FEAST OF THANKFULNESS · THANKSGIVING DEVOTIONAL

Grace After the Meal

November 22, 2026 · Deuteronomy 8:10–18 · Pastor Bart Denny

THE BIG IDEA

We know how to say grace before a meal. This Thanksgiving, let's remember to give thanks after it.

This is a short guide for Thanksgiving week. Pastor Bart's message at our Feast of Thankfulness was a ten-minute devotional, so the guide is shorter than usual. On your own, take a section a day or use the daily readings near the end. A group can work through it in about forty-five minutes, or use it around a Thanksgiving table.

Read **Deuteronomy 8:1–18**. The message focused on Deuteronomy 8:10–18, but Deuteronomy 8:1–9 tells you what Israel had come through. Next Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent, when Terra Penninga begins our series on Jonah, *A Greater One Than Jonah Is Here*.

Get talking

What's one dish that has to be on the table before it feels like Thanksgiving at your house?

Where this passage sits

Deuteronomy is a set of sermons Moses preached to Israel on the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River. The people have spent forty years in the wilderness. Most of the generation that left Egypt has died, and their children are about to enter the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses won't be going with them, so he spends his last days reminding them who God is and what he has done.

Deuteronomy 8 opens with a call to remember: "Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years" (Deuteronomy 8:2). God fed them manna and taught them that "man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3). Jesus quoted that verse when he was tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4:4). Then Moses describes the land ahead: streams, wheat and barley, vines and olive oil, bread without scarcity (Deuteronomy 8:7–9). Our passage is his warning about what a land like that can do to a grateful heart.

A few words worth a closer look

"Satisfied" (Deuteronomy 8:10, Deuteronomy 8:12)

To be full, to have had enough. Moses uses it for the moment after the meal, when the need that drove you to the table is gone.

"Praise" (Deuteronomy 8:10)

The Hebrew word is the usual word for "bless," as in "bless the Lord." Jewish families still pray a blessing after meals that draws on this verse.

"Forget" (Deuteronomy 8:11, Deuteronomy 8:14)

In Deuteronomy, forgetting God is more than a lapse of memory. It means living as though he weren't the one who brought you out and keeps you.

"Power" and "ability" (Deuteronomy 8:17–18)

The same Hebrew word stands behind "my power" in Deuteronomy 8:17 and "the ability to produce wealth" in Deuteronomy 8:18. Israel would claim the strength for themselves; Moses says God is the one who gives it.

"Covenant" (Deuteronomy 8:18)

The binding promise God made to Abraham and his descendants. Israel's harvests would be a sign of God keeping his word.

1 A full plate can make us forget

READ Deuteronomy 8:10–14 and Deuteronomy 8:17–18

Pastor Bart started with an ordinary dinner plate and a fair prediction: we'll pray, fill our plates, maybe go back for seconds or thirds, clear the tables and go on with our day. Most of us learned to say grace before a meal. Moses tells Israel to give thanks afterward: "When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you" (Deuteronomy 8:10).

Moses sees a danger in the good land, and it's forgetfulness. We tend to think hardship is the great test of faith, and it can be. Prosperity is another kind of test. When you're hungry, your need is obvious. When the cupboards are full and life is going reasonably well, it's easy to forget how much you depend on God.

Moses isn't condemning hard work. Israel would plant fields, build houses and care for their herds. His warning is about the story they'd tell themselves: "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me" (Deuteronomy 8:17). Even the ability to do that work came from God (Deuteronomy 8:18). Think of a Thanksgiving dinner. Somebody grew the food, harvested it, shipped it, bought it and cooked it, and we should be grateful for every bit of that effort. Behind it are things none of us made: soil, rain, sunlight and the capacity to grow food at all.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you remember about how grace was said at meals in the home you grew up in?

2. Why do you think comfort makes it easier to forget God than hardship does?

3. Where are you tempted to tell yourself that your own hands produced what you have?

4. How can we be grateful for human effort, our own included, without leaving God out of the story?

2 God was faithful in the wilderness, too

READ Deuteronomy 8:2–5 and Deuteronomy 8:15–16

Moses doesn't only point Israel ahead to the good land. He reminds them of the wilderness, the "thirsty and waterless land" with its snakes and scorpions, where God brought water out of rock and fed them manna (Deuteronomy 8:15–16). God was faithful there, too.

Pastor Bart was honest that not everyone comes to Thanksgiving after a good year. Some people will have an empty chair at the table. Others are facing illness, money trouble or a family situation that keeps getting harder. He didn't tell anyone to be thankful for every painful thing. He pointed to the God who sustained Israel in the wilderness and then brought them into the land. His faithfulness wasn't limited to their seasons of abundance, and his faithfulness to us doesn't depend on everything going the way we'd hoped.

As Advent begins next Sunday, Christians have a greater reason still to give thanks. God sent his Son into our world. Jesus gave himself for our sins, and through his death and resurrection he opened the way for us to be reconciled to God. No amount of hard work could earn that gift, and it stays ours in Christ even when life is difficult.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Look back over this year. What was your "wilderness," if you had one?

2. Where did God provide for you in that place, even if it didn't feel like enough at the time?

3. If someone you know is facing a hard Thanksgiving, what would help them more than being told to cheer up?

4. How does the gift of Jesus change what thankfulness can mean in a difficult year?

Give thanks after the meal

READ Deuteronomy 8:10

Pastor Bart's invitation was simple to describe and easy to skip. Say grace before you eat, and thank God for the food and the people around you. When the meal is finished, before you get up from the table, take a moment to remember one specific way God has sustained you this year. Maybe he provided something you needed, brought someone into

your life at the right time, or gave you strength for something you never expected to face. Thank him for it, and consider telling the person sitting beside you. We need to hear one another's stories of God's faithfulness.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is one specific way God has sustained you this year?

2. Who could you tell about it this week?

Wrap up

FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can we encourage each other to give thanks after the meal this Thanksgiving?

2. How can we pray for each other before we meet again?

Through the week

☐	**Monday**	Deuteronomy 8:1–9. Notice everything God did for Israel in the wilderness. Thank him for one thing he did for you this year that you didn't do for yourself.
☐	**Tuesday**	Deuteronomy 8:10–20. Ask God to show you where you've been taking his gifts for granted.
☐	**Wednesday**	Psalm 103:1–5. Make a list of the "benefits" the psalm names, then add one or two of your own.
☐	**Thursday (Thanksgiving Day)**	Luke 17:11–19. Ten men were healed and one came back to give thanks. After your meal today, be the one who comes back.
☐	**Friday**	2 Corinthians 9:6–15. Thank God for his "indescribable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15), and ask him who you could be generous toward this season.

Try this

At your Thanksgiving meal this year, before anyone gets up from the table, ask each person to name one specific way God sustained them this year. If you're eating alone, write yours down and tell someone about it later in the week.

Close in prayer

Father, thank you for your faithfulness to us, for the blessings we've enjoyed and for the people you've placed in our lives. Be near to everyone who is hurting this Thanksgiving, and give them strength, comfort and peace. Forgive us for the times we've taken your gifts for granted. Help us remember that everything we have comes from you, and above all, thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. As we share our meals this week, fill our hearts with gratitude and teach us to share your love and generosity with others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Notes

This guide online

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