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Ingratitude Day

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Ingratitude Day

Abstract

"Given how the logic of the two days work against each other, you may only be able to really celebrate one (even if you participate in both). So which day will highlight your week and your life—Thanksgiving or Black Friday?"

Posting about Thanksgiving and Black Friday from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/ingratitude-day/>

Keywords

In All Things, Thanksgiving, Black Friday, consumerism, satisfaction

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Ingratitude Day

 [inallthings.org/ingratitude-day/](http://allthings.org/ingratitude-day/)

Neal DeRoo

Growing up, every year we'd gather around a large table with our family to celebrate Thanksgiving and take turns saying one thing we were thankful for. When I do it now, as an adult, I find that I tend to be thankful for 'big picture' things: family, a job, a house to live in. My kids, though, tend to be thankful for the toys that they have (this year, the favorites are Hello Kitty and light sabers). Maybe there's something for us to learn from that lesson. Perhaps we, as adults, should be willing to say thank you for our toys and the things we like to play with: an HD TV (with surround sound!), a notebook or smart phone, a boat, a favorite recliner chair, or a book we read. These are the things, really, that give us little moments of joy each day, and so the things we should be thankful for. Sometimes it is good to remember to be thankful for the little things.

But as adults, we rarely mention these things. Perhaps that's because, even as we're gathered around the Thanksgiving table on Thursday, we're already thinking ahead to Friday, when we'll buy a bunch of new things to replace last year's favorite toys. And nothing undercuts our gratitude like the allure of something new and better. How can I be grateful for my iPhone 5, when I know the iPhone 6 is in the store, just waiting to be mine? How can I be happy with my TV, when there is a bigger one, with better HD and an automatic subscription to Netflix and Hulu+, that I could have for 50% off if I make it to Walmart before 8am tomorrow?

The very existence of Black Friday creeps into and interrupts the celebrations of Thanksgiving (and not just because Black Friday starts earlier and earlier every year). The frenzied acquisition of Black Friday—the buying of things because they're cheap, things that are cheap because we want to buy them—reveals a certain circular logic that we rarely stop to think about. But beneath that circle lies an even more vicious logic, the logic of consumerism: "I will be happy when I get what I want."

It seems simple and harmless enough: there is something pleasurable about having our desires met, and it can certainly be hard to feel happy when our desires go unsatisfied. But look a little deeper, and we see something more dangerous. Notice that happiness is something that we never have, but is something that is always still to come: "I will be happy when...", "I will be happy when...", "I will be happy when..."

How easy is it to let this refrain become the soundtrack of our lives?

Of our work lives: "I'll be happy when I finish college and get a job." "I'll be happy when I get promoted out of this entry-level position and get some real responsibility around here." "I'll be happy when my boss is gone and I can run this place." "I'll be happy when I can finally retire and have some time to do what I really want."

Of our financial lives: "I'll be happy when I've got a steady income." "I'll be happy when I make enough to pay my bills without worrying." "I'll be happy when I've got enough to buy a house." "I'll be happy when we can get that 3-bedroom house with a yard." "I'll be happy when we've got enough savings that I can stop worrying." "I'll be happy when the kids' college fund has enough in it." "I'll be happy when I know we're set for retirement." "I'll be happy when I know that I won't end up an inconvenience to my kids."

Of our love lives: "I'll be happy when I find someone." "I'll be happy when I get that ring on my finger." "I'll be happy when the wedding is over with and we're finally married." "I'll be happy when our two-some

becomes a family.” “I’ll be happy when the kids are a bit older, and the two of us can do things together again, as a couple.” “I’ll be happy when I’m playing with my grandkids.”

Of our religious lives: “I’ll be happy when I start doing daily devotions.” “I’ll be happy when my prayer life is better.” “I’ll be happy when I feel that I fit better at my church.” “I’ll be happy when I hear God speaking more clearly in my life.” “I’ll be happy when I’m living in heaven with Jesus.”

Opposed to this logic of consumerism lies the logic of satisfaction in Philippians 4: “I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am in.” Rather than waiting to get something else before I can be happy, I take contentment with what I already have. Perhaps this is the major lesson of Thanksgiving Day: be grateful for what you have, because it is good.

The message of Black Friday directly contradicts this lesson: if we’re always waiting to be happy at some future time when we finally get what we want, we find that we can never quite be happy with what we’ve already got. It’s almost as if we got so worried that we might be happy at Thanksgiving, that we had to invent Black Friday, to make sure we didn’t forget that we couldn’t possibly be happy if we didn’t get just one more thing (and get it at a big discount).

Given how they logic of the two days work against each other, you may only be able to really celebrate one (even if you participate in both). *So which day will highlight your week and your life—Thanksgiving or Black Friday?*

Dig Deeper

Want to read more about how gratitude can shape our culture? Check out [Q Ideas'](#) featured articles this week on gratitude. Watch and read thoughts on gratitude by [Ann Voskamp](#), with responses by Christianne Squires on [On Black Friday, Don't Forget Thanksgiving](#) , [Want to be happy? Be grateful](#) by David Steindl-Rast and [Black Friday and the Endless Cycle of Want](#) by Jeff Shinabarger.

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