



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

Did you miss me? Likely not. Your already-busy life was compressed significantly, last week. Holiday? Yeah, right. For most of my **Point of View**s, their career is lived in week-long marathons. Every week delivers a 26.2 mile demand; most are met on a 5/12/52 basis (that's five days a week, about 12 hours "on" every day, for 52 weeks a year - since all of their electronics are "on" during their time(s) "off"). So, Thanksgiving Week? Same amount of work - that's the 26.2 mile part - but the race was run on slightly different terms (three days @ 12 hours, plus a "long weekend" filled with stuffed briefcases, constantly-refilled e-mail boxes, and a little early-in-the-game Christmas shopping thrown in for good measure...).

Did you miss me? Last week was the first time in a decade that we didn't deliver a **Point of View** to our readers. I took last weekend "off." Off? Sure: Friday was a day-long TMP session in Santa Barbara, Saturday was an all-day consultation with a **TMP** graduate who is at a lifetime inflection-point, Saturday night was final prep for a guest preaching opportunity the next morning, Sunday was three services, filling in for a good friend - and **TMP** grad - in Santa Barbara. Sunday afternoon I spent with three key **TMP** grad couples in Santa Barbara, hatching plans for our future



ministry in the Central Coast... and then Monday was another **TMP** day-long in Santa Barbara. Jesus ministered in Jerusalem, but slept in Bethany; I ministered in Santa Barbara, but slept in Ventura (rooms down the coast are 60% less; the 25 minute commute is worth it). I "took the weekend off;" no **Point of View** last week...

So, I missed the "before Thanksgiving" window of opportunity; I didn't get to nudge you toward a thought in last week's mayhem. Here it is, as an espresso-shot: *Thanksgiving isn't a one-day-per-year event, for Christians.* Rather, it's an every-day mandate: *"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) Short and simple, but really hard to accomplish. Why?

Most days are joy-busters. Let's face it: every day is planned as a parade, and the majority of life's weather makers are doing

their best to rain on yours. Life IS hard, and it gets even harder when you declare your plan to live outside the box and God smiles on your choices. So, what's the antidote: *"Be joyful always..."* How do you do *that*?

Joy is either a response to external conditions, or it's a mind-over-mayhem declaration that positions you before your circumstances define you. *"Be joyful"* - that's the order - *"always"* - that's the frequency. Joy is not a reaction to your reality; instead, it is an act of your will, based on the eternally-impacting news that this life is the closest thing to hell you'll ever experience, on your way to the certainty of heaven, as your eternal dwelling place, just down the street from the palace inhabited by your Heavenly Father. If that doesn't effectuate the joy decision, nothing will...

Next order: *"pray continually."* Look, everybody prays - at least, that's what they tell the survey folks. Lost people pray; people who follow false religions pray; Muslims do it five times a day, on their way to the place where rejecting Jesus as Savior and Lord takes you. But, how about Christians?

We're the ones with the direct line to heaven, with the Advocate - the Lord Jesus himself - acting as our representative before the Father. How often does he allow us to appeal for assistance? *"Continually."* If I'm prayerless, I'm stupid. If I keep the line open, communicating constantly... I'm not only obedient, I'm supplied - with the power of heaven added to my capacity. *"Pray continually."*

Then, the Thanksgiving imperative: *"Give thanks in all circumstances..."* Why? *"This is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* That's reason enough... but, *why, else?*

In Africa, *HIV/AIDS* is the epidemic. In America, it's *Entitlement*. Entitlement - *"having a right to something"* - makes us demanding... but never grateful. Everything I have from God - *time, talent and treasure* - is not because of my rights; it's because of His grace. The things in your "rights" column never come up on Thanksgiving; the things in your "grace" column ought to come up every day...

Sorry for my week off. I'm back...

Bob Shank

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