***The Power of Thanksgiving***

**Thanksgiving 2020, #2: 1 Timothy 4:1-5 November 15, 2020**

***For everything God created is good,   
and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,   
because it is consecrated by the word and by prayer.*1 Timothy 4:4-5**

**Context, context, context**

14Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, 15if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. 16Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great:

He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit,

was seen by angels, was preached among the nations,

was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

1 Timothy 4:1-3

1) The church (in Ephesus!) still matters – Paul has sent Timothy to hold the fort (see Acts 20:17-38)

2) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ still matters, and thanksgiving is going to help get us there

**The problem that arose in Ephesus: “spirit good, world bad”**

*The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. 2Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. 3They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For God created everything good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word and by prayer.*

1 Timothy 4:1-5 (with reference to Genesis 1:31)

1) The word is God’s, the prayer is mine

2) Always be careful to declare something “unclean”

**The hardest lessons of Thanskgiving**

1) The power to change my perspective about God’s discipline

*25See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? 26At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” f 27The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.*

*28Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29for our “God is a consuming fire.”*

Hebrews 12:25-29 (quoting from Haggai 2:6 and Deuteronomy 4:24)

1) Moses tells the story of his experience of God’s discipline – and his confidence in God’s faithfulness

2) “Once” the Law warned on earth, “Once more” Jesus warns from heaven!

3) Thanksgiving enables me to receive – and grow from! – God’s discipline

2) The power to enjoy God’s creation

*23“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. 24No one should seek their own good, but the good of others. 25Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, 26for, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.” c*

*27If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. 28But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. 29I am referring to the other person’s conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another’s conscience? 30If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for?*

*31So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—33even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.*

*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*

1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1 (with a wonderful quote from Psalm 24:1)

1) Edification and enjoyment aren’t mutually exclusive – but they must begin with God, not my rights

2) Thanksgiving bolsters my conscience; develops my discernment

**Resources for further studies of Thanksgiving**

Bob Deffinbaugh has a good intro to 1 Peter at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/50-1-timothy-believing-and-behaving-household-god*](https://bible.org/seriespage/50-1-timothy-believing-and-behaving-household-god)

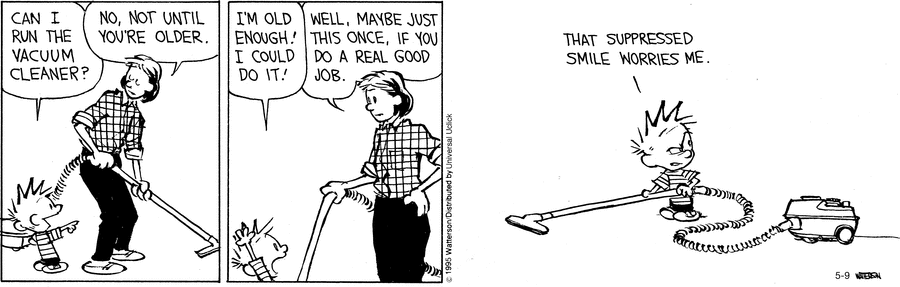
Ligon Dunan’s sermon on 1 Timothy 4 isn’t, I think, his best, but it is good intro to the passage at [*https://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/the-latter-times/*](https://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/the-latter-times/)

Randy Alcorn has a great little article on enjoying God’s good gifts at [*https://www.epm.org/blog/2020/Nov/9/time-efforts-hobbies*](https://www.epm.org/blog/2020/Nov/9/time-efforts-hobbies)

John Piper has a more eschatological take on Hebrews 12 at [*https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/a-kingdom-that-cannot-be-shaken*](https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/a-kingdom-that-cannot-be-shaken)

Nicholas Batzig’s blog on giving thanks like Jesus at [*https://feedingonchrist.org/thankfulness-jesus/?utm\_source=rss&utm\_medium=rss&utm\_campaign=thankfulness-jesus*](https://feedingonchrist.org/thankfulness-jesus/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=thankfulness-jesus)

Kevin de Young has a series of Thanksgiving blogs, including these:  
[*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/stuffed-full-with-thankfulness/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/stuffed-full-with-thankfulness/)  
[*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/gratitude-to-gods-glory/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/gratitude-to-gods-glory/)



# The Angelus by Jean-Francois Millet, 1857-1859

# The Angelus by Jean-Francois Millet, 1857-1859 also called “Prayer for the Potato Crop”

# A Thanksgiving Jesus

[Nicholas T. Batzig](https://feedingonchrist.org/author/nbatzig/)

If you were hoping to read something about our Puritan-American heritage–based on the title of this post–you will be sorely disappointed. If you’re looking for fodder for the culture war that is raging against the Christian foundation of this country in some aspect of [the Plymouth plantation narrative](http://books.google.com/books?id=tYecOAN1cwwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=on+plymouth+plantation&hl=en&sa=X&ei=CQ12VO7xIYukNqClg4gK&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false), you won’t find it here. If you, however, you are wanting to know what the Scriptures teach us about thanksgiving from the life and ministry of Jesus, then you’ve come to the right place. One of the things that we can be certain of–concerning all of the sinless perfections of incarnate Son of God–is that Jesus expressed full and unceasing gratitude to His Father for every provision, every kindness, every protection, every soul-strengthening support and every miraculous act that the Father worked through Him during His earthly ministry. Without doubt, Jesus is the most thankful person that ever walked the face of the earth; and yet, while we may safely be assured of this, there are only a few instances in which the Scriptures tell us about the thankfulness of Jesus. This should strike us as strange, given all that the Scriptures teach us about our own need to be thankful. Thankfulness–and the sinful lack of it–is one of the foremost teachings of Scripture. Though there are so many other passages, consider the teaching of Psalm 107, Luke 17:11-19 and 2 Timothy 3:2 in this regard. So, what are we to make of the fact that there are actually very few instances in which we are told of the thankfulness of Jesus? And, what can we then learn from the Scriptural record of the instances of His thankfulness?

In his sermon “[The First and Last Supper](http://mp3.sa-media.com/filearea/72712125023/72712125023.mp3),” Sinclair Ferguson points out that Jesus’ emotional life was not always evident to us because He did not “let His emotions all hang out.” He explained:

If you read through the Gospels you will learn a great deal from the Gospel testimony to the character and attractiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Occasionally, you will see His inner emotional life coming to expression. Occasionally, in a deep sense of truly righteous anger. On occasion, in the tears that flow from His eyes. And very rarely in the way our modest Lord Jesus Christ did not let His emotions all hang out.

While there is a reservedness on the part of Jesus in revealing all of His emotions, the Gospel writers have recorded several instances in which Jesus verbalized thanksgiving to His Father. They can be found in Matt. 11:25; 15:36; 26:27; Mark 8:8; 14:23; Luke 10:21; 22:17, 19; John 6:11, 23; 11:41 and I Corinthians 11:24. What is remarkable about these instances of thanksgiving is that they can all be placed into one of three categories; and, each of these three categories are bound up in or related to the work of redemption. In short, Jesus’ thankfulness teaches us to pour out our own hearts in thanksgiving to God–above all, for the redemption that He has freely given to us in the Son. Jesus’ prayers of thanksgiving fall into one of the following three categories:

**1) Thankfulness for the miracles that served the purposes of redemption.**

The Apostle John leaves us the record of Jesus offering thanks to God prior to performing two of His most noteworthy miracle–the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:11), and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41-42). With regard to the first, we might be tempted to conclude that Jesus merely gave thanks for the meal that He and His disciples, together with the multitude, were about to eat. However, the fact that it is the last thing we read before He performed the miracle, and the only other instance of Jesus giving thanks in John’s Gospel is immediately prior to raising Lazarus from the dead, shows that it is gratitude–not for the common provision of food–but for the miraculous sign pointing to His glory as the only Redeemer of men. In other words, Jesus gave thanks for the Father working the miracle through Him so that men would believe in Him. This becomes all the more clear as He exposits the true purpose of the feeding of the multitude–claiming that He was “the bread which came down from heaven to give life to the world.” The same is true with his giving thanks prior to raising Lazarus–a miracle that accompanied his declaration that He Himself is “the resurrection and the life.”

**2) Thankfulness for God’s sovereignty in the redemption of men.**

The next thing for which Jesus offered thanksgiving is recorded in Matthew 11:25 and Luke 10:21. Just before calling men to come to Him and find rest for their souls, Jesus thanked His Father for “hiding these things (i.e. the things of the Gospel) from the wise and prudent and revealing them to babes.” Jesus was thankful for God’s sovereign work in the redemption of men–in His sovereign regeneration and illumination of their minds and hearts in revealing Christ to them. Jesus was thankful that the Father hid the truth of the Gospel from men and women who thought that they were wise and who rejected His claims. Jesus thanked His Father for election and reprobation.

**3) Thankfulness for the fulfillment of redemption in His sufferings.**

Finally, Jesus thanked His father for His own sufferings. This might strike you as strange to hear, since we read of Jesus’ soul sufferings in the Garden of Gethsemane, hear His cry, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me” and listen in astonishment as He writhed in anguish, crying, “My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?” However, on the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread and wine and–taking up each of these symbols of the sufferings that He was about to endure–He “gave thanks.” Jesus thanked His Father that His body would be broken and His blood would be shed. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus, “for the joy set before Him, endured the cross.” Jesus knew that His sufferings were substitutionary and that they would bring many sons to glory. Jesus drank the bitter cup that was placed prospectively before Him in the Garden because, as John Maclaurin so astutely observed, “he had a still greater aversion to (His people having to drink it), than to drinking of it Himself.” Jesus thanked His Father for the hell that He would endure on the cross because He knew that it would result in the redemption of those that the Father had given to Him.

In short, the three things for which Jesus expressed thanksgiving were all bound up in the work of redemption. In this, Jesus teaches us that above all the things that we should be thankful for–not just on one day in November, but every day of our lives–is the redemption that we have in His blood, the forgiveness of our sins. The Apostle Paul and Peter surely understand this. When Paul opened his letter to the church in Ephesus he started with a declaration of thanksgiving to God for the redemption that we have in Christ: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ…” When the Apostle Peter opened his first epistle he led with the same proclamation of praise and thanksgiving: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead…” May God give us grace to learn from our Lord Jesus and the example of the Apostles that for which we ought to continually express gratitude to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Kevin de Young’s blog at [*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/gratitude-to-gods-glory/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/gratitude-to-gods-glory/)

For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. ([*2 Corinthians 4:15*](https://www.esv.org/2%20Corinthians%204%3A15/))

The Heidelberg Catechism is famous for its threefold outline of Christian theology: guilt, grace, and gratitude. We are guilty sinners before God. God saves us from guilt by his grace. We respond to this grace with heartfelt gratitude. You could add a fourth strand-glory. When we respond to grace with gratitude, God gets glory.

[Psalm 50:23](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%2050%3A23/) says, “The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me.”  We often think of thanksgiving as a family holiday, or something we give perfunctorily before meals, or something our mother commanded of us when we were in a rotten mood. But being thankful goes deeper, or, I should say, it goes higher. Gratitude makes much of God because it shows (1) that God is the author of all that is good and (2) that we love the Giver more than the gifts.

Paul explained that he ministered for the sake of the Corinthians so that more people might receive grace, so that more people might be thankful, so that more glory might go to God. What marvelous, gospel-proclaiming, God-glorifying logic! When we minister faithfully, God gets glory every step of the way.

# William Hendricksen’s commentary in the *New Testament Commentary* series Commentary on 1 Timothy 4

Though the church be ever so glorious, reflecting the radiance of its precious Lord and Savior (1 Tim. 3:15, 16), apostasy is just around the corner, for not all who belong outwardly to the church belong to it inwardly.

The present chapter deals with this apostasy.

**1. But the Spirit expressly says that in later seasons some will depart from the faith.**

“The Spirit says,” that is, “is now saying.” To whom was the Spirit speaking? Acts 20:29, 30 leads me to think that the apostle meant “to myself” (perhaps also to others). The Spirit, then, is saying that “in later seasons”—eras of this new dispensation, eras definitely marked out in God’s foreknowledge—some will *depart* or *apostatize* from *the faith* (objective sense), the body of redemptive truth, the Christian religion.

The Spirit was saying this *expressly* (“in stated terms”). There was neither doubt nor vagueness about it. A half dozen years ago Paul, addressing the elders of the churches located in the very region where Timothy was now laboring, had spoken as follows: “I know that after my departure grievous wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” A few years after that speech recorded in Acts 20, the apostle, writing to the Colossians from his first Roman imprisonment, had warned them against accepting the error that faith in Christ’s atoning work has to be supplemented by ascetic beliefs and practices (Col. 2). And now, writing to Timothy from Macedonia, he is distinctly informed by the Holy Spirit that the error, *already present* in its incipient form, *will grow and develop* in the manner indicated in verse 3.

Men will depart from the faith by **giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.** As the context indicates (and see also 1 John 4:6 where “the spirit of seduction” is contrasted with “the Spirit of truth”), these *spirits* are not men but *demons*. Like *planets* that seem *to wander* back and forth among the constellations, these spirits wander; moreover, they *cause men to wander*. They *seduce, lead astray*. By giving heed to them one is giving heed to *doctrines of demons* (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 13:11, 14).

**2.** These doctrines are **(embodied) in (the) insincere utterance** (literally, *in hypocrisy*) **of those who speak lies.** As Satan made use of a serpent to deceive Eve, and this by means of *an insincere utterance* (Gen. 3:1–5: he was hiding his real objective; for while he pretended to raise Eve to a higher level of glory, so that she would be “like God,” his real aim was to dethrone God and enthrone himself), so these seducing spirits or demons make use of *men who speak lies*, and who talk piously and learnedly in order to cover up their own arrogance or immorality.

These hypocrites are described as the men **whose own conscience is seared** (literally, *“who are cauterized as to their own conscience”*). By constantly arguing with conscience, stifling its warnings, and muffling its bell, they at last have reached the point where conscience no longer bothers them. *Grieving* the Holy Spirit has led to *resisting* him, and *resisting* him to *quenching* him. Then, through their own rebellion and obstinacy, their conscience will have been rendered (and thus will be permanently) *seared*. It will have been made callous. A good example is Balaam (Num. 22:12, 19, 21, 22, 32; 25:1–3; 2 Peter 2:15; Rev. 2:14).

**3.** Their teaching is—or will be—as bad as their character: **forbidding (people) to marry, and (enjoining them) to abstain from foods.**

Principles bear fruit. The false teachers who are here described, probably accept as one of their starting principles the thesis: Anything physical or sensuous is contaminating. It is not difficult to see how such a principle would in course of time cause the errorists to frown on *marriage. Foods*, too, would be condemned, though, of course, not absolutely. Fasting would be praised.

*An early fulfilment of the prophecy came in the second century*. It is not difficult to understand how Jewish ritualistic scruples, *already* in evidence in near-by Colosse as well as elsewhere (see Col. 2 and cf. Rom. 14), would ally itself with dualistic heathen philosophy. They had in common *Asceticism*, the renunciation of the comforts of life with a view to attaining happiness and perfection.

The second century syncretistic cult (see p. 20) in which the prophecy was partly fulfilled, was *Gnosticism*, which elevated *gnosis*, that is, *knowledge*, to a position of prominence above *pistis*, that is, *faith*. According to this system, the good God—the God of the new dispensation—could not have created the world, for the world is matter, and matter is the seat of evil. It was the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Demiurge, who created the world, the human body, matter. These are our enemies. They must be conquered. Hence, all Gnostics favored “the abuse of the flesh.” But this abuse of the flesh can express itself in two diametrically opposite imperatives: a. “Shun it”; b. “Overcome it by indulging in it.” The first was advocated by *Ascetic Gnostics*, such as Marcion, Saturninus, and Tatian (see Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, I. xxix; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I. xxviii); the second by *Antinomian* or *Licentious Gnostics*, such as the Nicolaitans. The apostle Paul, here in 1 Tim. 4, predicts and warns against the former. The apostle John (1 John 3:4–10; Rev. 2:15, 20, 24), the apostle Peter (2 Peter 2:12–19), and Jude (verses 4, 8, 11, and 19) combat the latter. But the two are never far apart. Paul in reality combats *both* varieties, for we have not only his statements here in 1 Tim. 4 but also that in 2 Tim. 3:1–9. (For the Cerinthian application of the basic thesis of Gnosticism see N.T.C. on John, Vol. I, pp. 33, 83, 84.)

But this is only *one* fulfilment. Others follow; for though in its ancient forms Gnosticism has passed away, its spirit has been in evidence again and again throughout the centuries. Also in our own day, whenever the Old Testament is frowned upon, whenever human reason is exalted above Christian faith, whenever the thesis: “Sin is real and is in its essence rebellion against God” is rejected, or whenever man’s ability to save himself is proclaimed (which is a denial of Christ as the only and perfect Savior), the ghost of Gnosticism stalks again.

Gnosticism despises God’s ordinances, for example, the marriage-ordinance (Gen. 2:24) and the ordinance concerning food (Gen. 1:29, 30; and especially Gen. 9:3). These errorists, whose coming Paul in a measure *describes* but even more *predicts*, order men to abstain from foods **which God created in order that those who believe and acknowledge the truth may partake of them with thanksgiving** (literally, *which God created for participation with thanksgiving by those who believe and who acknowledge the truth*).

These words pertain to *foods*, not to *marriage*. Of course, by implication they apply to both, but *directly* only to foods. The apostle has expressed his favorable view of *marriage and the family* in such passages as 1 Tim. 2:15; 3:2, 4, 12. With respect to foods, then, note that God—the only true God, who is the same in both dispensations—has created them. Hence, they cannot be bad or contaminating. And he has created them with a definite purpose, namely, “for participation with thanksgiving” (1 Cor. 10:31), so that the circle may again be completed, and what came from God may, in the form of thanksgiving, be returned to him. But the *natural* man is not able to pour out his heart in thanksgiving unto God. Hence, Paul adds, “by those who believe and acknowledge the truth.” Such joyful acceptance of the truth leads not to asceticism but to partaking with thanksgiving. This thought receives further emphasis as Paul continues:

**4. For every creature of God is excellent, and nothing is fit to be thrown away if it is received with thanksgiving.** This sentence confirms the preceding passage. Foods that were created for consumption with accompanying thanksgiving are excellent. In fact, *every* creature of God is excellent: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). Nothing is fit to be thrown away, as if it were evil or the seat of evil. Of late, science is beginning to discover that what used to be regarded as of no direct value to man may prove to be a source of great blessing; may, in fact, help to solve the food-problem of future generations; think, for example, of “plant-food from the ocean.”

*Every* creature of God is excellent:

(a) For the very reason that God *created* it.

and

(b) Because he also *consecrated* it.

Hence, Paul continues:

**5. For it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.** By means of God’s *blessing* upon it and by means of our *confident prayer*, it has been *consecrated* (cf. 2 Tim. 2:21), that is, set apart for holy use, lifted into the spiritual realm. For the Christian, eating and drinking are no secular activities (1 Cor. 10:31). While, before partaking of food, *he* utters his petition and thanksgiving, *God* at the same time pronounces his word of blessing (cf. Deut. 8:3). He remembers his gracious covenant (Ps. 11:5).[[1]](#footnote-1)

Randy Alcorn on whether we can enjoy hobbies with Thanskgiving  
at [*https://www.epm.org/blog/2020/Nov/9/time-efforts-hobbies*](https://www.epm.org/blog/2020/Nov/9/time-efforts-hobbies)

But seen properly, even hobbies and leisure activities can draw our hearts to worship Christ and be part of what’s done for Christ’s glory. A wartime mentality can be taken to such an extreme that we feel it’s unfaithful to enjoy any possessions, pleasures, or special activities. That’s why I’m so thankful that in the midst of his command that the rich be generous, in 1 Timothy Paul reminds us that God provides everything for our enjoyment! Even in wartime, it’s important to have battle breaks. Soldiers need rest and recreation. Life isn’t just utilitarian. There’s nothing wrong with spending time on pleasures that renew and revive us, especially considering that our battle will last a lifetime.

I’m grateful to have fun possessions, such as a bicycle, tennis racket, and mask, snorkel, and fins. They aren’t necessary; yet they contribute to my physical and mental health. Our family spends money on vacations that aren’t “necessary,” yet they bring renewal and precious relationship-building opportunities. My wife and I sometimes go out to dinner, enriching our relationship and renewing our vigor to return to life’s battles. We can give away much or most of our income and seek to use our time wisely, yet still have breathing room for legitimate recreational spending and leisure time.

Paul says it is demons and liars who portray the physical realm as unspiritual, forbid people from the joys of marriage, including sex, and “order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” ([1 Timothy 4:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim%204.3-5)). God is a lavish giver. “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” ([Romans 8:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.32)).

Because of the current darkness of our hearts, we must be careful not to make idols out of created things. But God isn’t displeased when we enjoy a good meal, marital sex, a football game, a cozy fire, or a good book. He’s not up in Heaven frowning at us and saying, “Stop it—you should only find joy in me.” This would be as foreign to God’s nature as our heavenly Father as it would be to mine as an earthly father if I gave my daughters a Christmas gift and started pouting because they enjoyed it too much. No, I gave the gift to bring joy to them and to me—if they didn’t take pleasure in it, I’d be disappointed. Their pleasure in my gift to them draws them closer to me. I am delighted that they enjoy the gift.

Of course, if children become so preoccupied with the gift that they walk away from their father and ignore him, that’s different. Though preoccupation with a God-given gift can turn into idolatry, enjoying that same gift with a grateful heart can draw us closer to God.

God welcomes prayers of thanksgiving for meals, games, books, relationships, and every other good thing. When we fail to acknowledge God as the source of all good things, we fail to give Him the recognition and glory He deserves. We separate joy from God, which is like trying to separate heat from fire or wetness from rain.

Every day we should see God in the food we eat, the air we breathe, the friendships we enjoy, and the pleasures of family, work, and hobbies. Yes, we must sometimes forgo secondary pleasures, and we should never let them eclipse God. And we should avoid opulence and waste when others are needy. But we should thank God for all of life’s joys, large and small, and allow them to draw us to Him. My taking pleasure in a good meal or a good book is taking pleasure in God. It’s not a substitute for God, nor is it a distraction from Him. In the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, it’s what I was made for: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

Now I can return to this specific question about reward: when we use hobbies and leisure activities as an opportunity to worship and glorify and thank God, we are acting in faith. Faith is what pleases Him, and our seeking Him is what He will reward ([Hebrews 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb%2011.6)). So yes, I believe hobbies done to God’s glory could be something He might well reward. Either way, when done to honor Him, they certainly won’t be considered worthless in our gracious Father’s eyes!

God is the one who gives us our gifts, abilities, and resources, all of which we are to steward well, seeking to please our Master. The first person Scripture describes as “filled with the Spirit” wasn’t a prophet or priest; he was an Israelite craftsman ([Exodus 31:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod%2031.1-6)). God gifted and called Bezalel to be a skilled laborer, a master craftsman, a God-glorifying artist. The gifting and calling were from God ([Exodus 35:30-35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod%2035.30-35)). He created each of us as individuals, with different interests and skills and talents, and using them to His glory is part of being a good steward. Different activities may even be a means of connecting with people we might otherwise never meet and provide opportunities to share about the God we love and serve!

Of course, if we participate in activities that don’t honor our Lord, or have pride in our abilities, or use them as excuse to neglect the other things God has commanded and called us to do, then yes, hobbies can become sin, and something God wouldn’t reward us for at His judgment seat.

If what you otherwise would have done with an hour spent on a leisure activity is pray, read the Bible, feed the poor, gather with your church, or share Jesus with your neighbor, then sure, just say “no” to the hobby!  But if you would have spent it doing a number of other discretionary things, then feel free to say “yes” to it. Do it wisely, do it God’s glory, and do it with joy and thanksgiving, knowing “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above” ([James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James%201.17)).

1. Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). [*Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bkrc-12tt?ref=Bible.1Ti4.1-5&off=608&ctx=+of+God+and+prayer.%0a~Though+the+church+be) (Vol. 4, pp. 145–148). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)