

Thankful in All Things

1 Thessalonians 5:18

PPT Title

Thankful in All Things

Main Point: We should be thankful in all our circumstances.

Key Verse: *Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.* - 1 Thessalonians 5:18 NLT

Props: A dollar; eye glasses (**Optional:** small bag of popcorn for each student)

GIVING THANKS

Teacher: Arrange ahead of time for an adult to interrupt you as you begin welcoming the students. Have the adult say to you, "Hey. I hate to interrupt, but I left my wallet at home and I really wanted a cup of coffee this morning. Can you give me a dollar?" Search your pockets and pull out a dollar. Hold it up and the adult will grab it (without saying thank you) and walk away. Stare at him as he walks away.

Ask Students: I'm happy to give a dollar to my friend, but did anyone notice anything when he took my money? *He did not say thank you.* **Say:** I wonder why he didn't say thank you. It's sort of like he thinks he **deserved** that dollar. But, that was my dollar. I gave it to him to be nice. He didn't *deserve* it. Or maybe he just doesn't want to admit he needed my help. Either way, not saying thank you is really a sign of pride.

Say: Well, let's move on to our lesson. One of the most important questions that a believer can ask is, "What is God's will for my life?" Where do you think we can find the answer to this important question? *Listen for answers.* **Say:** Whenever we have a question, the best place to find the answer is in God's written word, the Bible. Let's take a look at our Key Verse in 1 Thessalonians 5:18. In fact, let's all read it together off of our screen.

PPT Verse

Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 NLT

This verse says that it's God's will for everyone who believes in Jesus to **be thankful**. There are some things that happen in our lives that we are truly thankful for. We are thankful for birthdays, weddings, love, and family. But some things that happen are really difficult. We might have an illness, the death of a loved one, divorce, or some other sad event. How can God expect us to be grateful for those things? Let's look really closely at our verse. Some might think that this verse says to be thankful **FOR** all of our circumstances. But the verse actually says to be thankful **IN** all circumstances. The original Hebrew word for IN that is used here means "in the middle of" or "during."

In other words, no matter what is happening in your life, you can be thankful. The Bible gives us a long list of things we should be thankful for. These are the things that never change, no matter what is happening in your life. We are to be thankful:

- That God is good (1 Chronicles 16:34)
- That His love lasts forever (Psalm 106:1)
- For God's amazing grace (1 Corinthians 1:11)
- For the wonderful things God does (Psalm 107:8)

- Because God answers prayers (Psalm 118:21)
- For His perfect laws (Psalm 119:62)
- Because God gives us wisdom and reveals His truth to us (Daniel 2:22-23)
- For other believers (Philippians 1:3)

And most of all, we should be thankful because God gave His Son, Jesus, to save us from the punishment of our sin, and give us new life! (1 Corinthians 15:57) God has saved all who believe in Jesus; He has taken our sin and given us His righteousness.

Application: Remember when Mr. _____ took my dollar without saying thank you? We saw that when someone doesn't take the time to say thanks, they are really saying that they don't need anyone's help, or that they **deserve** what they have received. Make no mistake: no one deserves the wonderful blessings, grace, and salvation that God gives you! You should always take the time to thank God for these things, no matter what is happening in your life.

The Bible says that being thankful **brings honor to God** (Psalm 50:23). God actually commands us to be thankful. Back in the Old Testament, there were certain sacrifices that people were instructed to make as thank offerings to the Lord. When we thank God, we acknowledge that He deserves the credit. He has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. When others see you thank God, you point them to Him.

Giving thanks also **helps us**, because it makes us focus our attention back to the One we are thanking! **Teacher: Hold up eyeglasses and put them on.** Giving thanks is like putting on spiritual eyeglasses that help you focus on God. It will remind you that God is in control of everything. He never changes and He only allows what is good for you. You can have FAITH in God's goodness, and not FEAR the things around you. No matter what is happening in your life, give thanks to God **in the middle of** your circumstances.

PILGRIMS' EXAMPLE

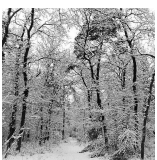
Say: Today, we're going to look at a story in history that isn't in the Bible. It happened a long time after the Bible was written. It's the story of the first settlers in America. Although it isn't in the Bible, it is a great example of the thankfulness that the Bible teaches us about.



Say: In 1620, a group of 102 passengers set sail for the New World. These people were citizens of England who called themselves Separatists. The Separatists wanted to live in a land where they would be free to worship God the way they believed God wanted them to. In those days, there was only one kind of church in England. Everybody went to the same kind of church. And that church was not doing a very good job of teaching the Bible and connecting people to God. So the Separatists "separated" themselves from the Church of England, and they risked everything to go to America. We call these brave men and women "Pilgrims." **Optional for younger students: Say: Every time you hear that the Pilgrims thanked God, raise both your hands in the air. Teacher, demonstrate raising both hands in a praise posture.**



The Pilgrims spent three wet, drippy, cold months at sea. **Ask:** Who knows the name of the ship they sailed on? *The Mayflower*. **Say:** They arrived in America on December 21. According to William Bradford, one of the pilgrims, as soon as the Pilgrims landed safely, "They fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean." (Bradford's Journal) Even though the journey had been very difficult, and they were facing an even more difficult future, the Pilgrims **thanked God** for bringing them this far. **(Raise hands in the air.)**



It was the dead of winter in the ice-cold northeast. The first thing the people did was to build a building where they could worship God together. The families had to live on the wet, drafty Mayflower while the men tried to build houses. Their lives were very, very difficult. There were no stores where they could buy wood, tools, or food. And in

the middle of winter, they could not grow food in the frozen ground. The Pilgrims were constantly hungry and cold. Soon, sickness came, but there were no hospitals where they could go to get well. The Pilgrims began to die. By the end of winter, nearly half of the Pilgrims had died.

Optional Questions for Older Students: Can you imagine, if you and your family had been part of the Pilgrims? What if you left everything you knew to go to an untamed foreign land so you could worship God, and within the first few months, half of your family died? Do you think you could still be thankful to the Lord?

Say: Even in their worst times, the Pilgrims **thanked the Lord** every day. **(Raise hands in the air.)** The Pilgrims were not thankful **because** so many people died. They were thankful **even though** so many people died. They were thankful **IN** their circumstances. Even in their grief, they found things to be thankful for.



The Pilgrims prayed continually for God's help and guidance. One day in March, during a church service, God sent a big answer to their prayers. In walked an Indian chief named Samoset. He saw the Pilgrims' serious needs and came back with an Indian helper name Squanto. Before this time, the Pilgrims had been terribly afraid of the Indians.

Squanto spoke English! He had been captured before by earlier explorers and taken to Spain to be sold as a slave. He escaped to England where he learned to speak perfect English. A kind Englishman had paid for his voyage to return to his homeland, and now he was here to help the Pilgrims. Notice how God had been at work in the life of Squanto! God worked all things together to answer the prayers of the Pilgrims at this critical time in the new settlement of America! The Pilgrims **thanked God** for Squanto's help. **(Raise hands in the air.)** In the words of the Pilgrim's leader, Governor William Bradford, "Squanto became a special instrument sent of God for [our] good."

Teacher Note: We can draw a comparison between Squanto's life and that of Joseph's in Genesis 37-45. Joseph was captured and taken to a foreign land, where he was taught a foreign language and was prepared by God to feed His people.



Squanto taught the Pilgrims to hunt deer and other animals. He taught them how to trap beavers. He taught them how to grow a great crop of corn. The trick was to bury a fish in the ground so the soil would have the proper nutrients to grow the best crops. He also helped them to trade with other Indian tribes.

The following fall, their harvest was plentiful. Governor William Bradford declared a day of **giving thanks to God**, which would be held in October. **(Raise hands in the air.)** He invited a friendly Indian neighbor to join them at the feast. When this Indian arrived, he brought 90 additional Indians with him! The Pilgrims didn't know how they would feed that many guests, but the Indians had brought 5 deer and a dozen wild turkeys to eat. The Pilgrims prepared vegetables such as carrots, beets, cucumbers, and turnips. The Indians taught the Pilgrims how to make cornmeal pudding and how to toast kernels of corn until it **POPPED!** **Ask:** Has anyone here ever eaten popcorn with your Thanksgiving feast? **Optional:** **Hand out small bags of popcorn.**



But the hardship didn't end there. The next winter was incredibly harsh and difficult. In November, another ship, called The Fortune, arrived. On board were 35 more settlers. These people arrived with no food, no warm clothes, and no other supplies. The Pilgrims would have to share what little they had. At one point, each person was only allowed to eat 5 kernels of corn per day! Can you imagine having less than one spoonful of corn per day?



The following summer, there was a 12-week drought. **Ask:** How many months is 12 weeks? **Say:** The crops were dying, and Pilgrims desperately needed God's help. The Pilgrims fell to their knees and prayed for 8 hours.



Ask: Do you think God heard their prayers? **Yes!** **Say:** God always hears our prayers (Psalm 6:9). And God's answer was incredible. It started to rain, and it didn't stop for 14 days! The harvest was saved. To celebrate, the Pilgrims had a second day of **giving thanks to the Lord.** (*Raise hands in the air.*) Again, the Indians were invited to the feast. This time, 120 Indians came to celebrate with their Pilgrim friends. Again, they prepared deer and turkey, fruits and vegetables.

"Only this time one dish was different. The first course, served on an empty plate in front of each person, consisted of 5 kernels of corn, a gentle reminder of God's faithful provision for them." (Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*)

This helped the Pilgrims remember that it was only by God's grace that they had the bountiful harvest. No amount of hard work or skill could have produced a good crop without rain. Only God could bring the rain that they needed!

Application: We can learn so much from the Pilgrim's example. The Pilgrims faced so many difficult situations. They faced hunger, sickness, freezing weather, and even death. However, they remembered the most important thing: God was in control. By thanking God for His grace and blessings **during** their hard times, they honored God and kept their focus on Him. They offered thanks to God every day, and He gave them the grace they needed to survive and thrive, and build a new country.

No matter what things are happening in your life, give all your thanks to the Lord. His grace is abundant, His love for you lasts forever, and He gives new life to everyone who trusts in His Son.

PPT Verse

Key Verse: *Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.* - 1 Thessalonians 5:18 NLT

PPT Main Point

Main Point: We should be thankful in all our circumstances.

Note to Teacher: "Thus out of small beginnings greater things have been produced by His hand that made all things of nothing, and gives being to all things that are; and, as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone unto many, yea in some sort to our whole nation." - Governor William Bradford

More fascinating reading of the first 30 years of Plymouth Colony can be found in the journal of William Bradford, known as "Of Plymouth Plantation." For more information: <http://www.pilgrimhall.org/bradjour.htm>