

Family TableTalk

Conversation 90

Give Thanks!

read

Psalm 111

think

I'm not a fan or follower of singer Willie Nelson, but I do like what he said about the effects of having a thankful heart: "When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around." While I've experienced the joy of what Willie Nelson is saying, I know that the opposite is also true: choosing to forget your blessings has a negative effect on your life. There have been times when I've focused so much on what I don't have, that I can get turned around in the wrong direction, leaving me to act like Winnie-The-Pooh's friend Eeyore, who was always moping around like a sullen, depressed, and gloomy pessimist.

How can we start to notice and count our blessings? Several chapters in the Book of Psalms are joyful expressions of thanks to God that offer a model for remembering His faithful love, protection, and provision. Psalm 111 is one of these "Thanksgiving Psalms" that begins and ends with a call to praise the Lord. In between we see a progression of thanks modeled.

First, we are to praise and thank God together with others for His mighty works. The Psalmist joins with others in thinking about, pondering, and studying the great works of the Lord. Second, we are to praise and thank God for His gift of salvation. In verse 9 we read that "he sent redemption to his people," which should lead us to give gratitude for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And finally, the ultimate expression of our gratitude is fearing God and obediently "following his precepts" (v. 10).

Our celebration of Thanksgiving - or anytime you are gathered around the table with other followers of Jesus - is a perfect time to recite and think about Psalm 111. Counting our blessings together serves as a reminder of the fact that God is our faithful Creator, Provider, and Redeemer. . . and that fact will turn your life around!

apply

- As you sit together around the table, spend some time verbalizing and pondering the great works of the Lord. Start by looking at your arms and hands. Move your arms and hands to notice the intricacies in how they work. Where else do you see the goodness of God in the works of creation?
- Take time to converse about the distractions that keep us from pondering God's great works. What are the things that capture and divert your mind, heart, and attention to send them in other directions?
- Discuss this question: In midst of the difficulties of life, what strategies and practices can we personally use to avoid the gloomy and pessimistic attitudes that leave us less than grateful? Or, how do we not become like Eeyore!?!?

pray

Creator of all things and the One who created all things good, we confess that the busyness of our lives hijacks our attention away from you. We fail to think about your great deeds in creating and sustaining us. Give us eyes to see your goodness, not only in your visible works of creation, but in the gift of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Help us to be eager and active participants in your praise that endures forever! Amen.

by **Walt Mueller**

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