


## 11.5 Influencers for Good



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Just now · 🌐

As we move on from this Thanksgiving holiday, I have found myself reflecting on the past year. It seems a reasonable thing as I watch my gardening season mostly come to an end. This made me think about why we celebrate Thanksgiving in the first place.

When you think about all the worldly reasons we shouldn't celebrate Thanksgiving, it could seem a logical conclusion that nothing matters.

I am here to tell you that it does matter. The reason that I celebrate Thanksgiving might be different than your reasons, and it can certainly be different from someone's reason to not celebrate at all. The important thing is to remember the WHY and not focus on the rest of it.

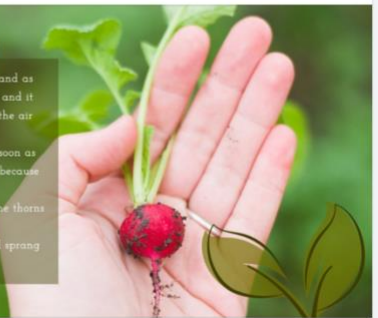
In November 1975, Sterling W. Sill, in a devotional speech, said, "We have an interesting custom among us in which we set aside special days to think about special things. ...Someone has said that the human mind has some of the qualities of the tendrils of a climbing vine. It tends to attach itself and draw itself upward by what it is put in contact with. ...In the month of November we set aside the fourth Thursday as Thanksgiving. On this day we try to build gratitude and appreciation into our lives. And as we recount our blessings we increase them. ...However, we can't adequately think about any of these great ideas if we just think about them during one day of the year."

I think this last part is critical. We MUST think about it more than one day a year or it isn't very helpful. It isn't sincere. It isn't pure. The meaning of any "tradition" is important when we remember WHY we do it. Holidays are no more important than any other "traditions" we develop.

This reminded me of the parable in Luke that talks about the sowing of seeds that was speaking of the mysteries of God. In the end, the sower only reaps what he puts his effort into. The Lord increases the harvest when the efforts are made. God loves effort and he blesses it. Ultimately, the sower only reaps what he sows. That made me think about what I sow and reap as a result.

When I liken this to my meager gardening attempts, I am able to count the blessings. I am grateful for the bounty even if it only yields one batch of spaghetti sauce, a small side on a meal, etc. Why? I could get so much more. It could be so much easier to buy it all. But, it requires little to no forethought for me to want more or to just buy it all. It also requires no effort on my part. As small as my garden has been, God has increased my bounty – blessings, health, patience, faith, and education. These don't come in the count of tomatoes or peppers. These come from the effort I put in.

What efforts are we putting in to make sure our grand ideas of thanksgiving and gratitude are not fleeting moments in time? What do these traditions mean to you? Why do you celebrate?



**Luke 8:5-8**

5 A sower went out to sow his seed, and as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

6 And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bore fruit an hundredfold.

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I want to comment on the rest of the assignment about finding church member influencers and following them on social media because it made me really think about it. I had a hard time doing this part of the assignment in one regard. I had a hard time finding other influencers that I wanted to follow.

One way that I survived through the negativity of the pandemic and all its controversy was to step back and apply what I already knew about social media algorithms. While my friends were taking social media as something you give up for Lent, I wanted it to be more and do more. There was a simple observation that I made –the algorithm only gives you what you feed it.

As a result of that, I had already adjusted what I liked, what I followed, what I reacted to, and how I interacted with it. It was a simple experiment. It reminds me of the “not so true” thing that circulates on Facebook regularly about only 25 followers can be seen and whatever else it claims. This works because for that single post, you get interaction also known as engagement. Eventually, that falls off again, but not because the algorithm is playing with them. It falls off because they no longer have regular engagement with these followers.

What I discovered is that if I did not interact with the negativity of lockdowns, the pandemic, masks, vaccines, and everything else of the times, my newsfeed was flooded with things that were “virtuous, lovely, or of good report [and] praiseworthy” (A of F 13). It did not happen the first day, but over a couple of weeks the negative “suck the life out of you” things I was seeing was gone. Yes, I did still see it, but where it existed were 20 other positive posts. The more I engaged with those posts, the more of them I saw and less of the other.

As a result, I was following prophets, general authorities, etc. I was following church quote groups. I was seeking after small businesses that believed like I did and shied away from the negativity as well. I even took over our neighborhood gardening group that is safe and serene and we focus on sowing and harvesting instead of doomsday emergency preparedness. Overall, my mood improved, my outlook improved, and it was easier to endure isolation by finding ways that I was still healthy and safe but able to get outside and see people from across the property lines. It is second nature to me to simply follow goodness now.