

REO Gives Thanks

Thanksgiving.

At its best, this is a day to show our gratitude to God for everything He is and everything He has done. It is also an opportunity to reflect on all the little, seemingly insignificant blessings in our lives. Spiritual or mundane. Eternal or earth-bound – we all have so much for which to say “thank you.” We hope that you have a fantastic Thanksgiving and that you take some time to recognise the Giver of all good things.

Ben Plunkett



Most of the time when you ask someone to say what they are thankful for at Thanksgiving time they will name stuff like God, family, good food, and a warm home. These are very great things to be thankful for and I truly am. However, this Thanksgiving I want to highlight a little something that is usually forgotten:

Seasonal changes. That's right. I'm thankful for seasonal changes. It fights mundaneness. Although I don't love all four seasons, some more, all of them have unique things to appreciate.

Fall is easily my favorite, so I love it for all four months. There are so many reasons why I love fall. The colors, the increasing coolness, Thanksgiving, and yada, yada, yada. The list rambles on and on. Plus, some of the best parts of the Lord of the Rings takes place during the fall. (I don't know if that's true. Totally made it up.)

I do appreciate winter though—for a few hours. No, really, I

do think there is beauty in trees without any leaves. And the snow, when and if it comes, as annoying and inconvenient as it can get is also beautiful. It does not take me long to tire of winter, though. Most of it is dreary days of scratch-out-your-eyes boredom and stagnancy. Really, I can think of very few things that I really like that come in winter. There's Christmas, of course, which barely comes in winter. That is one of its few saving graces.

The sunniness and greenness and growth of spring is a welcome change. While I don't love it with all of my heart like fall, I like it a lot. We like to think that spring is a time of sunny wonder when we prance with happy bunnies through fields of red and blue flowers. Yeah, that doesn't happen. Ever. There are taxes, though. We can prance with all those forms and stuff. Anyway, I enjoy spring for approximately three and a half months and then I want fall to be here.

But before we can get to that, we have to get through summer, my second least favorite season. Summer is fine and dandy if you can stay inside the majority of the time. But then you have to go outside doing all this "fun stuff" and you just end up getting all tired and sweaty with mosquito bites and sunburn welts and greasy, disheveled hair. However, I do appreciate this seasonal change as well. I give it six weeks and then fall better be getting here soon or else.

This blurb may make it seem like I am only thankful for fall rather than seasonal change in general, but I really am thankful for all of the seasonal changes. It's all about variety. In Tennessee and in many other parts of the world, all the seasons have defined changes. While I like some of the changes and seasons a lot better than others, I am thankful for the variety of a typical year.

Many of my REO comrades agree with me about fall, by the way, you can see our collective diatribe [here](#).

Phill Lytle



To keep with the spirit of Thanksgiving, I am thankful for times of feasting. While I love food (as is evidenced by my profile picture) this is not really about the food. It's about what happens around a table with friends and loved ones. Some of my favorite memories happened sitting around the table, eating good food, and spending time with people I care about.

One particular moment that comes to mind was when we had most of the active REO writers and contributors to my house for a Christmas party. It was a beautiful and heart-warming time. I mean that seriously. My heart felt warmed and full by the end of the night. I was as content as I have ever been.

Another memory that will never leave me is a visit to a Japanese conversation partner's host family's home while I was in college. We ate delicious Japanese cuisine, talked, laughed, and then spent the rest of the evening around the fireplace listening to the host father transfix us with story after story.

This Thanksgiving, my family is coming to my house. My parents will be here. My older brother and his family will be here. And my Chinese "daughter" will be here as well. The food will be great – of this I have no doubt. The time spent together, talking, laughing, and feasting on all that God has done in our lives will be even better. I am and always will be thankful for times like that.

Gowdy Cannon



Something out of the way of faith and family that I am very thankful for is fantasy literature. And notably, I am thankful for my wife and REO for influencing me to read several classic works that turned me into a fan. More than TV and movies, a good fantasy book really stirs my heart and mind at the same time.

It goes beyond entertainment to me. I have no doubt I am a better preacher because of fantasy literature. Just this past Sunday I was preaching about how God works in spite of injustice and is going to right all wrongs one day and out of nowhere I blurted out “Aslan is on the move!” And I appreciated a few people in the crowd nodding and smiling in response.

I also have no doubt reading about humans, dwarves, elves, and hobbits becoming a fellowship has very creatively kept a vision in my mind of what a church can be with ethnic diversity. I would love to have a church filled with English, Spanish and Polish speakers together on a spiritual journey with a common goal. And Tolkien ignites my imagination when I read him.

And then there is just the way my wife and I bond over fantasy literature. We’ve talked about books, watched movies and even taken trips to London and Orlando just because J.K. Rowling wrote a fantasy world, good vs. evil epic.

I’m very thankful for the color that these books add to my life, my marriage, and my ministry.

Debbi Atwood Sexton



I am thankful for Starbucks blonde roast, unsweetened, mellow and soft cold brew coffee.

Years ago, I fell in “like” with iced coffee and since then, I’ve spent countless dollars on little glass bottles of Starbucks frappes. After I realized that I had spent about \$2,751.00 on those little bottles, I tried making it myself! Not great, but I drank it anyway because of, you know, money. Eventually, I fell off the wagon and started buying the bigger bottles! At this point, I was an addict and figured there was no AA for coffeeholics.

However, God is all-knowing, all-wise, all-seeing and He cares about our life’s crises! Someone, somewhere, with the help of the Holy Spirit, no doubt, had the brilliant idea to stock the shelves with Starbucks cold brew that costs under \$5.00 for 6-8 servings!! It has rocked my world. I can now have iced coffee every morning for a fraction of the price of those little bottles of liquid gold. My wallet, my bank account and my husband are extremely happy!!

“The only thing I know for sure about today is coffee. Everything else is just wild speculation.” – Nanea Hoffman

In case you didn’t know, coffee has a spiritual origin!!

C.O.F.F.E.E

Christ Offers Forgiveness to Everyone Everywhere

We are handling the end of the week a little differently. If you are a regular reader, you know that on Fridays we publish The Five. As today and tomorrow most of us at REO, as well as most of our readers, are busy with friends, family, and loved ones, we have opted to combine our Thanksgiving feature with The Five, except it will not be published on Friday. Instead, we are running it today.

As you may have noticed, there are only four blurbs above. This is where you come in. In the comment section below tell us what you are thankful for. It can be something serious or it can be something as simple, yet life-changing, as indoor plumbing. Without you, this is just The Four that was published on the wrong day, and that would not be cool at all. So, lend a hand, help us out, and make this the greatest REO article ever!

Happy Thanksgiving!