

4 Ways You Can Repay the Lord

Introduction. How would you feel if you were seconds from death — and someone pulled you back to life? A man caught in a riptide was certain he was about to drown. Panicked and exhausted, he fought the current in vain. An alert lifeguard spotted him, plunged into the surf, and battled the waves to bring him safely to shore. Shaken and gasping for air, the man finally managed to say, “Thank you... How can I ever repay you?” “You don’t have to repay me,” replied the lifeguard. “Just live your life like it matters — because you were just given it back.”

In Psalm 116:12-19, the unidentified psalmist asks an even more profound question in v. 12: “What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” The NIV translates: “How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?”

It’s a question worthy of our time as we reflect on God’s many blessings in our lives. There’s an old hymn that reminds us: “Count your many blessings. Name them one by one.” Think about your blessings:

- Communion with the Creator.
- Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins.
- The fellowship of a church family.
- Answered prayers.
- Faithful friends.
- Godly parents.
- Loving spouses and children.
- Material provisions.
- Daily comforts.
- Talents and abilities.
- Opportunities for growth.
- Fulfilled dreams.

These — and so many more — remind us, as the psalmist recognized, that our feeble human effort can never truly repay God for His infinite grace and immeasurable goodness. Yet gratitude must respond, and in the succeeding verses of the psalm, the writer shows us four ways to do it appropriately.

I. Respond to His Gift of Salvation

- A. In the Jewish context and culture, he says, “I will lift up the cup of salvation” (v. 13). The imagery is from a “cup of blessing” used to sanctify Sabbaths, holidays, and joyous life-cycle events. It serves as a physical symbol of holiness, deliverance, thanksgiving, and unity.
- B. The New Testament often speaks of salvation as God’s gift:
 1. “The free gift” (Romans 5:15-18).
 2. The “indescribable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).
 3. “The gift of God” expressed in His grace, mercy, and love (Ephesians 2:4-8).
 4. “The gift of the grace of God” (Ephesians 3:7).
- C. Only an ingrate could ignore or disparage God’s gift of so great a salvation. The first way we “repay” God isn’t by giving — but by receiving.

- D. What can you do tomorrow? You can wake up rejoicing because you are walking in newness of life after your burial in Christ.

II. Express Dependence Through Prayer

- A. Four times in this psalm, the writer declares, “I will call on the name of the Lord” (vv. 2, 4, 13, 17). It’s an acknowledgment of his dependence on and trust in the Almighty God.
- B. This is one of the great paradoxes of Scripture: We “repay” God by asking for His help. Persisting in prayer demonstrates our recognition of God as the source of every blessing and our reliance on His continual care.
- C. Many different events in people’s lives that prompted them to pray to God:
1. Anxiety — Moses (Numbers 11:11-15).
 2. Discouragement — Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10).
 3. Gratitude — Solomon (1 Kings 8:22-53).
 4. Penitence — Ezra (Ezra 9:5-15).
 5. Persecution — Daniel (Daniel 6:10).
 6. Distress — Jonah (Jonah 2:1-9).
 7. Temptation — Jesus (Matthew 26:39, 42).
 8. Sickness — Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
- D. All of these godly, conscientious people demonstrate that it’s always time to pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1). Prayer works so express your dependance on God (Matthew 7:7-11).
- E. What can you do tomorrow? You can get to praying. Surveys show that religious people attend very little outside of Sunday morning (no Sunday night, Bible classes, small groups, etc.) and give very little (2-3% of their income). Let’s not make our prayers to God so deficient!

III. Live In Faithful Obedience

- A. “I will pay my vows to the Lord,” he affirms in verses 14 and 18.
- B. This expresses loyalty, commitment, devotion, and dedication. Gratitude is shown through obedience — not out of obligation, but out of love that honors Him. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15; 15:10).
- C. Several Christians are designated as faithful in the New Testament:
1. Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17).
 2. Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21).
 3. Epaphras (Colossians 1:7).
 4. Onesimus (Colossians 4:9).
 5. Silvanus (1 Peter 5:12).
 6. Antipas (Revelation 2:13).
- D. We “repay” Him through a sincere desire to conform our will to His and become more like Christ in both attitude and action (Romans 8:29; Philippians 2:5). Obedience is love in action. And these people advanced the kingdom through their love for Christ and His church.
- E. What can you do tomorrow? You can make your life as faithful as possible, reaching new heights of ability and service in your church and family.

IV. Offer Praise Publicly

- A. “I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving” (v. 17). Verse 18 reveals “in the presence of all His people,” and v. 19 adds, “In the courts of the Lord’s house.”
- B. There’s a number of people in the New Testament who offered public praise:
 - 1. The multitude “glorified the God of Israel” (Matthew 15:29-31).
 - 2. The people praised Jesus during the triumphal entry (Matthew 21:9).
 - 3. The lame man praised God after being healed (Acts 3:8).
 - 4. Paul and Silas praised God in prison (Acts 16:25).
 - 5. All Christians will continually praise God (Ephesians 5:18-21).
- C. When we express our gratitude, share our story of God’s faithfulness, and openly declare our reverence for Him as our Rock and Savior, we “repay” Him. Gratitude that’s never expressed is gratitude that’s never completed.
- D. Combined, these responses — though small compared to all God has done — declare, “Truly I am your servant” (v. 16). They echo Paul’s exhortation to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).
- E. What can you do tomorrow? You can use your opportunities to tell others what good God has accomplished in your life. In doing so, you’re praising Him and His majesty for all to see and hear.

Conclusion. God has saved our lives far more than any lifeguard ever could. How do we repay Him? We receive His grace. We depend on Him daily. We obey Him faithfully. We praise Him openly. And above all, we live like it really matters — because it does. Come to the front today if we can assist in your appropriate response.

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