

## MONDAY MANNA

November 23, 2015

### IS IT A GOOD TIME TO BE THANKFUL?

By Robert J. Tamasy

"Thanks a lot!" These three words carry a tremendous amount of meaning, and can be intended many ways. They can represent a sincere expression of gratitude, extended to an employee for excellent work on a project, a coworker, a valued customer for their business, or a supplier for meeting an urgent need in a timely manner. Or it can be said sarcastically, referring to someone's work, comments or attitudes that were not appreciated.

But at this time when the calendar year is drawing to a close and people in some parts of the world are preparing for a formal celebration of Thanksgiving Day, it seems a good time to reflect on those things for which we truly do feel thankful. For what are you saying, "Thanks a lot!" in the most positive way?

The list of possibilities is endless. From a work standpoint, we might be thankful for a new job, promotion, pay raise, added authority and responsibilities, increase in business, or strengthening of the company's brand and impact within your industry. But what if we did not get that job we were hoping to get? Or the much-needed increase in pay? Or if we feel that we, or our business, have stagnated? Can we be thankful for those things?

What about on a personal level: If we have made progress in our finances, paying off bills, setting aside more money for savings and investments, or being able to make special purchases we have planned to make for a long time, we can feel thankful. But what if we have suffered financial setbacks, with unexpected expenses? Or have had to steadily tap into our savings to meet pressing obligations? Or have had to delay desired purchases again? How can we be thankful for that?

The same things could be said about family relationships, our health, even hobbies and interests we pursue during our non-working hours. When things are going well, feeling and being thankful seems easy. But during times of great struggle – not so much. So what are we to do? The Bible offers suggestions:

**Make thankfulness a priority.** Being thankful should not be a token gesture, or an afterthought. Even in the midst of the pursuit of a great enterprise, it is important to pause and express our gratitude. *"When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord...with praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: 'He is good; his love to Israel endures forever. And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord'"* (Ezra 3:10-11).

**Be thankful...regardless.** Our perceptions of events and circumstances can affect our feelings, including our thankfulness. But we are instructed to express thanksgiving in all situations, partly because we may not immediately recognize their purpose or understand their eventual outcome. *"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

**Recognize the One to whom we should be thankful.** There is a tendency when things go well to congratulate ourselves for what we have accomplished. The Bible, however, reminds us that all things – skills, talents, and opportunities – come from God and we should express gratitude to Him. *"Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name"* (Psalm 100:4).

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## Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Do you have a regular Thanksgiving observance, or a designated time to think about things for which you are thankful? If so, describe what that is like for you.
2. What if you were to say, "Thanks a lot!" right now, would you be stating it in a positive way, or rather as a form of frustration or exasperation? Explain your answer.
3. Why do you think thankfulness can be a difficult attitude to practice, even in a season when expressions of thanksgiving are encouraged?
4. Is it really possible to feel a sense of thankfulness in times of struggle or in the midst of professional or personal setbacks? If so, how?

### NOTE:

*If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:*

- Psalm 50:14-15,
- Psalm 69:30-33, 95:1-7,
- Psalm 105:1-4, 106:1-2;
- Ephesians 5:20;
- Colossians 1:3-6