

Something to Talk About

A conversation guide for church leaders

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Too Busy to Be Thankful

Note: This is one of a series of articles intended to facilitate and guide church leaders' conversations about significant issues that often are not talked about among pastors, boards, and church leadership teams.

Prior articles can be found at <https://efcawest.efcadistrict.org/church-leadership/> or <https://efcawest.efcadistrict.org/something-to-talk-about-archives/>.

It's always struck me as a little cheesy when speakers and writers go a little off script by creating articles themed around holidays or other events. Yet, I find myself at the moment working on two articles in this series: one related to giving and one related to thankfulness. So, you guessed it. I had to reverse the order of the articles. The thankfulness article comes in November, and the giving article will come in December. I've become a little cheesy.

One of the benefits of having Thanksgiving Day show up on each year on the fourth Thursday of November is that it shows up on the calendar. I can guarantee you that, were it not for its appearance on the calendar each year, we in the USA would not dedicate a day each year (at least in theory) for the purpose of reflecting upon and giving thanks for God's benevolence toward us. Things that are on our calendars get done – we blow right past things that are not there. I was recently reminded of the power of remembering and being thankful while facilitating a Journey Wall process for a church.

As church leaders, even during difficult times, we have much to be thankful for. Yet, when we gather together as leaders, most of us have a brief devotional and an "opening prayer," then we get right down to business. There is much, however, to be thankful for, and that's something to talk about.

Leaders too often fall into the trap of working on today's issues without taking time to gain perspective by reflecting upon how we got there. An attitude of thankfulness and gratitude coupled with taking time to reflect upon our past can help create a faith-based context for addressing today's problems – we can confidently take faith-based actions because our

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decisions are rooted in recognition of God's faithfulness to us and to His church rather than on confidence in ourselves and our decision-making abilities.

Here are some ideas to help your team have a thankfulness conversation.

- Consider calendaring an occasional meeting to focus upon giving thanks. Too often we put this type of action at the start or end of an already busy agenda which tends to make it a brief interruption and distraction from the other "more urgent" business of the day. If you cannot do this, consider setting at least half of a regularly scheduled meeting for this purpose.
- Have the team remind themselves of the history of the church. Remember the faithfulness and vision of the founders and early pioneers. Look for times when God's faithfulness and favor shone through. Look for times of crisis and how God worked His will through them including lessons learned and blessings that followed.
- Even if in the midst of a difficult time, perhaps especially in the midst of a difficult time, pause to reflect and thank God for His faithfulness to His people throughout history and prayerfully seek His blessing as you work through the difficulties at hand.
- Make a list of things going on in your church right now for which you can be thankful. Make a list of the things going on in the world for which we can be thankful. Make a list of the promises of God for which we can be thankful.

Pausing to reflect and be thankful can reinvigorate tired church leaders and teams.

Thankfulness is an oasis for the soul, cool water for our parched and weary spirits. It's Biblical and God's will for us, too (I Thessalonians 5:18). We are not necessarily thankful *for* everything but can be thankful *in* everything. And, our thankfulness in the midst of those difficult "everything's" is something to talk about.

*Let us know if we can help and how your conversation goes.
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