



Pray with Thanksgiving and Joy


Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ~ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Discover the Context
1 Thessalonians 5:14-22

 How do these verses apply to trials you face? Can you give thanks and have joy even when you are suffering? You can learn to be thankful and joyful in trials because the Scriptures tell that God is using them to perfect our faith and for our good.

 “What then are we to do about our problems? We must learn to live with them until such time as God delivers us from them. We must pray for grace to endure them without murmuring. Problems patiently endured will work for our spiritual perfecting.”

~ A.W. Tozer
(1897-1963)

 How can you begin adding a spirit of thanksgiving into your prayers? What does Christian joy look like when you don't feel happy? Do you have a person on staff who can help encourage you?

In the bustle of camp life our prayer life can begin to suffer. Sometimes we feel so stretched that our prayer times get cut short or skipped altogether. Sometimes it's not so much that we pray less, but that we pray without power. We make rushed requests of God to give us strength or to help a camper or fellow staff member. These are perfectly legitimate prayers, but they can come out from us mechanically. We know that it's what we're supposed to do, but there's a disconnect between our head and our heart.

What can give life to our prayers? Today's verses show us two beautiful ways: thanksgiving and joy.

Here's how they work. When we thank someone, we acknowledge that they have done something good for our benefit. Now it is possible to acknowledge something good without truly being glad about it, but that's where joy comes in. When we rejoice about something, we don't just acknowledge that it's good; we are excited about how good it is!

Now let's relate this to God. Through thankfulness, we acknowledge that God is good and that his amazing character deserves our praise. We also acknowledge that he has done and continues to do good things for us. Then we let this bring us joy, because we get to know and speak to this good God, and we know he will continue to be good and do good.

So how does this change our prayers? Imagine you are exhausted and have a long afternoon of activities ahead of you. A typical prayer in this scenario might be, *God, help me have enough energy for the afternoon ahead.* That's not necessarily wrong, but how about adding thanksgiving for who God is? *God, I'm thankful that you are almighty and powerful, and I'm so glad you care for me enough to offer your strength to me! I know you can give me the energy I need.*

Thankfulness and joy help us focus, not on our lack of energy, but on the character and love of the God who can provide for our needs. (AEL)