REFLECTIONS with Andy Raub



Thanksgiving is a Contact Sport

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." -Philippians 4:6-7

Does the stress of the "Holiday Season" threaten to steal your joy? Here are some thoughts to help change that.

The Danger of "Holiday Season" Stress

We expect "The Holidays" to be a time of togetherness and celebration like a Hallmark Movie. But for many people, the season starts out with great expectations and crashes into stress. Time crunches, hurt feelings, and emotional memories can combine to create anxiety and stress that devalue everything they touch.

How can we break out of this anxiety trap and create more joy around the season? Thanksgiving kicks off our traditional Holiday Season, which includes Christmas and New Year. Here's how to make Thanksgiving a "contact sport" and use its power to draw closer to God, create new value for others, and buoy our own spirits.

Thanksgiving Draws us Closer to God.

Thanking God for our blessings is an act of worship that deepens our relationship with Him by resetting our focus on Him rather than on this world. Thanksgiving is an act of grace because it expresses love without asking anything in return. Giving thanks is also an act of humility because it acknowledges God's sovereignty and love and recognizes that all we are and have come from Him.

Appreciation Creates New Value in Others

When an investment, such as a stock, rises in value, it is said to appreciate. The same dynamic applies to people. Thanksgiving adds new value to a relationship. And who doesn't need that in today's world? When we thank or encourage a co-worker, spouse, or friend, we give them appreciation, and they instantly feel more valued. Thanksgiving actively seeks out and appreciates the unique qualities others may take for granted.

Gratitude Buoys Our Own Spirits

Thanksgiving has two parts: the action of giving thanks and the attitude of thankfulness or gratitude. The more we practice giving thanks, the more we grow in our feelings of gratitude. Research shows that gratitude boosts our mental health and reduces stress by focusing our thoughts on the positive. Grateful people tend to have a more optimistic outlook because they feel more appreciated and supported by others.

Make Thanksgiving a Contact Sport

Scriptures like Philippians 4, shown above, teach us that anxiety cannot coexist with a thankful heart. This verse instructs us not to be anxious but to replace our anxious thoughts with prayer and thanksgiving in every situation. Then it promises that the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Actively thanking God and showing appreciation builds a grateful heart that crowds out our anxiety. So, this Thanksgiving, I encourage you to practice Thanksgiving as a contact sport by taking these three actions:

Thanksgiving - Make a “blessing list” of who and what are most valuable in your life and thank God for them.

Appreciation - Add value to someone else’s life by telling them how much you appreciate them.

Gratitude - Jot down your biggest anxieties and pray over them. Exposing fear to truth creates peace of mind.



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