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7 Reasons I'm Thankful for My Church

Although fall is often known as “Christmas Shopping Season,” the American holiday of Thanksgiving is worth our time and energy as its own distinct observance.

Our church's Thanksgiving luncheon kick-starts my personal Thanksgiving celebration with a delicious meal and a chance to reflect on why I'm thankful for my church. Here are the top seven reasons:

1. Support during crisis. For all the accusations of hypocrisy and self-righteous judgmentalism thrown at the church, it's widely acknowledged that churches do a great job of taking care of their members during crises.

2. Harmony despite differences. Yes, we exemplify the old Baptist cliché that where two or three are gathered there are four or five opinions, but we are able to extend the embrace of fellowship with each other even though we are not in lockstep on every Biblical interpretation or social or political issue.

3. Acceptance and love for my children. As a parent, nothing swells my heart with pride more than seeing others appreciate and encourage my children. Our church gives them opportunities to grow, serve, and begin their faith journeys as followers of Christ.

4. Opportunities to serve. Not that I need to go looking for more things to do, but my church gives me ways to invest my time, making a meaningful and eternal difference in people's lives. There are countless ways I could get involved in the community, but my church gives me those opportunities plus ways to reach out to the world beyond.

5. Opportunities to give. By giving money to support the operations of our church as well as its ministries and missions' partners, I keep greed and gratuitous consumption at bay.

6. Focus on worship. It's true that a person can worship God at any time and in any place, but it's also true that my church and its ministers put thought and prayer each week into planning a meaningful encounter with God. Their efforts allow me to focus not on logistics, but on worshiping God and serving the world around me.

7. Meaningful relationships. I have scores of acquaintances and many more “friends” on social media. But the people who can look me in the eye and know when I am tired or frustrated or suffering are in my church family. A hug or a handshake takes on a different meaning when it comes from someone you serve and worship with, and I know these relationships can't be replicated anywhere else.

The next meal I sit down to will include an extra few minutes of thankfulness for my church. I encourage you to do the same.

Lance Wallace is a Baptist layperson and member of Parkway Baptist Church in Johns Creek, GA.

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