

# Giving Thanks – An Example to Follow

By Pastor Randy Brannon

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** *"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"*

November is the month of Thanksgiving throughout America. So often we become trite in our giving of thanks, but once in a while a case worth noting is set before us. Such is that with Dan Owens, evangelist for the Lord Jesus, founder and president of Eternity-Minded Ministries, and personal friend of many of us at Grace. Dan has spoken multiple times at Grace Community Church, and also at the Men of Integrity retreat and the Mayor's prayer breakfast in 2010. Feast on these words of his as you consider that he is battling sarcoma, a deadly cancer that has attacked him in his leg and possibly elsewhere.

*"A few weeks ago, at the urging of my radiologist, I went to see a chemotherapy doctor in San Luis Obispo. Although my doctor at Stanford said it was his opinion that I did not need chemotherapy, he also said there would be other doctors at Stanford who would differ with his opinion. I thought I would save myself a drive to Stanford for a second opinion and confer with the best our area has to offer. I was glad I went to see him as he was able to answer many questions I had about chemotherapy treatment for my form of cancer. We spent an hour together discussing my situation but it was one of his first questions to me that bonded us. His words were in effect, 'Finding out you had cancer must have been terrifying for you and your wife?' My response to him was, 'Not really.' From that point forward he took a different interest in me, and so much so, that before our time was done I was able to tell him why I was not terrified and that Christ was and is the answer. He wrote down the name of our ministry and said he looked forward to talking again*

*The word 'terrified' means to feel extreme fear. If I felt extreme fear of death then it would stand to reason that I don't really believe what I say I believe regarding Christ, salvation, heaven, and eternity. I think all of us are a bit uncomfortable with how we will die. I confess I have been very uncomfortable with flying since I first started doing it for a living over 25 years ago. I would not like to die in the violence of a plane crash. I recently read the writings of a Godly man who asked the Lord if he could die a certain way, and the Lord granted his request. I have never thought of asking that of God before.*

*I told the chemotherapy doctor that I had been thinking about dying since I was eight years old and I think about it just about every day. I am not alone in this as the early church eagerly looked forward to the life to come after death; they stayed much more focused than we do on the world to come. The early Christians reflected a great deal on death as seen in their writings and even more importantly, their courage in facing death. A pastor friend of mine that called on me a few weeks ago made the comment that he felt that 95% of all Christians in America truly do not believe the words of the Apostle Paul, 'For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.' He said he seriously doubted if the American Christian really believed that the next world is so much better than this world. I don't know about his percentages but I agree with his comment.*

*As I said to my doctor in our conversation, if I die at 55 instead of 75 what difference does that make? Yes, I said I would be missed by family and friends, and maybe I would miss them as well, but the end comes to us all sooner or later; we all end up in a cemetery. For those who truly trust Christ, and not only trust Him but live for Him, death is just the doorway to something much grander than we can even imagine.*

*After all was said and done with the chemotherapy doctor, I have decided not to have chemotherapy. I found out that it would be the worst of the worst for me due to the kind of cancer I had in my leg. I would have to be hospitalized six times for a week at a time over a six month period. It would indeed make me quite sick and yes, my hair would fall out. He went on to say it would only give me a 10-15% chance that the cancer would not return to my leg. Well, with that I thought, God can do better than 15%.*

*I have about 5 more sessions of radiation to complete and, just as they warned me, I am feeling its effects. Last week they stopped radiation for a few days to let my skin cool down; that was a welcome reprieve. They are now intensifying the radiation so the doctor has said that from now until the middle of November I am going to feel even more fatigue and pain. In just a few weeks I will return to Stanford for another MRI of my leg and a CT scan of my lung just to make sure all is well. On November 11th I will meet with Dr. Norton, my surgeon and oncologist at Stanford, and he will let me know how I am doing.*

*This week Gary Losey, our Festival Director, is headed back to Romania to work on the events that will be taking place in February. I am really looking forward to ministering once again as I have never gone this long in my life without preaching! I am praying that a church will invite me to preach sometime in late November or early December so I don't forget how to do it (just kidding)! I am sure the Lord will raise up that gift within me again. Do pray for Gary as he is in Romania working with our committee. Thank you for your prayers for not only me, but my entire family. It has been a weird time, but it has also been good. C.S. Lewis wrote, "God whispers in our pleasures and shouts in our pains" but I think sometimes He does just the opposite and all I hear are little whispers right now."*

**God's Peace to You! Dan**

*May we truly walk before others with lives of continuous thanksgiving to God as we reflect on the salvation for all eternity which we have because of the finished work of redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary 2000 years ago. This preceded His life-giving resurrection that demonstrated that the Father was well-pleased with His sacrifice on behalf of fallen man.*

**Give thanks to God and praying with you for Dan and Debbie, Pastor Randy**

## Is Halloween Hallowed or Harmful?

Hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, the Celts, a group of people in Britain and Ireland, held a festival on October 31st. The Celts and their priests, the Druids, celebrated Samhain on the eve of the New Year beginning November 1<sup>st</sup>. The Harvest was complete, winter loomed ahead, the power of the sun was fading and darkness would soon prevail. The Celts believed that during Samhain the veil separating the living and the dead was the thinnest. During this time evil spirits and the souls of the dead passed through the barrier. They believed Spirits and dead souls could torment the living - crops might be destroyed, babies stolen or farm animals killed. It was an opportunity to commune with the spirits. The Devil's power would be called on to foretell the future.

### TRICK OR TREAT — where did that come from?

The Druids tried to appease the goblins and prevent harm to people. It is believed that the Celts left out food for the spirits, hoping that a "treat" would prevent an evil "trick." Centuries later their descendants dressed as evil spirits and roamed house to house demanding food in exchange for the "spirits" leaving the home unharmed.

### ALL HALLOWS' EVE

As Christianity spread through Europe during the third and fourth centuries, pagan worship never completely disappeared and Samhain remained. In Ireland, children dressed as spirits went house to house demanding a treat. If they didn't receive one they performed an unwelcomed trick. In the 700s AD, the Church tried to combat this with a celebration of the Lord of life. Their thought was to recognize the hallowed ones who had lived godly lives. So November 1 became All Hallows' Day. The evening before was called All Hallows' Evening from which we get Halloween. Pagan customs continued though. With the growth of witchcraft during the Middle Ages additional symbols were associated with Halloween - black cats, witches, bats and skulls.

### HALLOWEEN IN AMERICA

Irish immigrants in the mid-1800s brought to America the Halloween customs we're familiar with such as costumes, trick-or-treating and carved Jack-o-lanterns. They also brought "tricks" with them which included breaking windows and overturning sheds and outhouses. Halloween is celebrated more than ever and darker practices continue to take place.

## BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO HALLOWEEN

First John 2:15 says, "Love not the world, neither the things in the world..." Few people think about the darkness that underlies most Halloween practices. Children don't and shouldn't. Stores certainly don't. Halloween is one of the major retail seasons of the year. *Is there anything wrong with Halloween? Does the Bible have anything to say about celebrating Halloween?* In Corinth, meat that had been sacrificed to idols was sold in the market. People bought the meat and ate it in honor of that god. Paul said "Everything is permissible" because he didn't believe the pagan gods existed. If we apply Paul's statement to Halloween, one could argue there's not much wrong with this day. The reason: the supernatural powers they tried to appease don't have power over Christ. Also, Jesus destroyed the power of death at the cross. Anyone who gives his or her life to Jesus doesn't need to fear evil. Paul said "Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial."

### HOW DO YOU CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN? — some things to think about:

1. What may not hurt you may hurt others.

"Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak" (1 Corinthians 8:9). Who are the weak when it comes to our discussion of Halloween? Children!

2. Some permissible things may hinder your Christian growth.

"Throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles... Let us fix our eyes on Jesus" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

3. God says, "Don't imitate evil!"

"When you enter the land the Lord... is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there..." Deut. 18:9-11

## ARE THERE ALTERNATIVES?

1. Reflect on how God has led you and others in the past

With 2000 years of church history; many faithful believers can encourage us. Figures from church history; saints we have known. (see Hebrews 11) Part of our Christian tradition honors October 31 as Reformation Day, celebrating Martin Luther's beginning the Reformation by posting his "Ninety-five theses" on the church door.

2. Hold a Bible study on what God says about the occult and witchcraft.

3. Use trick-or-treating as an opportunity to tell others about the love of Jesus.

Brochures could be taped to candy and dropped into each trick-or-treat's bag.

4. Gather for a prayer and praise meeting.

## WELL WHAT ABOUT LIFE?

Halloween's earliest origins reflect a fear of a lord of death. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

So, is Halloween hallowed or harmful?



## Opportunities for you to be an Ambassador for Christ in 2012

### **China: June 3-18**

We will help our missionaries, Wilson and Tanya, reach out to those in their community .

*Ministry: Character Education with children at school through skits and songs, Encouraging and teaching the local Body of Christ. Approximate cost \$2250*

### **Czech Republic: July 4-17**

We will work alongside our missionary, Jim Liljegren, to help the Slavic Baptist Church and new church planters minister to the lost.

*Ministry: Building relationships with unchurched Russian speaking people and sharing about Christ Approximate cost \$3500*

### **New Mexico: July 20-28**

We will work alongside House of Prayer (a Navajo Church).

*Ministry: Teaching God's Word, Leadership training, light construction and VBS*  
Approximate cost \$500 adult/youth, \$200 children

If you are interested in finding out more information on any of these mission opportunities please contact Mark Lacaze.

Last day to "sign up" for a 2012 Mission Trip is December 18th.

### **Missionary Highlight this month....**

Tim and Beth Faul are missionaries in Brazil. Tim uses his medical background to minister to the Yanomami Indians. Beth uses her gift of hospitality in the Mission's Guest House. In addition to their own ministry among the lost Tim and Beth also spend a lot of time ministering to the other missionaries who live in hard-to-reach villages. Pray for the Faul's as they continue to be Christ's Ambassadors in Brazil.



*A Christian Business and Professional Men's Association*



# THE GIDEONS INTERNATIONAL

P. O. Box 473 · Madera, CA 93637

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is with great joy that I report to you on the Colombia Scripture Blitz. Your prayer support was most evident as we felt the Spirit of God moving as we shared the Gospel with hundreds of thousands of the lost and dying in Bucaramanga, Manizales and Pereira.

We placed Scriptures into the hands of school students, college students, police, fire, medical personnel, military, prisoners, and people on the street.

It was incredible to be able to share the Gospel with students in their classroom and to lead them in the prayer of salvation. People were so open to the Gospel and thousands accepted Christ as their Savior. It was exciting to have police officers and prisoners alike give their hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ. Imagine seeing whole units of the Colombian military listening to the Gospel message and clutching their testaments to their hearts as they accept Christ as their Savior.

With your help we placed 436,602 Scriptures. An estimated 60,000 to 70,000 school students accepted Christ and over 1,000 people made decisions with one on one witnessing. Without your prayers this could never happen. When man works, man works. When man prays, God works.

Thank you for your support for me and The Gideon ministry,

Bill Day

## Gideon Cards

One way to be an ambassador for Christ is to give Gideon Expressions Cards. These cards enable you to dedicate Scriptures in memory, or in recognition, of a friend or loved one. You can also use these unique cards to acknowledge a special event or an occasion in someone's life, or simply say "Thinking of you."

Each Gideon Expressions card provides a brief testimony of how God has worked in someone's life as a result of receiving Scripture from The Gideons. These Scriptures, placed in areas around the world served by The Gideons, provide a lasting memorial.

Last year The Gideons received enough in donations through this program to purchase over 14 million Scriptures to be placed around the world. Every penny donated to The Gideons goes for Scripture. It is never used for the overhead costs of the Gideons.

The Cards are available in a display rack in the church lobby or online at [www.gideons.org](http://www.gideons.org). If you would like to know more about this program or schedule a presentation for your Sunday School class or Bible Study contact Bill or Bonnie Day at 675-3266



**AWANA**  
**November 2011**  
**Wednesdays 6:30 – 8:00 pm**

**November 2, 2011**  
**Pumpkin Night. Play games with pumpkins**

**November 5, 2011**  
**Hayride**

**November 9, 2011**  
**Bring a can night and help those in need.**

**November 16, 2011**  
**Thanksgiving theme. Thank God for all our blessings.**

**November 23, 2011**  
**Thanksgiving week. NO AWANA!!**

**November 30, 2011**  
**Multi Color Night. Check with your leaders for details.**



***Precept Bible Study***  
***With Robin Poythress***

There is still room for any woman who wants to join the Precept Study called, Jeremiah: When God's Judgment Finally Comes. This portion of Jeremiah will reveal what God has declared for Israel and all the nations and inhabitants of the earth. Current events in our nation and the world indicate that this message of Jeremiah is for now. Times are urgent, and the Lord of hosts has an urgent message He wants you to know. Please come and study with us. You have two opportunities each week. I hope you will make time for one of them. And by all means, bring a friend with you.

Wednesday: 6:30 – 8:00 pm in room 304 (portables on the north side of campus)

Thursday: 9-11:15 am in Room 7 (classroom behind the sanctuary)

Study books are \$20 and there is childcare for both classes.



2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Every Wednesday:	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1  <i>Ladies Bible Study</i> 6:30 pm 18735 Shell Dr	2  <i>Men's Study</i> <i>At Chubbies</i> 6:30 am ***** <i>"All for the Family Night"</i> 5:30 pm <i>Meal</i> * 6:30 pm <i>To</i> 8:00 pm <i>AWANA</i> * <i>Pursuit</i> *	3  <i>Ladies Bible Study</i> 9:00—11:30 am <i>Hispanic Ministry</i> 7:00 pm	4	5  <i>Men's Breakfast</i> 8:00 am
6  Sunday School 9:00 am Worship Service 10:30 am ***** <b>Remember to Set Your Clock Back</b>	7	8  <i>Ladies Bible Study</i> 6:30 pm 18735 Shell Dr	9  <i>Ladies Bible Study</i> * 6:30 pm <i>To</i> 8:00 pm <i>AWANA</i> * <i>Pursuit</i> *	10  <i>Ladies Bible Study</i> 9:00—11:30 am <i>Hispanic Ministry</i> 7:00 pm	11   VETERANS DAY	12  <i>Cornerstone Sunday School Class Potluck</i> 4:00 pm
13  Sunday School 9:00 am Worship Service 10:30 am *** Blood Drive *** <i>Churches of Madera Thanksgiving Service</i> 6 pm North Campus Gym	14	15  <i>Ladies Bible Study</i> 6:30 pm 18735 Shell Dr	16  <i>Ladies Bible Study</i> * <i>Men's Bible Study</i> * <i>Child Care Provided</i>	17  <i>Ladies Bible Study</i> 9:00—11:30 am <i>Hispanic Ministry</i> 7:00 pm	18	19
20  Sunday School 9:00 am Worship Service 10:30 am 5:00 pm Annual Soup & Salad Dinner	21	22	23  <i>Men's Study, Chubbies</i> 6:30 a.m.	24   THANKSGIVING	25  <i>Church Office Closed</i> *****	26   Count Our Blessings
27  Sunday School 9:00 am Worship Service 10:30 am   First Sunday of Advent	28	29	30  <i>All for the Family Continues Tonight</i>			

