I'm Replacing Petition With Thanksgiving
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I'm Replacing Petition With Thanksgiving

by Pastor Tim Dilena, *Senior Pastor*

"Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated." —John 6:11

There are two words that may be among the most important words we can ever learn to say in prayer: Thank You.

We know how to ask God for things. We know how to pray when we need provision, healing, direction, or a miracle. We bring Him our children, our marriages, our finances, our health, and the situations we cannot fix ourselves.

There is nothing wrong with petition. Petition is simply bringing our own needs before God. Scripture encourages us to do that.

But there are moments when God wants to teach us something deeper: before asking Him for what is missing, stop and thank Him for what is already there.

That is exactly what Jesus did in John chapter 6.

Thousands of people had gathered around Jesus, and they needed to be fed. The disciples looked at the crowd and saw an impossible situation. Then Andrew discovered a boy carrying five barley loaves and two fish.

One lunch. That's all they had.

Imagine looking at five thousand hungry people while holding enough food for one child. The need was enormous, and what they had seemed insignificant.

If that were us, we probably would have immediately started praying for a miracle. "God, send more bread!" "Lord, we need more fish!" "God, somehow provide what we don't have!"

But Jesus did something different.

The Bible says, "Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks..."

Before multiplication, there was thanksgiving. Before the miracle, there was gratitude. Before the thousands were fed, Jesus thanked His Father for what was already in His hands.

He replaced petition with thanksgiving.

> **Before asking Him for what is missing, stop and thank Him for what is already there.**

Bring Your One Lunch

We can become so consumed with the 4,999 things we don't have that we forget to thank God for the one lunch we do have.

We see the bill that still needs to be paid. We see the prayer that hasn't been answered. We see the healing we're waiting for. We see the opportunity that hasn't come. We look at somebody else's life and wonder why their

prayer seems to have been answered while ours hasn't.

Soon, our prayer life can become completely centered around the shortfall.

But what would happen if, for a moment, we stopped bringing God the 4,999 and brought Him our one lunch?

> **Our prayer life can become completely centered around the shortfall.**

"God, thank You for what You've already given me." "Thank You for the roof over my head." "Thank You for my family." "Thank You for carrying me through something I thought would destroy me." "Thank You for providing yesterday." "Thank You for waking me up this morning." "Thank You that I'm still here."

Gratitude doesn't mean pretending that everything is perfect. Jesus knew five loaves and two fish weren't enough.

Gratitude simply refuses to allow what is missing to make us forget what God has already provided.

Thankful That I Had It to Give

Recently, while walking through New York City, I stopped at an ATM because I needed some cash. Not long afterward, a man approached me with a story about his car being towed, his phone not working, and needing money.

I've lived around New York long enough to hear plenty of stories.

But for some reason, I reached into my pocket and gave him the $20 bill I had just withdrawn.

As I walked away, I started thinking, "Did I just get swindled?" I even considered going back to see whether he was asking other people for money.

Then I felt the Holy Spirit speak something very simple to my heart: Be thankful that you had it to give.

That changed everything.

Instead of worrying about what the man did with the $20, I could thank God that He had placed something in my hand that I was able to give away.

Sometimes gratitude is simply changing the way we see what is already in our hands.

The Rare Air of Gratitude

There is an old story about an aviator who heard an unusual noise while flying. Eventually, he discovered that a rat had gotten aboard the aircraft and was gnawing at some of the wiring.

The pilot could hear the problem. He knew it was dangerous. But he couldn't reach the animal.

Then he had an idea. Instead of trying to reach the rat, he took the airplane higher - to an altitude where he could survive but the rat could not.

He changed the altitude.

There are things that try to gnaw away at us spiritually: jealousy, envy, comparison, bitterness, and discontentment.

"Why did they get blessed?" "Why did their prayer get answered?" "When is it going to be my turn?"

Sometimes we're trying to fight those things at the wrong altitude. You need to go higher.

There is an altitude where envy can't survive. There is an altitude where comparison begins to die. There is an altitude where discontentment loses its grip.

It is the rare air of gratitude.

When somebody else gets blessed, go higher and say, "Thank You, Jesus, for what You're doing in their life." When you're still waiting, go higher and say, "God, I trust Your timing." When you don't have everything you want, go higher and say, "Lord, thank You for everything You've already given me."

You may not be able to change your circumstances immediately, but you can change your altitude.

Thanksgiving Before the Miracle

Many of us have unconsciously decided that gratitude belongs on the other side of the miracle.

"When God answers, I'll thank Him." "When the money comes, I'll praise Him." "When the doctor gives me the report I'm praying for, I'll rejoice." "When my child comes home, I'll give thanks." "When the door finally opens, I'll worship."

But Jesus shows us something different.

He gave thanks before the multiplication.

That is faith.

Faith says, "God, I don't have enough in my hands, but I know who You are." Faith says, "I don't know how You're going to do it, but I remember what You've already done." Faith says, "I still have unanswered prayers, but I refuse to allow what I'm waiting for to erase the memory of Your faithfulness."

> **You may not be able to change your circumstances immediately, but you can change your altitude.**

What's Your One?

So let me ask you something. What is your one?

If you couldn't ask God for anything today and could only thank Him, what would you bring?

Maybe you have 4,999 needs. Maybe you genuinely need a miracle. But bring your one lunch.

Remember His faithfulness. Remember the prayer He answered. Remember the door He opened. Remember the provision that came at exactly the right moment. Remember the things He protected you from. Remember where you were and where He has brought you.

Then simply say: "Thank You."

You may still need a miracle tomorrow. You may still have unanswered questions. There may still be things you're trusting God to provide.

But today, before asking for another loaf, thank Him for the one already in your hands. Before asking Him to do something else, remember what He has already done.

Today, I'm replacing petition with thanksgiving. ▣

When a Kid's Faith Changes a Family

A twelve-year-old boy in rural Cambodia stood beside his grandfather, who had suffered a stroke and was paralyzed.

He remembered something he had been taught about prayer.

So he laid his hands on his grandfather and prayed.

The next day, he returned to the ministry leaders who had taught him about Jesus, eager to tell them what had happened.

"My grandfather stood up and walked," he said.

It is the kind of testimony that makes you stop for a moment.

The boy had been a part of a ChildCry feeding program, a ministry of Times Square Church dedicated to feeding kids and sharing the hope of Jesus Christ. In partnership with Overland Missions, ChildCry currently serves kids in five rural villages across Cambodia.

Every week, they gather for more than a healthy snack. They are loved and discipled, memorize Scripture, worship together, and learn what it means to put their faith in Jesus.

Once a month, families from all five villages come together for a special revival gathering with worship, fellowship, and a shared meal. It was at one of these gatherings that the twelve-year-old returned—and afterward went home to his grandfather.

The ministry leaders continued checking in with him in the days that followed. His testimony remained the same. If anything, his excitement grew as he talked about what God had done in his own family.

Then something else happened.

The boy developed a headache and considered taking medicine but decided to pray first. He later told the leaders that after asking Jesus for healing, the pain completely disappeared.

For a twelve-year-old kid, faith was becoming something very real.

And that is part of what makes this story so special.

The impact of ChildCry reaches far beyond providing food. As kids discover Jesus for themselves, they carry what they are learning back into their homes—to parents, grandparents, siblings, and neighbors.

Many of the kids served in Cambodia come from difficult circumstances. Some are being raised by grandparents while their parents travel to the cities for work. Others have experienced broken homes or deep poverty. But through the faithful care of local ministry partners, they are discovering that they have a Heavenly Father who knows them, loves them, and will never leave them.

Today, ChildCry serves approximately 120 to 150 kids each week across these five villages. Along with nutritious snacks and monthly community meals, they receive consistent biblical teaching, Scripture memorization, discipleship, and relationships that continually point them to Jesus.

Sometimes it can be difficult to measure what happens when you feed a kid week after week, teach them Scripture, pray with them, and tell them about Jesus.

And then a twelve-year-old goes home.

He lays his hands on his grandfather.

And prays.

Set the Table for Jesus

by Treg McCoy, *Missions Director*

And suddenly, it is upon us.

When the days get longer and the colors of spring give way to the warm light of summer, it feels as though summer could last forever. And then, almost without warning, the light shifts. The leaves change. You walk outside one morning and realize that the inevitable is on its way.

Winter.

For me, Thanksgiving marks the threshold. We still get a few beautiful days, but there is no denying it anymore. Winter has arrived.

Thanksgiving itself always provides a distraction for the transition.

It is one of my favorite holidays because somehow it has retained its purpose. It genuinely causes us to stop. To look around the table. To appreciate those who are close and remember those who are far away. And, at least for a moment, to recognize how much we have to be thankful for.

Earlier this year, I found myself standing in a slum outside Durban, South Africa. As I looked around, I remembered standing in a similar place in Kampala, Uganda.

What struck me wasn't only the harshness of life there. It was the fact that life was being lived there.

Children were running around. People knew their neighbors. There was laughter and conversation. There was community and a sense of belonging in the middle of circumstances that, from my world, seemed almost impossible.

And I started thinking about Jesus.

What if He came walking into that community?

I could imagine the excitement. Someone finding a chair. Someone else preparing whatever food they had. The crudest lean-to suddenly being swept and made ready. The best plate brought out. Someone making room around a table that didn't really have room for one more.

Not because they suddenly had more.

Because Jesus was there.

And I realized that may be the heart of Thanksgiving.

Our gratitude isn't dependent upon everything around us being right.

Jesus changes the table.

I have watched Him do that all over the world this year. I've seen Him among children in Africa, in our Lighthouse ministry in India, among the Deaf community, and in the lives of people quietly following Him in places where doing so comes at great cost.

And I've seen Him here at home.

On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, we will make room at a table at Times Square Church for those in our church family who may not have somewhere to go. We'll eat together that afternoon and then walk over to Tuesday Night Service.

Nothing elaborate.

Just family making room for family.

Wherever you find yourself this Thanksgiving—in a beautiful home, a tiny apartment, around a crowded table, or perhaps somewhere you never expected to be—take a moment and look around.

Notice the people God has placed there. Notice the life that is happening around you. And somewhere between the food, the conversation and all the things that make Thanksgiving, remember who else is at the table.

Jesus is there.

And whether that table is in New York City, Amsterdam, India, or in the middle of a slum outside Durban, His presence gives all of us a reason to be thankful.

Happy Thanksgiving.

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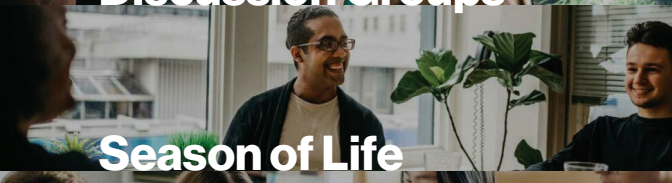

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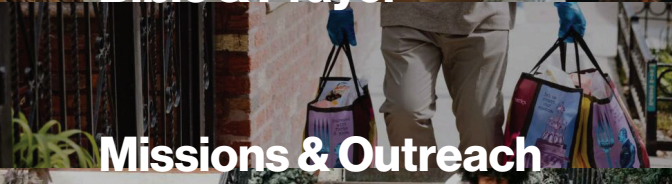

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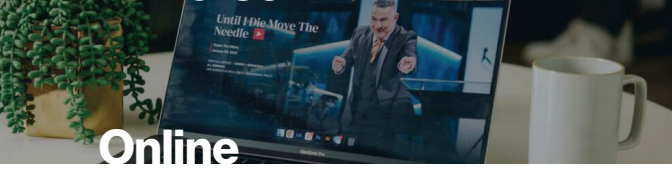

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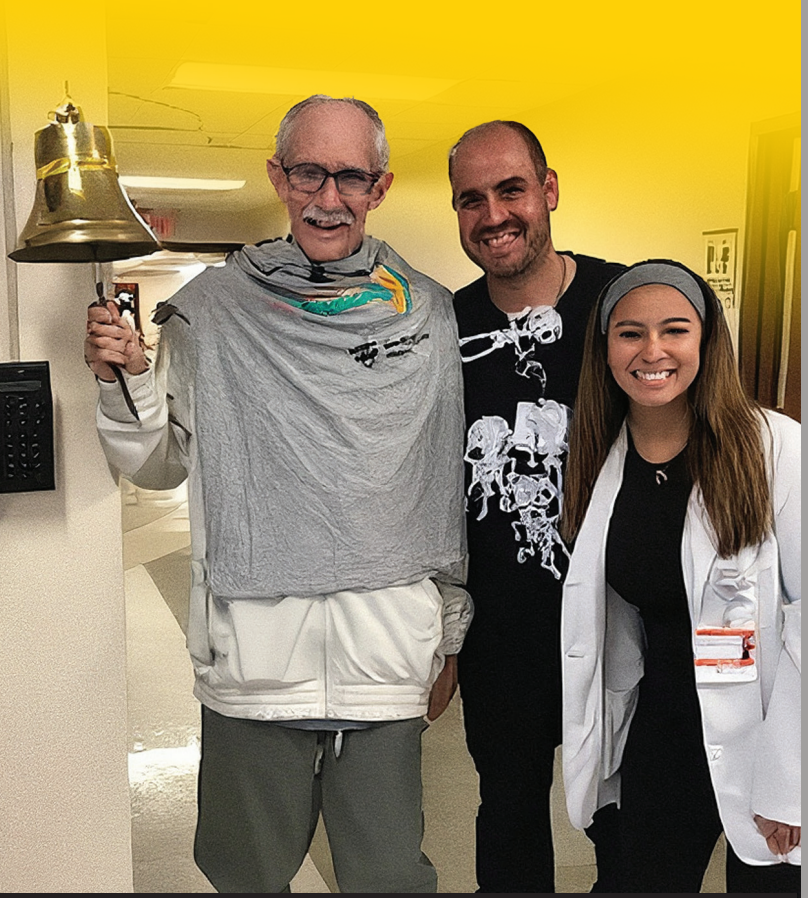

Share your story at **billionstories@tsc.nyc**

A New Heart, A New Spirit

Harry's Story

Harry and Margaret Dietrich were sitting on an airplane in Fort Lauderdale praying for a gate.

They were traveling from Medellín, Colombia, to New Jersey for Harry's sister's seventieth birthday. Their flight had landed safely, but there was no available gate, and they missed their connecting flight.

While waiting to be rebooked, Harry suffered a massive heart attack.

Within minutes, emergency personnel rushed him to Broward Health Medical Center, where the cardiac specialists and equipment he urgently needed were available.

Suddenly, the missed flight looked very different.

Doctors discovered that a major artery supplying Harry's heart was completely blocked. They placed a stent, but additional heart attacks and several strokes followed. He lost his ability to swallow and speak and had significant weakness on his left side.

One physician described Harry as the sickest patient in the hospital.

Margaret stood beside the man with whom she had spent nearly eighteen years serving vulnerable children and people experiencing homelessness in Medellín.

Now Harry was the one who needed to be carried.

Surrounded by monitors and medical equipment, a resident asked Margaret what she believed was going to happen.

“He is going to walk out of here,” she said.

Over the next four weeks, there wasn't one dramatic moment of healing. Instead, there were daily miracles.

Little by little, strength returned. Harry regained abilities that had been lost.

And eventually, the man once described as the sickest patient in the hospital did exactly what Margaret said he would do.

He walked out.

Harry's recovery continues, and there is still a journey ahead. But for Harry and Margaret, this has become another memorial stone: after nearly eighteen years of carrying the love of Christ to others, they can look back on a missed flight, a devastating diagnosis, and four weeks of daily miracles and see that through every moment, God was carrying them.

TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of *The Cross and the Switchblade.* It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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237 West 51st Street | NY, NY 10019

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