

THANKSGIVING

David Halbrook

The American holiday “Thanksgiving” implies that there is someone to whom we owe thanks. You don’t thank a tree for its fruit or a chicken for giving eggs—they had no choice but should be *received with thanksgiving* (1 Tim. 4:4). Those who did not *glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, became futile in their thoughts* (Rom. 1:21). In 2008, a *Time* poll revealed that “only 10% of Americans regarded the country’s moral and spiritual condition as their foremost electoral concern...money woes pushed religion off the table.” Futile thoughts.

To whom can Atheists give thanks? Maybe to our “founding fathers” but they ignore the Father who created the land and resources. The evidence of Him is *the things that are made* (Rom. 1:20).

Those who claim to believe the Bible must go far beyond thanking God for life and food. The next step is to *do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him* (Col. 3:17). Can you thank God for the rounds of beer you drink, abandoning your spouse, or for having the health to enjoy life but refusing to worship Him? Though the holiday is past, give the word some thought.

-- *Editor’s Note:* Though this article is a week late, the concept is timeless. Find someone this week to hand it to, suggesting that they look for our article in the *Arkansas Weekly* every week. If you aren’t read to do that—be sure you have read the front-page article.

Church of Christ—Quail Valley
4104 E. Harrison St.
Batesville, AR 72501
Office- (870) 793-6700

Evangelists:
David Halbrook 569-4491
Lenoard Westbrook 612-8409

The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

November 27, 2011

WWW.QVCOC.COM

PRAYING FOR EVANGELISM

Ronny E. Hinds

Save this article. Place it somewhere where you will see it often. Read it often! Allow what Scripture says, and prayer, to change your life and the lives of others.

All Christians can participate in evangelism. The first thing we can do is pray. Prayer is a God-given tool to help us convert others. Jesus said to the chosen seventy, “*pray*” and then He said “*go*” (Luke 10:2-3). What precedes our going is prayer!

Pray For Laborers. When Jesus told the seventy to pray, He specifically said, “*pray... to send out laborers into His harvest.*” One of the great needs the Lord has is for people willing to work to convert others. The gospel is God’s power to convert, but unless we are willing to declare this good news many will never know its power.

Pray For Peace and the Swift Advance of the Gospel. Paul exhorted Timothy that “*first of all... supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men... that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life*” because God “*desires all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:1-4). To the Thessalonians Paul wrote, “*pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly... and... we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men*” (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

Pray For the Opportunity To Teach Others. “*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ... that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak*” (Colossians 4:2-4). We all desire for that opportunity to teach those we know. Then pray for it!

Pray For the Salvation of Specific People. “*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved*” (Romans 10:1). All of us have family and friends we would like to see saved. We agonize over their lost condition. We long for them to know and share the joys we have as Christians. Then pray for them!
(continued inside)

Pray For Boldness. In Acts 4:29 the disciples did. “*Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word.*” Knowing it would not be easy and in the face of opposition they prayed. The Lord answered them. “*And they spoke the word of God with boldness*” (4:31).

These are some things we can do. Let us do them!

(*The Knollwood Reminder 11-20-11; www.knollwoodchurch.org*)

PERSONALIZED RELIGION

Steven Deaton

An article in the September 13, 2011 edition of *USA TODAY* (p. 2A), was titled “More Americans customize religion to fit their personal needs.” To read it is to confirm what many of us have known for years; men push God off the throne and rule themselves. Or, to put it in Old Testament terms, “everyone [does] what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

The article quotes George Barna, author of a new book examining the state of religion in the U.S.

“People say, ‘I believe in God. I believe the Bible is a good book. And then I believe whatever I want.’”

People take what they want from the Bible and leave the rest off. For instance, people like the teaching about God’s love and blessings, but ignore the part about His wrath (Rom. 11:22). They embrace God’s grace, but reject the idea of keeping His commands—all of them (Jn. 14:15; Matt. 28:18). The Bible is treated like a religious buffet; pick and choose only what you like in the amount you like. Each man is his own god.

Some of the findings and statements noted in the article are stunning. Here are a few.

“The folks who make up God as they go are side-by-side with self-proclaimed believers who claim the Christian label but shed their ties to traditional beliefs and practices.”

“All the major trend lines of religious belief and behavior he measured ran downward – except two.”

“More people claim they have accepted Jesus as their savior and expect to go to heaven.”

Barna blames pastors for those oddly contradictory findings. Everyone hears, “Jesus is the answer. Embrace him. Say this little *Sinners Prayer* and keep coming back. It

doesn’t work. People end up bored, burned out and empty,” he says. “They look at church and wonder, ‘Jesus died for this?’”

Wow! This is something faithful gospel preachers and Christians have been saying for decades. Denominationalism with all its allurements is religiously bankrupt. It has a strong appeal, offers this-world comfort and many distractions, but at its core is wholly without biblical foundation.

Look at the core appeal of denominations today. They offer youth recreational activities, various forms of entertainment for worship, and amenities that rival the best cruise ships. Think about it, the biggest, most active, churches in many cities are those that have a sports league with a full gymnasium, regular rock concerts for Jesus, and a café with gourmet coffee – maybe even a hair salon and bowling alley.

Did Jesus die so young people could play basket ball on Friday night or video games on Saturday afternoon? Did the Son of God shed His blood to provide disciples with a caffeine fix on Sunday morning? Can you imagine the Prince of Peace at a church “worship” concert swaying His hands in the air or doing a fist-pump or cheering on a karate exposition in His name?

The church for which Christ died is a spiritual institution with other-world interests (Acts 20:28). It is to uphold truth (1 Tim. 3:15). He died to save souls. Jesus commanded the apostles to go preach the gospel so men would become His disciples (Mk. 16:15, 16). He did not direct them to entertain the masses and mesmerize them with carnivals for Christ. The appeal of the Savior is the cross, not a cup of coffee (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

Those who are drawn by the social gospel are not fit for the kingdom of God. Their desire is for the material—this world, not the next. Churches that use the social gospel are not churches of Christ, but churches of men. They stand on the foundation of the doctrines of men, not the doctrine of Christ, and will be uprooted (Matt. 15:7-14).

Honestly, while some people are waking up to the reality of denominational vanity, most will continue to drink and remain intoxicated on the wine of the harlot. However, there are a few who are ready to turn to the milk of the word (1 Pet. 2:2). They are ready for spiritual sobriety and we can help them.

(www.implantedword.com/personalized-religion)