

BE THANKFUL



AN ACTION PLAN FOR A RADICAL THANKSGIVING

BASED ON THE BOOK, *RADICAL*, BY DR. DAVID PLATT

FOR LEADERS

- **Decorate your church with symbols of scarcity.**

At Thanksgiving, it's traditional for churches to decorate their buildings with symbols of abundance: sheaves of wheat, gourds, and so on. And of course it's entirely appropriate at this time of year to thank God for his provision. But let's never forget that most people in this world know little about abundance. They're subsisting on what they can make day to day, maybe not even getting enough food to eat.

At our church, we once decorated our stage with garbage and cardboard shacks to remind the congregation of how millions of people in poor shantytowns live. How could you do something similar at your church? It could be as simple as putting out a cornucopia with nothing but a few kernels of corn in it.

At the appropriate point in your Thanksgiving service, explain the meaning of the unusual decorations to your congregation. Then lead everyone in praying for those who have too little in this world.

- **Teach on gratitude for the gospel.**

Thanksgiving is the time of year when people are thinking about their material blessings as well as the blessings they have in their loved ones. And certainly there's nothing wrong with thanking God for these things. After all, "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights" (James 1:17).

But over and above all other blessings to us is the gospel God has given through his Son. So focus your teaching this Thanksgiving on the theme of gratitude for the gospel. Through the gospel we can know our heavenly Father and bring him glory by doing what he asks.

"The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

- **Take a special church "thank offering" for the poor.**

In biblical times, the Law called for the Israelites to offer periodic thank offerings. Those offerings were food sacrifices made of such ingredients as bread and oil. But your church can give a different kind of "thank offering" by making a special over-and-above financial gift to God's work this Thanksgiving.

Choose a specific cause, perhaps a ministry to the hungry in your community. Promote it and ask people to give. The motive isn't guilt or pressure. The motive is gratitude toward God.

- **Organize your church to feed the hungry.**

The chances are good that there are already some excellent organizations feeding the poor and homeless in your community. The chances are also good that they don't always have enough food or enough helpers.

Talk to community leaders in this area and ask the simple question "What can our church do to help?" Then listen. Perhaps your church could plug people into the volunteer rotation for food delivery. Perhaps you could stage a food drive and contribute to a food pantry. Perhaps you could use your connections to get ongoing donations from restaurants or food distributors.

Thanksgiving is a good time to inspire the people you lead to help in these ways. Make a point of encouraging them to continue their work beyond the holidays.

- **Tell church members how you're thanking God for them.**

The apostle Paul had an interesting habit of telling the readers of his letters how he was thanking God for them (Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 1:15-16; Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; Philemon 1:4). Maybe it was because he knew it would encourage them, give them strength to go on to even greater service to the Lord.

This Thanksgiving, think about people in your church who are faithfully serving God. Another member of the church staff. A volunteer leader. A church member who doesn't have an official role in the church but who somehow is always in the right place at the right time to pray with the sorrowful. Anybody whose service to the Lord you appreciate. Use note cards, e-mails, phone calls, or whatever means you feel best about to tell these persons how you are thanking God for them.

Who knows? Your encouragement may be just what a weary or discouraged person needs to keep going.

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WHAT PART OF THE GOSPEL IS OPTIONAL?

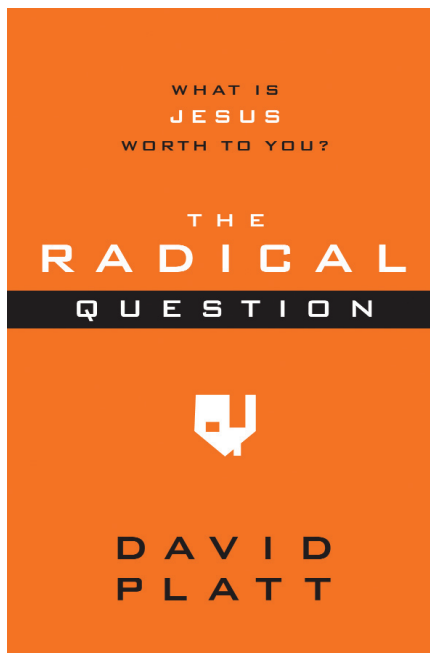
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