

Give Thanks for Everything

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Psalm 136

Part of the purpose for the season of Thanksgiving is to remind us to be thankful for everything. From the first Thanksgiving meal in which the pilgrims gave thanks for surviving their first year to now, when we should acknowledge that God has given us grace to live another day, we are reminded we should give thanks. We should give thanks for everything.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 NIVO

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

When we give thanks, we acknowledge that God is Lord. He is in control of life. He is our provider and redeemer.

Giving thanks can also change our perspective on life. People who are thankful seem to live with less stress. Perhaps they live better than those who are always complaining about things.

Psalm 136 is a praise Psalm that calls us to offer up thanks and praises to God for all that he has done. It is an antiphonal Psalm. The leader calls out and a choir responds.

Psalm 136:1-26 NIVO

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. *His love endures forever.*
² Give thanks to the God of gods. *His love endures forever.*
³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords: *His love endures forever.*
⁴ to him who alone does great wonders, *His love endures forever.*
⁵ who by his understanding made the heavens, *His love endures forever.*
⁶ who spread out the earth upon the waters, *His love endures forever.*
⁷ who made the great lights-- *His love endures forever.*
⁸ the sun to govern the day, *His love endures forever.*
⁹ the moon and stars to govern the night; *His love endures forever.*
¹⁰ to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt *His love endures forever.*
¹¹ and brought Israel out from among them *His love endures forever.*
¹² with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; *His love endures forever.*
¹³ to him who divided the Red Sea asunder *His love endures forever.*
¹⁴ and brought Israel through the midst of it, *His love endures forever.*
¹⁵ but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea; *His love endures forever.*
¹⁶ to him who led his people through the desert, *His love endures forever.*
¹⁷ who struck down great kings, *His love endures forever.*
¹⁸ and killed mighty kings-- *His love endures forever.*
¹⁹ Sihon king of the Amorites *His love endures forever.*
²⁰ and Og king of Bashan-- *His love endures forever.*
²¹ and gave their land as an inheritance, *His love endures forever.*
²² an inheritance to his servant Israel; *His love endures forever.*
²³ to the One who remembered us in our low estate *His love endures forever.*
²⁴ and freed us from our enemies, *His love endures forever.*
²⁵ and who gives food to every creature. *His love endures forever.*
²⁶ Give thanks to the God of heaven. *His love endures forever.*

1. Psalm 136 reminds us we are to actively participate in the worship God. In this case, with thanksgiving.

Psalm 136 has two important features.

1. It is an antiphonal Psalm, or a Psalm that has a refrain. In an antiphonal usage, the Psalm would be read by the leader and then the response would come from another group or choir, or the congregation. In the Psalm, we hear repeated 26 times that God's love endures forever.

Those who complain of contemporary songs having too many repeated lines should consider this example from the Bible. Here is something to consider – Can you ever say enough about God's love? Can you ever say enough about grace?

Also, repetition also gives us opportunity to “hear.” Often we hear words or sing songs with little regard to what is being said. Repetition in worship gives us an opportunity to hear deeper, into our mind and soul, what might otherwise just pass by.

2. It is a confessional Psalm. The psalm rehearses the saving history of God's work for Israel. It begins in creation and moves to the Exodus, and then the conquering of the kings during the wanderings.

As an antiphonal Psalm it reminds us that we are to be active participants in worship. Worship is never meant to be we come and watch someone else do. It is not a performance. While we might enjoy the music of the choir or the songs we sing, it is not worship if we are focused on our personal enjoyment. Worship happens when we move the heart toward God to appreciate what he has done.

Samuel Terrien, The Psalms and their Meaning for Today. Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1952.

Biblical faith attempts to place man at the disposal of God rather than God at the disposal of man. P. 65.

It is very important to learn to become an active worshiper rather than a passive observer. Your heart will connect to God if you join in the expression of worship to God.

2. Worship is ascribing worth to God for who He is and what He has done.

The English word “worship” means to ascribe worth. The Hebrew and Greek words for worship mean to bow down before the Lord.

הִשָּׁתַּחֲוֶה (shāḥâ) **bow down (worship)**

קָדַד (qādad) **I, bow down (bow the head)**

NIVO **Exodus 34:8**

Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped.

προσκυνέω bow down (worship) to prostrate oneself in the presence of someone to show honor or reverence or kiss the hand by kneeling.

NIVO **1 Corinthians 14:25**

And the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

NIVO **Revelation 5:14**

The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Hallelujah (Praise the Lord) is always a verb. Usually in the second plural form “you praise” *Hallelu* plus a shortened *jah* for Yahwey.

The noun is *tihilla*, although sometime people speak of sections of the Psalms as the *Hallel*.

To bless (praise with words) comes from בָּרַךְ
εὐλογέω to bless, to speak well of. Eph. 1:3

By physically bowing down, we indicate that God is superior to us. However, the tradition of worship revealed in the Psalms is one of corporate songs sung to God. In this form, we are declaring praise to God by speaking words from our mouths.

In the Psalms the words most often used are “to praise” *Hallel* and to bless *barak*. The Greek, *eulogetos*, means to speak well of.

It is as important to speak our words as to sing them. Music and singing have had a long history of development in worship, both in the history of the Bible and in Christian history. We use a variety of music because God has given us a wide spectrum of music to use. God is the author of music as well as salvation. (The devil doesn't create anything.) While each of us may have music we enjoy and worship styles we prefer, we must remember, worship is not about us. It is about God. It is also not about the music either. If we are ascribing worth to God, then the heart of worship is found in the words we say, whether we say them, or sing them.

I encourage you to say with your mouth what you love about God. This is good, even when the congregation is singing. What are you saying to God?

Some of our congregational songs are confessionals. We are speaking truths about God. We do this together as a body of believers. By speaking with our mouths, we make confession of our faith before God. In confessional worship, it is important for us to join in the confession together. Singing or speaking, with your mouth, declare praise to God.

We should give thanks to God for everything. From time to time, give praise to God for all the things that are provided in your life. After all, God is our provider. Offer thanks for food each time you eat. You could be without food. Offer thanks for health. You could lose your health. Offer thanks for being able to walk, or see, or hear, or having your mind.

Offer thanks for your children, grand-children, your neighbors, your friends. Give thanks for our church. Our church members, leaders, everyone.

Thanksgiving changes your heart. It lifts you up out of despair and loss, and puts your eyes on heaven. Thanksgiving comes from a heart of faith. It builds hope that sustains us in life's hard times.

3. Let us give thanks to God today for his salvation.

Most of all, we should give thanks for salvation. If not for God sending His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our salvation, we would be lost. We would have no hope beyond the grave. We would have no certainty of heaven. So, we should extend the Psalm to include God's saving work.

Let us join in together in a new antiphonal Psalm of praise. I will lead the role of the caller. You as congregation join in the repeated refrain. You will say, *His love endures forever*. We will add new verses to Psalm 136 because we live on the other side of the cross and resurrection.

1. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. *His love endures forever.*
2. Give thanks to the Lord for His salvation. *His love endures forever.*
3. Give thanks for God sending Jesus, to save the world from sin. *His love endures forever.*
4. Give thanks for the Word who became flesh. *His love endures forever.*
5. Give thanks for the cross to cover our sin. *His love endures forever.*
6. Give thanks for the resurrection, so we may live again. *His love endures forever.*
7. Give thanks for grace, for we are unworthy of salvation. *His love endures forever.*
8. Give thanks for the Holy Spirit so God may live in us. *His love endures forever.*
9. Give thanks for His Word, the Bible, so we may know God's will. *His love endures forever.*
10. Give thanks for the church, so we may have fellowship with other believers. *His love endures forever.*
11. Give thanks for our pastors and teachers of God's Word. *His love endures forever.*
12. Give thanks that Christ is coming again. *His love endures forever.*
13. Give thanks that our dead will live again. *His love endures forever.*
14. Give thanks that we will live with God forever. *His love endures forever.*

15. We will live in the new heavens and the new earth. *His love endures forever.*
16. Where there will be no more curse. *His love endures forever.*
17. Where there will be no more sin, or death, or sorrow. *His love endures forever.*

18. Where there will be no need of light or the sun, because God will be our light. *His love endures forever.*

19. Where the river of life will flow from the throne of God. *His love endures forever.*

20. Where we will live with God and Christ Jesus forever. *His love endures forever.*

Give thanks to God for everything, especially salvation.