

# I AM THANKFUL...

God chooses to work through us, *Revelation 22:1-5*

"Dianthropic."

That's the word New Testament scholar N.T. Wright coined to describe God's behavior in the Bible. While the term may not roll off the tongue, it does accurately describe an essential feature of God's activity – He chooses to work through humans ("dianthropic" literally means "through humans"). I am thankful that God chooses to work through humans because His choice gives meaning and value to our lives.

We will celebrate Thanksgiving later this month, a time when many people in our nation pause to reflect on the blessings in their lives. We understand, however, that our thankfulness should not be limited to a national holiday; we recognize that we should "give thanks in all circumstances"<sup>1</sup> (*1 Thessalonians 5:18*). Given the central place God wants thankfulness to have within our lives, we will take advantage of the upcoming holiday to remind ourselves of some of the reasons for our gratitude. We begin in this lesson by considering God's choice to work through humans, why His choice should make us thankful, and what it means for our relationships with one another.

## "They shall reign forever"<sup>2</sup>

- From its opening pages, the Bible records God's consistently choosing to work through humans. Consider the following selected passages:
  - The Bible opens with God creating a "very good" world (*Genesis 1:31*), which He then entrusted to humans whom He tasked with the responsibility of representing His rule (*Genesis 1:26-28*).
  - God's response to humanity's rebellion against the responsibility He gave to them centered on His selection of Abraham as the individual through whom He would work to bless "all the families of the earth" (*Genesis 12:1-3*).
  - Even though his brothers' jealousy motivated them to sell him into slavery, Joseph recognized that God worked through him and his difficult situation to "preserve for [his family] a remnant upon earth" (*Genesis 45:4-8*).
  - Later, when Egypt enslaved and oppressed Abraham's descendants, God chose Moses as the one through whom He would rescue Israel (*Exodus 3:7-10*; cf. *Exodus 14:16, 21, 26; 15:6, 9, 12*).

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Revelation 22:4-5.



- In the New Testament, Paul announced God's commitment to dwell within Christians who therefore have the responsibility of representing His reality and His will within the world (*1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; Ephesians 3:10*).
- Jesus, to whom God has given "all authority in heaven and on earth", chooses to exercise his sovereign rule in the world through the agency of the church (*Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 1:20-23*).
- John announced that God's dwelling place is with man (*Revelation 21:5*) and that God intends to partner with humans to rule "a new heaven and a new earth" (*Revelation 22:4-5; 22:1*).
- In each of the preceding passages, God could have acted differently; He could have accomplished His purpose more quickly and more efficiently on His own, yet He chose to work through humans.
- The lengthy story of God's choice to work with and through humans reveals the challenges humanity consistently presents to Him (*cf. Genesis 6:5-6; Romans 1:18-31; 3:9-18, 23*).
- God nevertheless remains committed to His plan to work through humans because He "is love" and focuses His love on humanity (*1 John 4:8; John 3:16-17*).
- God does not, therefore, focus on efficiency or productivity but concentrates instead on cultivating loving relationships (*cf. Deuteronomy 10:12-15; Romans 5:6-11*).

## Applications

- I am thankful because God's choice to work through humans gives meaning and value to my life.
  - Our meaning and value do not depend on money, career, education, beauty, power, or any other superficial metric we use in our society to evaluate one another.
  - Our value lies in God's belief that we can partner with Him and are worthy of His time and energy.
- My thankfulness to God for the value He gives my life should express itself through my relationships with the people around me. Gratitude to God results in:
  - Focusing on relationships rather than productivity or efficiency.
  - Valuing people over programs.
  - Being committed to relationships with fallen people who introduce complexities, frustrations, and heartbreaks into my life.
  - Belief that people are worth my time and energy because they are also worthy of Jesus' sacrifice.

God chooses to work through humans. Understanding the value He believes we possess ought to engender an abiding thankfulness in us. Understanding that value ought to motivate us to partner with the people around us. May God help us develop relationships that express our gratitude to Him.

