

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Live Your Life in the Light

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Some families have a “chore board.” It’s a list of things for children to do to help out in the family, whether it’s wipe off the counter, help with the laundry, empty the dishwasher, mow the lawn, or mop the floor.

God, your heavenly Father, has a chore board for you too. But they aren’t really chores. It’s more like God’s list of things that people who are part of his family naturally do. It’s part of a longer list, but today’s Bible reading gives us three to start with:

First, he wants you to *rejoice always*. Rejoice is a pretty church-y word. It means God wants you to show joy all the time. Not only when things happen that you like, but even when you’re sad and hurting. It’s more than the joy you feel at Christmas or when you get a new puppy. It’s the happiness you feel when you know you’re safe and secure because Jesus has made you part of God’s family. It’s the joy of knowing you belong to him—forever.

Secondly, God wants you to *pray continually*. That doesn’t mean you can’t do anything except pray. It means that you never stop talking to God *first*, all the time. When you’re sad, let God know how much your heart hurts and that you need him. Then go get a hug from your mom or dad. When you’re wondering how you should deal with a bully, talk to the school counselor, but don’t forget to also ask God to give you his wisdom and courage. When you have good news and want to share it, thank God first for the amazing news! Then share it with your friends.

Thirdly, God wants you to *give thanks in all circumstances*. Corrie ten Boom is a good example of this. She and her sister were in a big prison, called a concentration camp. Their bed was full of bugs. That’s when her sister thanked God for the fleas. Corrie didn’t think she’d ever be thankful for bugs that bit her. While stuck in this miserable situation, they studied their smuggled Bible with other prisoners. Later they learned that the fleas kept the prison guards away, which let them tell the other prisoners about Jesus. Corrie was now thankful for the fleas.

God’s to-do list isn’t long, but it’s what he truly wants us to be doing. May God help you rejoice, pray, and give thanks your whole life!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- Name two things that makes you happy.
- If it's a person, who should we pray for?
- If it's a thing, what are you thankful for?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What in your life feels like bugs biting you? How can we thank God for them?
- Name three blessings from God in your life that make you happy.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Discuss with your parents the one thing really bothering right now that God wants to use for your good. (*Hint: It can't be a sibling.*)
- Today's devotion encouraged more happiness, prayer, and giving thanks. Which of those three do you want to focus on the rest of this week?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Father, I don't pray all the time, I'm not joyful all the time, and I'm not thankful all the time. I'm sorry. Thank you that Jesus paid for all the times I don't do these three things. Help me see your to-do list as a blessing and not a chore.

Hymn: CW 19:1 – O Lord, How Shall I Meet You Hymn

O Lord, how shall I meet you, How welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you, My Hope, my heart's Delight.
O Jesus, let your Word be A lamp to light my way,
To show me how to please you, To guide me ev'ry day.