

# Thanksgiving & Intimacy with God

by Michael Rudolph

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There are many in the world who do not know about God, because they have not read the Bible, nor have they thoughtfully considered His creation. Scripture says that they are without excuse. Then there are those who have read the Bible, acknowledge His creation, and consequently know about God, but they don't believe that what the Bible says is true, and they are blinded to the implications of God's creation by sin. These we call unbelievers. Then there are those who have read the Bible, believe what the Bible says, have open eyes to what God has made, and consequently know about God and who He is. These we call believers in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they know and they believe. Then there are those believers who have, at least once in their lives, experienced Messiah's visitation and received Him as Lord, but they do not regularly experience God's presence. If asked, they would not say that they walk with Him other than through obedience to His *Torah*. These are born-again believers, destined for eternal life, but not currently enjoying God's presence or the reality of His Kingdom here on earth. They know about God, they have had glimpses of God, but they do not know Him intimately as one knows a friend.

Often, believers who experience God in this limited way are aware that there is something more, but have not found their way to it, and those of us who are charged with helping them find it, are often frustrated because we know that we cannot merely transfer our own intimate experience with God to others.

Today, I am pleased to share an understanding with you that I think God revealed to me, and showed me, as well, where it is revealed in Scripture. Yeshua Himself revealed it to us -- showed us the way to experience God intimately -- to know the Father as He knew Him. It is in Matthew 26:27-28 where we read:

*“He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them [His disciples], saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’”*

In the Matthew account of that event, Yeshua blessed the *matzot* -- the bread -- and gave thanks before drinking the wine and leading his disciples in doing likewise. This is the way the event was described in Mark 14 also, while in Luke 22 and 1 Corinthians 11, Yeshua gave thanks before partaking of the bread as well.

Until now I never focused on the thanksgiving component of the *shulchan adonai*, but only on the *baruchot* -- the blessings. In fact, when I have led the Table of the Lord from memory, without reading one of the Scriptures, I have typically said “and then He blessed the bread” ... “and then He blessed the wine”..., and then I proceeded to say the traditional *baruchot* over both the bread and the wine, and did not pause to thank God in addition.

I am thinking that it was not coincidental that Yeshua's expression of thankfulness to His Father in heaven was integrated into Yeshua's invitation to His disciples to be intimate with Him -- to

literally take Yeshua into themselves through the bread and the wine, while in an attitude of thanksgiving.

Now let me show you another Scripture where thankfulness is linked to intimacy with God; it is Philippians 4:6:

*“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;”*

And two verses later Philippians 4:9:

*“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”*

Psalms 95:2 says . “Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving;” if intimacy with God accompanies our thankfulness, we should expect to see the opposite if we are not thankful. And we do see the opposite in what Romans 1:20b-21 says of those who knew God but were not thankful to Him:

*“... they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ...”*

Indeed, the thankfulness to which Scripture calls us is not only to thank God for one thing or another that we perceive as blessings, but rather to walk a continuous walk of thankfulness:

Ephesians 5:18-20: *“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah,”*

“Giving thanks always for all things” is the key. “All things” means for life itself. It is not a situational matter – it is a way of life to be continually mindful of God and of our very being – that without God’s graciousness we would have no life and no purpose on earth.

I came to this understanding early in my born-again life, and I have never looked back. But I had a fore-taste of it in my early teens when I had my first summer job working in a country hospital. There, on a daily basis, I saw sickness and death and suffering, and I remember so clearly how I compared my own life and health to the plight of the patients there, and how I experienced a deep sense of thankfulness. But at the time, God was not part of my conscious world, and so my thankfulness was FOR things, but not TO anyone. I also remember feeling ill at ease with my thankfulness, because it was not lost on me that my enjoyment of well-being was only possible because of the comparison with the misfortune of others. Nevertheless, that emotional high generated by thankfulness and tempered by guilt, followed me through my teen years and early adulthood, and I am sure that it accounted for my continuous positive attitude

toward life, and my satisfaction with whatever circumstance I found myself in. It was only after I met God in my middle adult years that I transferred being thankful FOR THINGS to being thankful TO SOMEONE, and that someone was God. And as soon as I made that transfer to God, the guilt I spoke of previously left me, because my thankfulness was no longer based on any worldly comparison.

I shared with you, on an earlier occasion, that soon after I met God and subsequently met Yeshua, that the verse of Scripture “And Enoch walked with God.” deeply impressed me, and that I sought that kind of relationship with God – a relationship in which I could sense God’s presence continually. I am convinced that the combination of desiring it with all my heart, combined with my walk of continuous thanksgiving to God, is what has resulted in God granting me the intimacy that I asked for. Now while it is true that I cannot transfer my relationship with God to others, I can and, as a matter of fact I have, transferred to you the achievable elements of how I acquired it. It consisted of two things, (1) desiring it with all my heart, and (2) walking with a continuous attitude of thankfulness to God for all things in my life.

I am convinced that if you do those two things that I did, and don’t throw a wrench into it with unrepentant sin (notice I said “unrepentant sin”), that God will give you the desire of your heart as well, because Scripture promises it in Psalm 37:4, which reads:

*“Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”*

Since thanksgiving is so crucial to our intimacy with God, I want to spend a few minutes reading Scriptures about thanksgiving, and then we’ll open this up for a short period of testimony and discussion. So let’s begin.

Psalm 92:1: *“It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night, on an instrument of ten strings, on the lute, and on the harp, With harmonious sound.”*

Psalm 97:12: *“Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.”*

Psalm 100:1-5: *“Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.”*

Psalm 105:1: *“Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works!”*

Ephesians 5:17-21: *“Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,*

*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”*

Colossians 3:16-17: *“Let the word of Messiah dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Yeshua, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*

Let’s finish by reading Psalm 136:1-26 responsively together:

“Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is* good! For His mercy *endures* forever.  
Oh, give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy *endures* forever.  
Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords! For His mercy *endures* forever:  
To Him who alone does great wonders, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
To Him who by wisdom made the heavens, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
To Him who laid out the earth above the waters, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
To Him who made great lights, For His mercy *endures* forever--  
The sun to rule by day, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
The moon and stars to rule by night, For His mercy *endures* forever.  
To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
And brought out Israel from among them, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
With a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
To Him who divided the Red Sea in two, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
And made Israel pass through the midst of it, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
To Him who led His people through the wilderness, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
To Him who struck down great kings, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
And slew famous kings, For His mercy *endures* forever--  
Sihon king of the Amorites, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
And Og king of Bashan, For His mercy *endures* forever--  
And gave their land as a heritage, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
A heritage to Israel His servant, For His mercy *endures* forever.  
Who remembered us in our lowly state, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
And rescued us from our enemies, For His mercy *endures* forever;  
Who gives food to all flesh, For His mercy *endures* forever.  
Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy *endures* forever.”