



Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!

What is something you can be thankful for this year?

**[Author Note: Think of some things you are thankful for. The following is what I used the first time ... maybe it will help you think of some things.]**

I have many things to be thankful for this year. But they all pale in comparison to the fact that my wife and I are 20 weeks pregnant with our first child, and we just found out it will be a girl. In fact, this past Tuesday we went to get our first sonogram, where we got to see our daughter for the first time. While we were there, she took her finger and thumb and made a “guns up.” My wife and I both graduated from Texas Tech, so we are very thankful for her loyalty!

Now, we all have things we are thankful for. I could go around the room and you may say, “I am thankful for my family, my church, the Dallas Cowboys, my boyfriend/girlfriend, I’m a senior and am about to move out, my brother is a senior and he is about to move out,” etc. The list could go on and on and on.

But maybe there’s something that happened that keeps you from thinking about anything good that happened this year. Maybe it was something big, or maybe it was a ton of small things that just kept piling up. Because let’s face it, there are all kinds of things that can keep us from being thankful.

Maybe your parents split up, maybe your bae dumped you, maybe your car was in a wreck, maybe you got in big trouble with your parents, maybe there is going to be an empty chair at the Thanksgiving dinner this year. Maybe you’re so tired of COVID-19 and social distancing. Maybe you were burnt out by the election and all of the political fighting. Maybe you have family members who disagree politically, and so Thanksgiving will be stressful!

Regardless of who you would have voted for, regardless if your team won it all or lost everything, whether you feel positive or negative about your

current circumstances, there is some very real advice from the apostle Paul that is relevant to all of us. Let's jump into the book of 1 Thessalonians.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 (NIV)**

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

There are three things in these three verses that we can apply to our lives this Thanksgiving.

The first is found in Verse 16: ***“Rejoice always.”***

This can be difficult, because we don't always want to rejoice. When we look at that empty chair this Thanksgiving, it's going to be very difficult to rejoice. When we think about all the crazy stuff that happened this past year, it will be very difficult to rejoice.

Yet Paul encouraged the church at Thessalonica to rejoice always. Many of the people at this church were under the impression that Jesus was going to return very soon, and they were confused why it hadn't happened yet. In fact, their confusion turned to mourning as their family members began to die, because they thought Jesus would return during their lifetimes. Paul wrote this letter to encourage them to rejoice always because of the hope we find in Christ Jesus. Let me read you a verse from the previous chapter.

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13–14 (NIV)**

*Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.*

The words “rejoice always” meant the same to this group of believers in 50 AD that they mean for us today in 2020.

The second thing Paul teaches us is found in verse 17: ***“Pray continually,” or “pray without ceasing.”***

This doesn't mean when you leave here get in your car turn out on the highway and say, “Well, he told me to pray without ceasing, so here we

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