lives. Let our thankfulness be more than just our obligatory prayer before we eat the turkey, before we sit down and have our meal. That’s important. That is, but let not that be the only time of it. I’m not telling anyone to go preach at their family, but seek God, “How do I proclaim You, how do I lift You up? How do I?” That’s my prayer with my family. “How do I share with my parents? How do I share with my sisters? How do I share with my nieces and nephews and my cousins?” How do I do that without just walking in and...? God has a way of doing that, but, if we don’t seek Him we don’t find it. Whether it be those of you here with your families, or Thanksgiving for our celebration for our military, seek to be a minister. Seek to have God’s grace shown in you. Amen. Thank God.

GREAT LAKES