

EPISODE 033 - OUR FAVORITE THANKSGIVING TRADITION

WITH NANCY RAY

Intro

Can you even believe it's the week of Thanksgiving? I know, I can't. Well, Happy Thanksgiving, friend. I'm grateful you're here. Today's episode is going to be short and sweet all about my favorite Thanksgiving tradition that any family can do, any couple can do, and it's the most beautiful practice of just opening your eyes to the beautiful, good life around you.

You're listening to Work and Play with Nancy Ray, Episode 33.

Much of our daily lives can be divided into two categories: work and play. Simply put, that is where our life and our legacy take place. This is a podcast all about learning to work and play well, which leads to a healthy soul and a fulfilling life.

Listen in.

Content

Well, I hope this week you find yourself in the midst of not so much work and a whole lot of play. It's Thanksgiving week. It's a week to just kind of turn down the volume on all of the screen time, on all of the work obligations and just chill out and be with family. It's definitely a season for feasting and I hope that you get to do some of that this week.

I am so excited to share something so simple, but something so profound. I actually was taught this tradition from Will, my husband and his family, specifically my wonderful mother-in-law who I adore. She kind of led the charge in their family doing this every single Thanksgiving as well, and his brother and sister grew up, and we've kind of adopted it and to our family. And I'm excited to share it with you today.

So, Will would always tell me these stories of how when they were growing up, usually they would be all in the car together, heading to the mountains. We share a similar family tradition where we'd go to Boone, North Carolina every fall, around Thanksgiving and get our Christmas tree after Thanksgiving, chop it down off the mountains, in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, and then bring it back home.

But one of the things that they did as a family every Thanksgiving was write a thankful list. And this is something that I want to share with you today that you could maybe try over the

next couple of days with your own family and see how it opens your eyes to God's goodness in your life.

So here's how it works. Usually they were in the car and I think they started doing this obviously when the kids were a little bit older and they could read and write and participate. But it's not something that you should avoid just because your kids are young. We're still going to do it this year, but maybe it'll just be more of a conversation for you. But this is kind of what it looked like for them. They'd be in the car and their mom would say, "Everybody pull out a sheet of paper and a pen." Or she would pass them around and say, "I want you to think back at the last year, the last 365 days and write a thankful list. What are you thankful for?" And typically that suggestion would be met with some groans and some complaining because you know at the time, maybe they're in middle school or high school and they were like not into the thankful list and she said, "No, we need to stop and write down everything you're thankful for." They're be like, "Mom, I don't want to do this again." Like, "Why are you doing this?" And so just know that it might not be a perfect situation if you're trying to get your kids on board to do this for the first time or maybe the fifth time or the tenth time, they're just not going to be into it and that's fine.

But I think it's important to persist because Will has even told me that though he kind of pushed against his mom for so many years, he looks back and it's one thing that he's really thankful that she made them do. So they would take a sheet of paper and a pen and they would simply take, I think she would maybe set a timer or maybe just give them 10 or 15 minutes, just a quiet car and say write as many things down that you can think of that you were thankful for in the last year. It can be anything. It could be a big event, it could be a big accomplishment, it could be something so small, it doesn't matter, but it's really important to just stop and look back at God's faithfulness.

So they would take some time and write down their thankful list. And after 10 or 15 minutes was up or however long was needed, they would each go around and share their list of things that they're thankful for. And doing that as a family, makes you pause and look back at everything that happened. Now, for the last several years, Will and I have actually been going on a Christmas date every year and we kind of done this at Christmas time, just the two of us because our kids are small and can't really participate in this, but our oldest is now four years old. And I think this is something that we're really going to do every single Thanksgiving now with our kids as Millie's getting older and just as a practice to practice gratitude and thankfulness. Because what would happen as they shared, even Will's mom and dad would share and each of the kids would share, as that happen, they would think about things they had totally forgotten about.

They would write things down that they're grateful for, that they they don't remember or talk about on a daily basis and maybe no one else in the family knew, but in that moment, at Thanksgiving, they were able to share it. And when they did that, they realized how good God had been to them. They realized how much they had to be thankful for.

I think right now, for whatever reason in America, we just have this complaining culture. I see it in myself almost daily. My mind so easily is focused on all the negative things, all the hard things, all the things that aren't going my way on a daily basis, and that's just my flesh. That's just my mind and I have to fight against that. But one of the ways that you can literally change your mind and change your perspective is the practice or discipline of gratitude. And yes, it is a practice. Yes, it is a discipline because we don't naturally go there, we have to fight for it.

But as the mom or the dad in your home, you can lead this charge and there's no better time to do it than Thanksgiving. It's what Thanksgiving is all about. So I encourage you, this year, if you've never done anything like this before, take some time and write a thankful list. I think it's important too, to take time to write it down if you're able, because when we just talk about things that we're thankful for, sometimes we move on a little bit too quickly. But if we take time to make a list and think about things big and small and maybe something that's insignificant to someone else, but that's very significant to you, it really illuminates all of God's faithfulness, all of God's goodness, and makes you look back and really appreciate the year for what it was.

Maybe this year was a really hard year for you. Maybe the thought of a thankful list doesn't sound like fun because you just don't want to because it's just been a grueling year, hard on so many levels. I want to pause and encourage you, maybe you need to do it the most. Because we can see God's faithfulness and goodness in his hand, even in the really difficult years if we stop and look for it.

Maybe this year is really good for you. What a wonderful way to celebrate God's goodness and just to stop and realize it and write it down and recount all the ways that he's been good.

So that's it. My favorite Thanksgiving tradition is to simply write a thankful list and go around and share your thankful list every Thanksgiving. It doesn't have to be on Thanksgiving day, at the table. It simply has to be done some time that week. So choose a time that's realistic and good for you as a family to do this and share it. And I would love to hear how it affected your family, your perspective, and your heart of gratitude.

Now, it's time for the [Work and Play Cornerstore](#), and this is where I'm going to start to get a little bit holiday-themed. I'm excited about this. I'm hoping to give you things that are going to be really beneficial for your holidays. I still can't believe we're here at the end of November, about to decorate for Christmas. I mean it's just, I can't believe it.

Anyway, the Work and Play Cornerstore is where I have some fun. I recommend some things from my personal life and experiences to bring you a book that I'm loving and a thing that I'm loving. It can be random, funny, serious, great, but I just always stick by the rules, I did something I personally recommend and have read or used in the past. I'll get a tiny commission from anything bought through these links. So I always appreciate it when you use my links because that helps me continue to bring this podcast to you every week, and it's just fun.

Today, I'm going to be adding the book *One Thousand Gifts* by Ann Voskamp. This book is all about gratitude, looking for the little beautiful gifts in life all throughout your day. It definitely ties into this heart of gratitude in making a thankful list, but she talks about doing it on a regular basis throughout your life. And if this isn't something you've ever done before, this book is a great place to just understand and learn how you can go about doing that in your own life.

And the thing that I'm adding to the Cornerstore is one of my favorite prayer journals. My friend, Valerie Woerner is an incredible soul. She's like a kindred spirit of mine. We connect on so many levels. I've met her in person a couple of times, but we're online friends, but she has this amazing shop, if you've never heard of it, it's called Val Marie Paper, where she sells prayer journals and she even has made a prayer course and pregnancy journals and they're beautiful. But her annual, her yearly prayer journal is just gorgeous. I get it every year. It's beautiful. It's got this linen cover in the year on the front. And so last year, it's funny, mine was pink. I chose a pink one because I thought I was having all three girls. And so it's made me smile all year as I've filled it out and because it's pink and I had a boy. But this next year, I've chosen the cream linen cover. It's beautiful. So I'm going to leave a link for that there.

But here's what I want you to know about it. It has three sections to it. The front has a lot of prompts of things you can pray for that you fill out every month. The middle section is just blank. It's like the conversation piece of prayer where you just write to God, and that's my favorite section. But the third section is so important, and the third section of her journal is actually called Gratitude, and it's where you get to practice this practice of gratitude, this discipline of gratitude on a daily basis. It forces you to open your eyes to God's goodness and faithfulness every single day. So make sure you check out the show notes for the link for Val Marie Paper's yearly prayer journals that are beautiful. I think they make the most perfect Christmas gift. So if you're looking for a wonderful Christmas gift, maybe for your mom or your sister or a dear friend, it's such a great gift to give. I've already bought several for Christmas gifts this year.

I couldn't think of two better things to recommend to you this week, the week of Thanksgiving than the book *One Thousand Gifts* and the *Yearly Prayer Journal* by my friend, Val Marie Paper.

Now, I did want to share one bonus thing because I know Christmas is around the corner and I can't help myself. This is something that's been so valuable for me and my family the last couple of years, but I use Minted for my holiday cards. I think they have the most beautiful Christmas card designs. It's so user-friendly, but here's the thing that I want to tell you about it that a lot of people don't know, and it's the main reason why I use it.

Number one, you store all of your addresses in their system. So what I do, you have two options, you can edit or change addresses as they change for your friends and family as they move within the website. You just create your own username, password. You can enter it all

manually or you can do what I do, I make this Excel spreadsheet and I save it. It's like my master address book for anything in my family that I need to reference. If I need to send someone card, I use this Excel document and I follow Minted's guidelines. So I build out this Excel document with all of my friends and families addresses, I use their guidelines. And as I get, you know, "Hey, we're moving." Or, "Hey, here's our new address throughout the year." I'll go in and I'll update the Excel document and I'll save it. Then what you can do at Christmas time, when it's time to do your holiday cards, you simply upload that Excel document and it automatically populates your entire Minted address book.

Now here's the catch. This is the best part of the whole thing. They do free printed addressing for anytime you order your Christmas cards through Minted. Just think of the time you save. Literally the first year I did this I was like, "Oh, I want to hand write all of my addresses." I was really into making it personal and I kind of want to do like calligraphy. Anyway, who has time for that anymore? I certainly don't. And they have these beautiful fonts you can choose from.

So the first year I did this, the first year I used the Minted address book, my life was changed. I cannot tell you the hours this bought me back. And you don't have to pay any extra for it. It comes free. So you can go to NancyRay.com/mintedholiday, and you can get 30% off your holiday cards, and you can get 20% off of all other orders throughout the next year.

Now here's the deal, if you go to this link, NancyRay.com/mintedholiday, it is going to prompt you to subscribe to an annual membership, which is \$38 a year. But I want you to do the math on this. If you buy \$100 worth of holiday cards and you save 30% that's \$30 off right there. So maybe it's like break even for that order, but if you order holiday cards again next year with the same annual membership, you'll get another 30% off then and you'll get 20% off the entire year for anything else you buy through Minted--anything.

So I just encourage you to consider it. Go to NancyRay.com/mintedholiday to grab your annual membership. Save that 30% for holiday cards, save that 30% again next year, and 20% off anything this year. I think it's a pretty awesome deal.

I just had to share that with you because it's such a time saver and I know if you're like me, you're probably just now trying to order Christmas cards and trying to get them out. So I hope this is helpful to you.

Okay, I'm going to close with something fun. I am going to read pages from my gratitude journal circa 2014 and then I'm going to read another page from this year. I hope this inspires you to just get a glimpse of how to look for the little and beautiful things in your life as you practice your thankful list this week.

Okay. In 2014, I was thankful for the Lord's discipline and love, a Whole Foods date night, spontaneity, husband kisses, short fingernails with nail polish, running, that a new season

begins today. Having a neighborhood pool, bananas and RP team meetings. Clarity, the gift of writing and language, a clean studio, nights at home, breakfast with a friend, lake days, bathrooms on every level of my house. A weekend at home, sore body after tubing, my sister-in-law, Jess, my friend Bob's athletic determination. Speaking in church, our new Sundays, God's great mercy, Will's amazing sermon, memories keeping Boaz, the joy of decluttering, the renewal of my mind by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word, sore muscles, an intern day. Dreams of being caught up in the spirit, words of quiet time that prepare me for my day, real inner peace, the power of encouragement, and popcorn.

Okay. Moving on to this year. Hot coffee with creamer. Lyndon saying, "Watch mama, watch." Millie getting out of the pool, excellent class. I know it's hilarious. Beaufort recognizing me and smiling so big. A team that loves me and fights for what's best. Being part C12 Key Players Group, new art above my piano, sleep, the identity message in The Lion King, books, pink nail Polish, cooler weather. Millie, Lyndon, and Harper and Haven playing dress up, playing UNO by sunset with the cousins. An easy flight, Sabbath as a family, listening to cicadas and sitting on the back porch.

I hope this encourages you to make your own thankful list. It can be big, it can be small. And I hope it also encourages you to practice gratitude throughout your year. I'm going to close with a favorite quote from Oprah Winfrey. She says,

"Be thankful for what you have. You'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."

Happy Thanksgiving friend, and I'll see you next time.