Grace Baptist Church (Chinese Congregation) Rick Griffith, PhD

11 June 2000 Single Message

NIV 30 Minutes + translation

**Why Thank God?**

***Psalm 147***

**Topic:** Worship/Thanksgiving

**Subject:** Why Thank God?

**Complement:** God heals us, God delights in us, and God gives us His Word

**Purpose:** The listeners will thank Him for everything.

# Introduction

### We tend not to be thankful because of the regularity of God's blessings in our life (THANKFULNESS shown when we miss a regular blessing).

### Even when we do give thanks, sometimes it’s not from our hearts (THANKSGIVING repeated "thanks" needs to be creatively expressed).

### Need: Are you a thankful person? How would you know?

#### How many times have you said “thank you” today? Besides grace at breakfast!

#### Would those closest to you say that you regularly show gratefulness?

### Subject: Why thank God?

### Our tendency to be thankless is why our thoughts need to turn to Psalm 147.

### Let’s look at verses 1-6 to see the first reason to thank God. Verses 1-6 exhort us to…

# I. Thank God for healing our hurts (1-6).

#  [Thanking God is the natural response to being delivered from affliction.]

## Praise God because this is good to do (1).

### We are exhorted to praise God (1a).

### The psalmist then gives two reasons to praise God (1b-c).

#### It's good to praise God (1b).

#### It's pleasant to praise God because praise is becoming (1c; NASB).

##### The word for "pleasant" is also used in the Song of Solomon where the maiden is said to be beautiful or lovely.

##### There's something about living with a thankful heart that even makes the countenance more becoming—more attractive. I've seen people who by worldly standards would not be considered attractive, but when they learn to praise and thank God their entire countenance changes!

##### I think that's why most applications to Christian organizations ask for a picture. They want to see if what your beliefs have informed your face!

(So it's good to praise God so much that it even helps the way we look. But we should also…)

## Praise God for His grace shown in healing us from our past (2-3).

### God showed his grace towards Israel by rebuilding Jerusalem after the exile (2).

#### Let me refresh your memory of the context here concerning Israel's capital, Jerusalem. Jerusalem has the distinction of being one of the most rebuilt cities in the world. It has been destroyed and rebuilt seventeen times!

#### God said to Israel time and again, "Unless you repent the nation will be destroyed and brought into exile." They didn't repent and sure enough, the Babylonians came and destroyed the city which was followed by seventy years in exile—yet God in His grace brought the people back to their homeland and rebuilt the city walls even though the nation had made such terrible mistakes.

### God shows His grace towards us by healing our past mistakes (3).

#### God binds up the bones of those who are fractured, nursing us back to health and healing the pains of the past.

#### Hasn't He done just that for you? Hasn't He healed you from those patterns and wounds of the past that at that time you thought would plague you for life?

#### Some of us here come from unaffectionate and overbearing fathers and mothers—even broken homes, broken marriages, or broken dreams. Yet God has healed us from those memories and repeat mistakes of past failures. Isn't that something to reflect upon and burst forth in genuine thanks to our God the healer?

#### Have you ever thought about where you would be today if you had never experienced God's forgiveness and healing power? None of us knows for sure, but I can speculate where I'd be.

##### I'd be miserable and brokenhearted without God's intervention into my life. I probably would be in what some call a "successful career" up to my neck in debts to pay off a materialistic bent.

##### By the way, do you know what materialism is? It's buying things you don't need with money you don't have to impress people you don't even know!

#### So where would you be apart from God's goodness? Today let's truly thank Him for how He's saved us from those potential mistakes and delivered us from those actual mistakes as well—for binding up our wounds.

(We not only have cause to thank God because it's a good thing to do and because of His healing hand on our past. We can also be thankful and…)

## Praise God for His sustaining power (4-6).

### God sustains the universe (4-5).

#### What a tremendous and all-powerful God we have! He has given names to each one of the billions of stars!

#### If the earth was the size of this table tennis ball, how far do you think Alpha Centari (the nearest star) would be?

##### To the end of the room? No, farther than that! To the other side of Singapore? No—around the earth—four times!

##### At the speed of light it would take over four years to reach the nearest star! (CREATION size of the universe)

#### No wonder why this text says God’s understanding has no limit!

(You know what's even more fantastic than this? That this same God who sustains the entire universe also upholds you and I in our times of affliction…)

### God sustains us (6).

#### We can thank God for His sustaining power in our own lives in those difficult times of adjustment.

#### Two psychologists, Holmes and Rahe, have put together what is often called a "Stress Scale." It identifies various events in life which cause stress and gives each event a different number for the type of stress.

##### Death of a spouse has the highest rating of 100.

##### Other stresses are rated for a new home, new baby, moving to a new city, etc.

#### The psychologists say that if you exceed 200 stress points in a given year the likelihood of visiting their office is significantly increased! During the first three months in my pastorate Susan and I hit over 350 stress points (and that's for three month period, not for a year)!

#### No, we didn’t crack. But why? Because Holmes and Rahe don't have points to subtract from their scale for the sustaining grace of God.

#### God has sustained you in the difficult times as well. Now is a great time to reflect on His sustaining power and to thank Him from a heart of gratitude.

(These first six verses say to thank God for showing His power by healing our hurts. He has brought each one us out of the pit, but not only this. The next four verses reveal that God has an intimate concern for us, saying that we should…)

# II. Thank God for delighting in us (7-11).

#  [Praise God for taking special care of us.]

## Thank God with musical accompaniment (7).

### God has blessed us with instrumental music.

### Doesn’t instrumental music like you hear during the offertory lift you up? Doesn’t it make your own time of personal worship all the easier? God has designed us as people who respond to instrumental music.

(The next two verses remind us to…)

## Thank God for sustaining creation (8-9).

### He sustains plant life (8).

### He sustains animal life (9).

(Now notice what really delights the heart of God most…)

## Thank God for delighting in those who fear Him (10-11).

### He’s not impressed with horsepower (10a).

### He’s not impressed with manpower (10b).

### He is impressed with those who patiently fear Him (11).

#### Is there anything that thrills your own heart more than knowing that our God takes a personal, intimate interest in you? Think of it! The very God who has created this vast universe delights in you and me when we fear Him!

#### God in His patience actually listens to our requests! What If God had an answering machine?

##### Imagine praying and hearing this: "Thank you for calling My Father's House. Please select one of the following four options:

###### Press 1 for requests.

###### Press 2 for a thanksgiving.

###### Press 3 for complaints.

###### For all other inquiries, press 4."

##### What if God used the familiar excuse: "All our angels are helping other customers right now. Please stay on the line. Your prayer will be answered in the order it was received!"

##### Can you imagine getting these kinds of responses as you call on God in prayer?

###### If you would like to speak with Gabriel, Press 1

###### If you would like to hear from Michael, press 2

###### For any other angel, press 3.

###### If you would like King David to sing a song for you, press 6.

###### To find out if your relative is here, enter his/her date of death and listen for the list that follows.

###### For answers to nagging questions about dinosaurs, the age of the earth, and where Noah's Ark is, wait until you get here.

##### Our computers show that you have called once today already. Please hang up immediately. You may call again tomorrow.

##### This office is closed for the weekend. Please call again during normal business hours, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday."

#### Thank God, you cannot call Him too often! You only need to ring once and God hears you. Because of Jesus, you never get a busy signal. God takes each call and knows each caller personally. He knows your request even before you call!

(This passage so far has reminded us of two reasons to thank God: because God has healed us when we've been brokenhearted and because He delights in each of us. There's a third and final reason we should thank God…)

# III. Thank God for His Word (12-20).

#  [Praise God that obeying His Word protects us.]

## We should praise Him for His protection (12-14).

### Imagine how it must have thrilled the people of Jerusalem to have their walls rebuilt!

#### The city walls had been torn down for 70 years.

#### Yet God finally allowed them to be rebuilt as His gracious provision so that the bars of its gates were strong (13a).

### We have a difficult time relating to this because we don't live in walled cities, but haven't you also experienced God's protection in similar ways?

#### God's protection is seen in that each of us here has a place to live, protecting us from the elements. In Manila, where Susan and I ministered full-time in 1981, over 1/4th of the city's eight million people lived on the streets. This is why even small rainstorms take such a tremendous toll of human lives there. Yet God has given you and me more than adequate protection from the elements, hasn't he? He has really been good to us, hasn't He?

#### We can thank God that while the rest of the world seems to be getting bombed by terrorists, He has spared us (14a).

#### We can thank God for providing Singapore with an abundance of food (14b) despite the fact that it can’t be grown here due to our population density.

##### How often do we thank God that while many countries employ about 80% of the population in food production, we have less than 2% of our people in food production?

##### As believers we can especially be thankful since the atheist may feel thankful, but he doesn't know **who** to thank!

(But do you know what causes me to be thankful for the most? It is having solid principles to live by. You see, for many years I had to determine right from wrong based solely on my conscience. And while the conscience tells us to **do** right, it doesn't tell us what **is** right. That's why I'm glad for verses 15-20 that remind us to…)

## Praise God for giving us His Word (15-20).

### Notice how His **spoken** word is powerful and swift, controlling the weather (15-18).

### Notice also that He gave Israel His **written** Word (19).

### God gave His Word only to Israel (20).

#### Israel profited in a unique manner because God gave the nation very specific instructions on how to live.

#### How thankful are we to have the Word of God in our own hands? Do we demonstrate this thankfulness by daily reading and study?

#### My Mongolian student at SBC doesn’t have the luxury of reading the OT in his own language for his quiet time—it’s not translated yet! But last night I counted 16 different translations on my shelf—all in English!

#### Let's never neglect to thank God for placing in our hands His written revelation in a language that we can understand, readily available anytime we take time to read His love letter to us.

# Conclusion

### So why thank God? Because God heals us, delights in us, and gives us His Word (MI).

### There's so much to be thankful for, I've had to narrow down my comments this morning to the few areas mentioned here in Psalm 147. This psalm has reminded us of:

#### The privilege of having a God who lifts us out of our affliction

#### The wonder of knowing that the God of the universe delights in us

#### The privilege (and I might add, responsibility) of handling the Word of God

### Here’s an assignment: start writing your own Psalm 151 right now similar to Psalm 147, expressing personally to God those things for which you're thankful [one minute of silence]. Finish it later and let’s pray together now…

### Prayer: "Father, we thank you that the same God who counts the stars, calling each one by name, and who feeds the young ravens when they cry, also feeds us and cherishes those who fear Him. We love you and acknowledge that you have only been good to us this past year and before we can even remember. We offer ourselves to you with grateful hearts and ask that we would reflect upon your goodness this entire week until we meet again. In Christ's name, Amen."

Mt. Carmel BP Church Camp “Awe? or Blah?” Rick Griffith, PhD

9 June 1998 Message 2 of 4

NIV 50 Minutes

**Why Thank God?**

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# Introduction

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### Even when we do give thanks, sometimes it’s not from our hearts (THANKSGIVING repeated "thanks" needs to be creatively expressed).

### Need: Are you a thankful person? How would you know?

#### How many times have you said “thank you” so far today? Besides grace at breakfast!

#### Would those closest to you say that you regularly show gratefulness?

### Subject: Why thank God?

### Our tendency to be thankless is why our thoughts need to turn to Psalm 147.

#### There's no question about the intent of Psalm 147. The beginning and the end repeat the phrase "Praise the Lord" and the middle just gives us numerous reasons why we should be thankful to God.

#### Psalm 147 has three cycles of praise beginning at verses 1, 7 and 12. Each cycle calls us to praise then gives reasons to praise God. So this morning we'll observe three exhortations to thank God with the appropriate motivations to do so.

### Let’s first look at verses 1-6 to see the first reason that we should thank God. Verses 1-6 exhort us to…

# I. Thank God for healing our hurts (1-6).

#  [Thanking God is the natural response to being delivered from affliction.]

## Praise God because this is good to do (1).

### We are exhorted to praise God (1a).

#### Here we find the common Hebrew expression *Hallelujah*, which means… “praise the Lord”!

#### It's always good to know why we say certain foreign expressions! Do you also know what “Amen” means?

### The psalmist then gives two reasons to praise God (1b-c).

#### It's good to praise God (1b).

#### It's pleasant to praise God because praise is becoming (1c; NASB).

##### The word for "pleasant" is also used in the Song of Solomon where the maiden is said to be beautiful or lovely.

##### There's something about living with a thankful heart that even makes the countenance more becoming—more attractive. I've seen people who by worldly standards would not be considered attractive, but when they learn to praise and thank God their entire countenance changes!

##### I think that's why most applications to Christian organizations ask for a picture. They want to see if what your beliefs have informed your face!

##### One recent song is even called “Praise looks good on you.”

(So it's good to praise God so much that it even helps the way we look. There's a second cause for praise in the next two verses also. We should…)

## Praise God for His grace shown in healing us from our past (2-3).

### God showed his grace towards Israel by rebuilding Jerusalem after the exile (2).

#### Let me refresh your memory of the context here concerning Israel's capital, Jerusalem. Jerusalem has the distinction of being one of the most rebuilt cities in the world. It has been destroyed and rebuilt seventeen times!

#### The reference here to rebuilding the city likely has in mind the rebuilding of the walls under Nehemiah. Remember how Israel sinned over and over, going after other gods and getting enticed in all the vice of the surrounding nations? God said time and again, "Unless you repent the nation will be destroyed and brought into exile." They didn't repent and sure enough, the Babylonians came and destroyed the city which was followed by seventy years in exile—yet God in His grace brought the people back to their homeland and rebuilt the city walls even though the nation had made such terrible mistakes.

### God shows His grace towards us by healing our past mistakes (3).

#### God binds up the bones of those who are fractured, nursing us back to health and healing the pains of the past.

#### Hasn't He done just that for you? Hasn't He healed you from those patterns and wounds of the past that at that time you thought would plague you for life?

#### Some of us here come from unaffectionate and overbearing fathers and mothers—even broken homes, broken marriages, or broken dreams. Yet God has healed us from those memories and repeat mistakes of past failures. Isn't that something to reflect upon and burst forth in genuine thanks to our God the healer?

#### Have you ever thought about where you would be today if you had never experienced God's forgiveness and healing power? None of us knows for sure, but I can speculate where I'd be.

#### I undoubtedly would not have married such a beautiful woman of God as Susan, and what marriage I did begin probably would not have lasted even these 16 years since I would follow in the pattern set for me in my own family where marriages are dispensable.

#### I'd be miserable and brokenhearted without God's intervention into my life. I probably would be in what some call a "successful career" up to my neck in debts to pay off a materialistic bent.

#### By the way, do you know what materialism is? It's buying things you don't need with money you don't have to impress people you don't even know!

#### So where would you be apart from God's goodness? Today let's truly thank Him for how He's saved us from those potential mistakes and delivered us from those actual mistakes as well—for binding up our wounds.

(We not only have cause to thank God because it's a good thing to do and because of His healing hand on our past. This Thanksgiving time we can also be thankful and…)

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### God sustains the universe (4-5).

#### What a tremendous and all-powerful God we have! He has given names to each one of the billions of stars!

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##### To the end of the room? No, farther than that! To the other side of Singapore? No—around the earth—four times!

##### You see at the speed of light it would take over four years to reach the nearest star! (CREATION size of the universe)

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(You know what's even more fantastic than this? That this same God who sustains the entire universe also upholds you and I in our times of affliction…)

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##### Death of a spouse has the highest rating of 100.

##### Other stress events are rated for a new home, new baby, moving to a new city, etc.

#### The psychologists say that if you exceed 200 stress points in a given year the likelihood of visiting their office is significantly increased! During the first three months in my pastorate Susan and I hit over 350 stress points (and that's for three month period, not for a year)!

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#  [Praise God for taking special care of us.]

## Thank God with musical accompaniment (7).

### God has privileged us with the blessing of instrumental music.

### Doesn’t instrumental music like you hear during the offertory lift you up? Doesn’t it make your own time of personal worship all the easier? God has designed us as people who respond to instrumental music.

(The next two verses remind us to…)

## Thank God for sustaining creation (8-9).

### He sustains plant life (8).

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(Now notice what really delights the heart of God most…)

## Thank God for delighting in those who fear Him (10-11).

### He’s not impressed with horsepower (10a).

### He’s not impressed with manpower (10b).

### He is impressed with those who patiently fear Him (11).

#### Is there anything that thrills your own heart more than knowing that our God takes a personal, intimate interest in you? Think of it! The very God who has created this vast universe delights in you and I when we fear Him!

#### Of all the things we should be thankful for, this should be it. Sure we're grateful for the material blessings, the prosperity we enjoy--but nothing can compare with having hearts filled with gratitude for God giving us the privilege of hoping in His unfailing love and seeing Him delight in us as a result!

#### God in His patience actually listens to our requests! What If God Had an Answering Machine?

##### I have learned to live with answering machines as a necessary part of modernization. But I have often wondered, “What if God decided to install an automated answering system?”

##### Imagine praying and hearing this: "Thank you for calling My Father's House. Please select one of the following four options:

###### Press 1 for requests.

###### Press 2 for a thanksgiving.

###### Press 3 for complaints.

###### For all other inquiries, press 4."

##### What if God used the familiar excuse: "All our angels are helping other customers right now. Please stay on the line. Your prayer will be answered in the order it was received!"

##### Can you imagine getting these kinds of responses as you call on God in prayer?

###### If you would like to speak with Gabriel, Press 1

###### If you would like to hear from Michael, press 2

###### For any other angel, press 3.

###### If you would like King David to sing a song for you, press 6.

###### To find our if your relative is here, enter his/her date of death and listen for the list that follows.

###### For reservations at My Father's House, simply press the letters J-O-H-N, followed by the numbers 3-1-6.

###### For answers to nagging questions about dinosaurs, the age of the earth, and where Noah's Ark is, wait until you get here.

##### Our computers show that you have called once today already. Please hang up immediately. You may call again tomorrow.

##### This office is closed for the weekend. Please call again during normal business hours, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday."

#### Thank God, you cannot call Him too often! You only need to ring once and God hears you. Because of Jesus, you never get a busy signal. God takes each call and knows each caller personally.

(This passage so far has reminded us of two reasons to praise God: because God has healed us when we've been brokenhearted and because He delights in each of us. There's a third and final reason we should praise God…)

# III. Thank God for His Word (12-20).

#  [Praise God that our obeying His Word protects us.]

## God’s people should praise Him for His protection (12-14).

### Imagine how it must have thrilled the people of Jerusalem to have their walls rebuilt!

#### The city walls had been torn down for 70 years.

#### Yet God finally allowed them to be rebuilt as His gracious provision so that the bars of its gates were strong (13a).

### We have a difficult time relating to this because we don't live in walled cities, but haven't you also experienced God's protection in similar ways?

#### God's protection is seen in that each of us here has a place to live, protecting us from the elements. In Manila, where Susan and I used to minister full-time, over 1/4th of the city's eight million people live on the streets. This is why the smallest rainstorms take such a tremendous toll of human lives there. Yet God has given you and I more than adequate protection from the elements, hasn't he? He has really been good to us, hasn't He?

#### We can thank God that while the rest of the world seems to be getting bombed by terrorists, He has spared us (14a).

#### We can thank God for protecting our bodies from extreme sickness, especially since He has provided Singapore with an abundance of food despite the fact that it can’t be grown here due to our population density.

##### How often do we thank God that while many countries employ about 80% of the population in food production, we have less than 2% of our people in food production?

##### As believers we can especially be thankful since the atheist may feel thankful, but he doesn't know **who** to thank!

(Do you know what causes me to be thankful for the most? I'm thankful for God's help during difficult times which we observed in verses 1-6, and I'm excited about how God delights in me as one of His children which I noted in verses 7-11, and I thank God for His protection alluded to in verses 12-14, but what really causes me to well up in heartfelt gratitude each day is having solid principles to live by. You see, for many years I had to determine right from wrong based solely on my conscience. And while the conscience tells us to **do** right, it doesn't tell us what **is** right. That's why I'm glad for verses 15-20 that remind us to…)

## Praise God for giving us His Word (15-20).

### Notice how His **spoken** word is powerful and swift, controlling the weather (15-18).

### Notice also that He gave Israel His **written** Word (19).

#### Jacob, or Israel, had God's laws to direct them in specific ways so that when they obeyed His Word they prospered.

#### Let me give you an example of one specific way that Israel profited by obeying the Law as recorded in Dr. S. I. McMillen's book, *None of These Diseases* (pp. 11-12 on leprosy quarantining).

### God gave His Word only to Israel (20).

#### Israel profited in a unique manner because God gave the nation very specific instructions on how to live.

#### Aren't we blessed to have the Word of God as well? God has used it in my life countless times to prevent me from making costly mistakes. For example, Scripture records the many painful realities associated with alcohol that has given me the conviction to be an abstainer. Who knows the potential pitfalls I've avoided and you've avoided by having this wonderful book to obey!

#### How thankful are we to have the Word of God in our own hands? Do we demonstrate this thankfulness by daily reading and study?

#### On Friday I received a letter from Living Bible, International which detailed the scarcity of Bibles in Mainland China (read portion of letter).

#### I once met a Christian in China myself in 1981 who had the only Bible in his church, and it was borrowed and in English! I'll never forget getting back to my office and counting 17 Bibles in 11 different translations on my shelf.

#### Let's not forget to thank God for placing in our own hands His written revelation in a language which we can understand, readily available anytime we take time to read His love letter to us.

# Conclusion

### Why thank God? Because God heals us, delights in us, and gives us His Word (MI).

### There's so much to be thankful for I've had to narrow down my comments this morning to the few areas mentioned here in Psalm 147. This psalm has reminded us of:

#### The privilege of having a God who lifts us out of our affliction

#### The wonder of knowing that the God of the universe delights in us

#### The privilege (and I might add, responsibility) of handling the Word of God

### Here’s your assignment: write your own Psalm 151 right now similar to Psalm 147, expressing personally to God those things for which you're thankful.

### Prayer: "Father, we thank you that the same God who counts the stars, calling each one by name, and who feeds the young ravens when they cry, also feeds us and cherishes those who fear Him. We love you and acknowledge that you have only been good to us this past year and before we can even remember. We offer ourselves to you with grateful hearts and ask that we would reflect upon your goodness this entire week, not just on Thursday. In Christ's name, Amen."

# Discussion Questions:

1. How many times a day do you think you thank God?
2. What have you already thanked God for today?
3. What are some specific, practical ways you can remember to thank God more?

 **Preliminary Questions**

**Verses Questions**

Context What did the author record just prior to this passage?

Purpose Why is this passage in the Bible?

Background What historical context helps us understand this passage?

1

**Tentative Subject/Complement Statements**

Text

**Possible Illustrations**

Verse 14b

##### Did you know that:

###### The U.S. spends more money on air conditioning than all the expenses in China (a country with five times our population)?

###### Americans comprise 6% of the world's population but consumes 42% of the world's food supply and 65% of the world's energy?

###### Our country uses more than 1/3 of the world's tuna supply to feed our **cats**?

##### Why am I quoting these statistics? To make us feel guilty? No, to remind us that we live in a land of bounty more than any country in the history of mankind, and to remind us to give thanks to our God.

**Title**

***Passage***

**Exegetical Outline**

***Exegetical Idea:***

# I.

# II.

# III.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Subject: Why thank God?

### Our tendency to be thankless is why our thoughts need to turn to Psalm 147.

# I. Thank God for healing our hurts (1-6).

## Praise God because this is good to do (1).

## Praise God for His grace shown in healing us from our past (2-3).

## Praise God for His sustaining power (4-6).

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## God’s people should praise Him for His protection (12-14).

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# Conclusion

### Why thank God? Because God heals us, delights in us, and gives us His Word (MI).