

THANKSGIVING AS AN EXPRESSION OF FAITH: A THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF JOHN 6:11

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Received: July 1, 2026 / Revised: July 8, 2026 / Accepted: July 15, 2026

ABSTRACT

This study addresses a significant lacuna in Johannine scholarship: the theological role of thanksgiving in John 6:11 has been routinely acknowledged but rarely subjected to sustained analysis. While the Synoptic parallels employ *eulogeō*, John's deliberate use of *eucharisteō* raises critical questions regarding the relationship between gratitude, revelation, and belief within the Fourth Gospel's narrative architecture. Employing a grammatical-historical exegesis integrated with narrative criticism and intertextual analysis of Second Temple Jewish *berakhah* traditions, this theological study examines the lexical, syntactical, and narrative features of John 6:11 within its immediate context and its function as a hermeneutical key for the ensuing Bread of Life discourse. The analysis demonstrates that thanksgiving in John's Gospel constitutes a distinct theological category rather than an incidental liturgical echo, functioning as a bridge between divine initiative and human response. The study's novelty lies in proposing a thanksgiving-faith model that illuminates the participatory and doxological character of Johannine faith, offering a fresh reading of the feeding miracle as a revelation of the Son's relationship with the Father. This model contributes to broader conversations on liturgical theology and spiritual formation, with particular relevance for contexts where gratitude occupies a central place in Christian piety.

Keywords: Johannine theology; thanksgiving; John 6:11; *eucharisteō*; faith

INTRODUCTION

The Fourth Gospel has long been recognized as the most theologically deliberate of the four canonical accounts, yet the specific role of thanksgiving within its narrative architecture remains curiously under-theorized. John 6:11 records that Jesus, before distributing the loaves to the five thousand, "gave thanks" (*εὐχαριστήσας*). This seemingly incidental detail raises questions that extend well beyond the immediate context of the feeding miracle. Why does John employ *eucharisteō* at this particular juncture when the Synoptic parallels use *eulogeō* (to bless)? What theological weight does this act of gratitude carry within the Johannine narrative? How does this moment of thanksgiving relate to the Gospel's pervasive concern with revelation, belief, and the relationship between the Son and the Father?

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The problem is compounded by the observation that thanksgiving appears at other strategically significant moments in the Fourth Gospel. The raising of Lazarus is preceded by Jesus' prayer of thanksgiving (John 11:41), and the Farewell Discourse contains elements of gratitude and doxological reflection. Yet scholarly treatments of Johannine theology have tended to concentrate on the signs, the "I am" sayings, and the high priestly prayer, often treating thanksgiving as a peripheral concern rather than a constitutive theological category. This neglect represents a significant lacuna in the academic literature, particularly given the growing interest in the affective and doxological dimensions of early Christian piety (Piotrowski, 2026; Okoh, 2025). Furthermore, the relationship between thanksgiving and faith in the Johannine corpus has not been systematically examined. While John's Gospel is frequently characterized as the "Gospel of belief," with the verb *pisteuō* appearing some 98 times, the precise manner in which gratitude functions as an expression or catalyst of faith remains underexplored.

The urgency of this investigation is underscored by several converging factors. First, contemporary theological discourse has witnessed a resurgence of interest in the theology of gratitude, particularly within discussions of Christian worship, sacramental theology, and spiritual formation (Smith, 2022). The term *eucharisteō* itself carries eucharistic resonances that connect John 6:11 to later liturgical developments, yet the Johannine text must be allowed to speak in its own voice rather than being read exclusively through later eucharistic controversies. Second, the Johannine feeding narrative has been the subject of intense scholarly debate regarding its relationship to the Synoptic accounts and its theological significance within the Fourth Gospel. However, the specific emphasis on thanksgiving in John's version, as distinct from the blessing in the Synoptic parallels, has not received adequate attention. This distinction is theologically significant and demands careful investigation. Third, the broader field of biblical theology has increasingly recognized the importance of attending to the doxological and affective dimensions of biblical texts (Fosu, 2023). The tendency toward purely cognitive or propositional readings of Scripture has been challenged by scholars who emphasize the participatory and worshipful character of biblical faith. A focused study of thanksgiving in John 6:11 contributes to this emerging conversation by demonstrating how a single narrative detail can illuminate the theological texture of an entire Gospel. Fourth, from the perspective of the Indonesian theological context, where gratitude (*syukur*) occupies a central place in Christian piety and practice, a rigorous exegetical study of Johannine thanksgiving offers resources for theological reflection that are both academically credible and pastorally relevant (Setiawan et al., 2025; Patasik, 2022).

Despite the extensive body of Johannine scholarship, several specific gaps can be identified. First, while commentaries on John 6 routinely acknowledge the presence of thanksgiving in verse 11, few offer sustained theological reflection on its significance. The tendency is to note the liturgical resonance of the term and then move on to other concerns. A dedicated study that places thanksgiving at the center of theological analysis is lacking. Second, the relationship between

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thanksgiving and faith in the Fourth Gospel has not been systematically explored. While scholars have examined Johannine faith in terms of belief, trust, and commitment, the doxological dimension of faith has received comparatively little attention (Choi, 2022; Harold, 2022). This study addresses this gap by proposing that thanksgiving constitutes a distinctive mode of faith expression within the Johannine framework. Third, the intertextual relationship between John 6:11 and Jewish thanksgiving traditions, particularly the *berakhah* formulas of Second Temple Judaism, has been noted but not thoroughly developed. The precise manner in which John's use of *eucharisteō* engages, transforms, and reinterprets Jewish liturgical traditions requires closer examination (Nababan, 2023). Fourth, the narrative function of thanksgiving within the structure of John 6 as a whole has not been adequately explored. The feeding miracle serves as the narrative prelude to the Bread of Life discourse, and the act of thanksgiving may function as a hermeneutical key for understanding the discourse that follows. This potential connection has not been sufficiently investigated.

The novelty of this study lies in its proposal of a thanksgiving-faith model for interpreting Johannine theology. Rather than treating thanksgiving as an incidental narrative detail or a liturgical echo, this study argues that thanksgiving constitutes a distinct theological category within the Fourth Gospel that illuminates the participatory character of Johannine faith. The proposed model suggests that thanksgiving functions as a bridge between divine initiative and human response, revealing the structure of faithful receptivity that characterizes authentic belief. This study also offers a fresh reading of the relationship between John 6:11 and the Bread of Life discourse by demonstrating how the act of thanksgiving establishes the theological framework within which Jesus' subsequent self-revelation as the "bread of life" must be understood. The thanksgiving of Jesus is not merely a prelude to miracle but a revelation of the relationship between the Son and the Father that grounds the entire discourse. Furthermore, the study contributes to the broader conversation regarding the doxological dimension of biblical faith by demonstrating how a focused exegetical investigation can illuminate the affective and worshipful character of Johannine Christianity (Danquah & Osei, 2025; Suwito, 2024). The thanksgiving-faith model proposed here has implications for liturgical theology, spiritual formation, and the practice of Christian gratitude.

This study pursues the following objectives. First, to conduct a rigorous grammatical-historical exegesis of John 6:11 that attends to the lexical, syntactical, and narrative features of the text. Second, to situate John 6:11 within the broader Johannine theological framework, particularly the Gospel's presentation of revelation, sign, and belief. Third, to examine the intertextual relationship between John 6:11 and Jewish thanksgiving traditions, particularly the *berakhah* formulas of Second Temple Judaism. Fourth, to analyze the narrative function of thanksgiving within the structure of John 6, particularly its relationship to the Bread of Life discourse. Fifth, to propose a thanksgiving-faith model that illuminates the participatory dimension of Johannine faith and offers resources for contemporary theological reflection.

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The theoretical framework for this study draws upon three intersecting streams of scholarship: Johannine theology, narrative criticism, and the theology of gratitude within early Jewish and Christian traditions. The first stream, Johannine theology, provides the foundational categories for understanding the distinctive theological vision of the Fourth Gospel. The seminal work of C.H. Dodd established the importance of understanding John's Gospel as a theological document that presents Jesus as the revelation of God through signs and discourses. Subsequent scholarship, including the contributions of Raymond Brown, Rudolf Schnackenburg, and more recently Marianne Meye Thompson and Richard Bauckham, has refined and challenged Dodd's framework while affirming the theological density of the Johannine narrative (Hahnenberg, 2022). For the purposes of this study, the Johannine categories of revelation, sign, belief, and the relationship between the Son and the Father provide the essential theological vocabulary.

The second stream, narrative criticism, offers methodological resources for attending to the literary and rhetorical features of the Johannine text. The work of R. Alan Culpepper and others has demonstrated the importance of reading John as a coherent narrative in which individual episodes contribute to the overall theological and rhetorical design. Within this framework, the act of thanksgiving in John 6:11 is not an isolated detail but a narrative element that participates in the larger story of Jesus' revelation and the response of faith. The third stream, the theology of gratitude, draws upon both Jewish and Christian traditions of thanksgiving. The Hebrew Bible's rich vocabulary of praise and thanksgiving (*todah*, *yadah*, *barak*) establishes the liturgical and theological context within which Johannine thanksgiving must be understood (Nababan, 2023). The work of scholars such as Claus Westermann on the praise traditions of Israel and the more recent contributions of Gerd Theissen on the psychology of early Christian worship provide resources for understanding the theological significance of gratitude. Within the Christian tradition, the development of eucharistic theology, from the *Didache* through the patristic period, offers a trajectory of interpretation that illuminates but must not be allowed to overshadow the Johannine text itself (Alexander Malov, 2024).

While these three streams of scholarship provide essential resources, each requires critical examination. Johannine theology, despite its sophistication, has sometimes tended toward abstraction, treating the Gospel's theological concepts as timeless ideas rather than narrative events. The tendency to systematize Johannine thought can obscure the dynamic, participatory character of the text's theology. Narrative criticism, while valuable for attending to literary features, sometimes risks neglecting the theological claims of the text in favor of purely aesthetic or rhetorical analysis. The theology of gratitude, particularly in its contemporary psychological formulations, can drift toward a utilitarian understanding of thanksgiving as a technique for personal well-being rather than a theological act oriented toward God (Owusu, 2025). This study seeks to hold these three streams in critical tension, drawing upon their strengths while resisting their respective temptations toward abstraction, aestheticism, and utilitarianism.

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The research gap that this study addresses is therefore both specific and significant. It is specific in its focus on a single verse that has been insufficiently examined in its own right. It is significant in its claim that this verse illuminates a dimension of Johannine theology that has broader implications for understanding the nature of faith, the structure of revelation, and the relationship between divine action and human response. The thanksgiving-faith model proposed here offers a fresh conceptual framework that has not been articulated in the existing literature, and it does so by attending carefully to the text of John 6:11 within its literary, theological, and liturgical contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly literature relevant to thanksgiving in John 6:11 can be organized around four interconnected areas: Johannine theology, narrative interpretation, Jewish and early Christian traditions of thanksgiving, and contextual theological reflection on faith and Christian formation. Although the terminology of thanksgiving appears explicitly in the Fourth Gospel, its theological significance has received substantially less attention than Johannine Christology, signs, belief, and sacramental imagery. The present study therefore brings established Johannine scholarship into conversation with a corpus of nineteen Indonesian theological and pastoral works in order to examine thanksgiving not merely as a liturgical action but as an expression of faith rooted in the relationship between Jesus and the Father.

The first major stream is Johannine theology. Dodd's influential interpretation of the Fourth Gospel established John as a profoundly theological narrative in which the identity of Jesus is disclosed through signs and accompanying discourses (Dodd, 1968). The subsequent contributions of Brown and Schnackenburg expanded historical, literary, and theological approaches to the Gospel, while Bauckham challenged interpretations that restricted John's audience to an isolated Johannine community and proposed a broader early Christian readership (Bauckham, 1998). Thompson's emphasis on the Father-Son relationship is especially important for John 6:11 because Jesus' thanksgiving cannot be separated from the Gospel's consistent portrayal of the Son as receiving, revealing, and accomplishing the Father's work (Thompson, 2001). Within this theological architecture, thanksgiving may be understood as a visible expression of Jesus' filial relationship to the Father rather than simply a customary prayer before eating.

This Johannine framework is complemented by Yulianto's *Injil Yohanes*, which emphasizes the divine identity of Christ, new birth, faith, sanctification, communion with Christ, and transformation through God's Word (Yulianto, 2018b). Although the work does not develop a specialized theology of *eucharisteō*, its Christological and discipleship orientation provides an Indonesian theological context for understanding John 6. In particular, its emphasis on Christ as the center of Johannine revelation supports the contention that the feeding of the five thousand should not be reduced to a narrative about material provision. The miracle points beyond bread to the identity of the One who

gives it. Consequently, Jesus' act of thanksgiving becomes meaningful within the wider Johannine movement from sign to revelation and from revelation to belief.

Yulianto's *Injil Markus* provides a useful canonical conversation partner because the Synoptic feeding tradition employs *eulogeō* rather than John's *eucharisteō* (Yulianto, 2018a). The difference should not automatically be interpreted as a theological contradiction, since blessing and thanksgiving belong to overlapping Jewish practices surrounding meals. Nevertheless, comparison with the Synoptic tradition makes John's lexical choice worthy of closer attention. The Johannine wording foregrounds gratitude to God and thus opens the possibility that the evangelist intends the action to participate in his broader theology of the Son's dependence upon, communion with, and revelation of the Father.

Narrative criticism constitutes the second important scholarly stream. Culpepper's work demonstrates that the Fourth Gospel should be interpreted as an integrated narrative in which characterization, plot, irony, signs, misunderstanding, and discourse work together to lead readers toward belief (Culpepper, 1983). From this perspective, the phrase describing Jesus as having "given thanks" should not be treated as an expendable narrative detail. It occurs immediately before the multiplication and distribution of the bread and therefore participates in the characterization of Jesus. The miracle is performed within an explicit posture of relationship toward the Father. Narrative criticism consequently provides methodological justification for asking why the narrator preserves this particular action and how it shapes the reader's perception of the sign.

At the same time, narrative criticism alone is insufficient. Stibbe (1992) and related approaches have shown the importance of literary sensitivity while also exposing the danger of separating the narrative world from its historical, Jewish, and theological setting. John 6:11 therefore requires integration of literary analysis with grammatical-historical and intertextual interpretation. The use of *eucharisteō* must be examined in relation not only to John's narrative strategy but also to Jewish practices of blessing and thanksgiving. This combined methodology protects the interpretation from two opposite errors: reducing thanksgiving to a conventional meal formula or inflating it into a fully developed later Eucharistic doctrine without adequate textual justification.

The Hebrew and Jewish traditions of praise and thanksgiving provide a third interpretive stream. Westermann (1981) demonstrated the centrality of praise and thanksgiving in Israel's response to God's saving and sustaining activity. Concepts expressed through *todah*, *yadah*, and *barak* reveal that gratitude is fundamentally relational and theological: God is acknowledged as giver, deliverer, covenant Lord, and source of life. The Jewish *berakhah* tradition likewise places meals within the recognition of divine provision. Such a background is indispensable for John 6:11. Jesus' thanksgiving does not create divine generosity but acknowledges the Father from whom provision comes, thereby locating the miracle within a theology of divine initiative rather than autonomous wonder-working.

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This distinction is particularly relevant when John 6:11 is read alongside Yulianto and Ely's *Ucapan Bahagia* (2026b). Their exposition of Matthew 5:3–12 challenges definitions of divine blessing based exclusively on material abundance and instead locates blessedness in Kingdom character: spiritual poverty, meekness, righteousness, mercy, purity, peacemaking, and faithfulness. Applied to John 6, this perspective guards against interpreting the multiplication of bread as evidence that faith primarily guarantees material prosperity. The abundance of the sign reveals God's generosity, but its Johannine purpose ultimately directs the reader toward Jesus himself. Gratitude is therefore related to receiving God's gift rightly, rather than merely acquiring more of the gift.

This concern becomes even sharper in *Teologi Kemakmuran vs Teologi Penderitaan* (Yulianto & Rinawati, 2026b). The work critiques theological constructions that equate divine favor with health, wealth, and uninterrupted success. Such critique is significant for interpreting John 6 because the crowd itself becomes vulnerable to a materially oriented misunderstanding of Jesus' sign. Having eaten the bread, the people seek Jesus again, while Jesus exposes their fixation on physical satisfaction (John 6:26). The narrative therefore contains an internal critique of a purely material response to divine provision. Thanksgiving, when understood theologically, does not terminate in the material gift but redirects the recipient toward the Giver.

A similar corrective arises from *Sukses Tanpa Kehilangan Tuhan* (Yulianto & Kismiyanto, 2026), which places achievement, vocation, and material success under the lordship of God. Its contribution to the present inquiry is indirect yet useful: material provision becomes spiritually dangerous when the gift displaces God as the ultimate object of faith. John 6 presents precisely such a danger. The crowd experiences miraculous provision but must still move from fascination with bread toward faith in Christ. Gratitude can therefore function as a theological discipline of proper orientation, acknowledging that provision is received from God and must lead the believer toward communion with God rather than toward autonomous consumption.

The Pauline works within the Indonesian corpus broaden this canonical understanding of gratitude. *Kitab Galatia, Efesus dan Filipi* emphasizes grace, redemption, union with Christ, sanctification, ecclesial life, and perseverance (Yulianto, 2018c), while *Kitab Roma* situates Christian existence within the movement from sin and grace toward transformed life (Yulianto, 2019). *Aplikasi Kehidupan untuk Remaja dan Dewasa: Kitab Kolose, 1 & 2 Tesalonika* further emphasizes Christ's supremacy, spiritual maturity, perseverance, and eschatological hope (Yulianto, 2022). These works do not directly interpret John 6:11, yet collectively they reinforce an important canonical principle: Christian response arises from prior divine grace. Thanksgiving is thus not a mechanism for compelling divine action but a response to the God whose gracious initiative precedes human action.

This distinction is crucial to the thanksgiving-faith model proposed in the present study. Jesus does not give thanks in John 6:11 as a technique designed to activate a miracle. Such an interpretation

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would risk turning gratitude into a spiritual transaction. Instead, thanksgiving occurs within the Son's trustful relationship with the Father. The miracle follows, but the theological direction moves from divine identity and relationship toward thanksgiving and provision, not from a human technique toward divine obligation. This protects the text from interpretations in which gratitude becomes a formula for obtaining supernatural outcomes.

The Christological foundation of this claim is strengthened by Yulianto and Setiawan's *Kristologi: Kajian Teologis tentang Pribadi, Karya, dan Keilahian Yesus Kristus* (2026). Their emphasis on the person, work, and divinity of Christ provides an important framework for resisting readings of Jesus merely as an exemplary religious practitioner. Jesus' thanksgiving certainly models gratitude, but within the Fourth Gospel he is more than a model. The One who gives thanks is the incarnate Son, whose works reveal the Father and whose relationship to the Father constitutes a central dimension of Johannine Christology. Consequently, John 6:11 must first be interpreted Christologically before it is appropriated devotionally.

The emphasis on Christ-centered transformation is extended by *Memiliki Pikiran Kristus* (Yulianto & Wijaya, 2026). The work presents Christian maturity in terms of renewed thinking shaped by God's sovereignty, Scripture, grace, humility, holiness, love, perseverance, and Christlike discernment. This perspective contributes to the present study by locating gratitude within transformed perception. Thanksgiving requires more than positive emotion; it interprets reality theologically. The grateful believer recognizes provision as gift, the giver as God, and life itself as lived before God. Such theological perception corresponds with the Johannine contrast between those who see signs merely at the level of physical benefit and those who perceive what those signs reveal about Jesus.

Imago Dei yang Retak further situates human response within the categories of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration (Yulianto & Rinawati, 2026a). Human beings distorted by sin do not naturally receive God's gifts with proper worship and gratitude; grace is required to restore their God-oriented identity. This anthropological insight helps explain why exposure to a miracle does not automatically generate genuine faith in John's Gospel. The feeding of the five thousand demonstrates that receiving divine benefits is not identical with recognizing divine revelation. Thanksgiving therefore belongs to a redeemed orientation in which the gift is interpreted in relation to its divine source.

The pastoral literature on suffering also contributes an important corrective to a theology of gratitude. *Bila Topan Keras Melanda Hidupmu* presents faith as trust in God amid the storms of life rather than only during favorable circumstances (Yulianto & Ely, 2026a). *Maukah Engkau Menyembuhkanku Tuhan?* examines illness, prayer, waiting, divine sovereignty, and the possibility that faithful Christian existence may continue even when immediate healing does not occur (Yulianto & Warti, 2026b). Together these works prevent thanksgiving from becoming dependent

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upon visible abundance. Although John 6:11 occurs in the context of miraculous provision, a biblical theology of thanksgiving cannot be restricted to moments when scarcity is visibly reversed.

Keberanian Menjalani Hidup similarly relates faith to perseverance, trust, and obedience under conditions that do not always provide immediate certainty (Yulianto & Warti, 2026a). This theme strengthens the distinction between thanksgiving as circumstantial optimism and thanksgiving as theological trust. John 6:11 depicts Jesus giving thanks before the crowd sees the completed provision. The narrative should not be turned into a mechanical principle promising that gratitude always produces miracles; nevertheless, the temporal ordering is significant because thanksgiving appears within Jesus' confidence in the Father rather than after human recognition of abundance.

The same pastoral depth is supplied by *Kesembuhan Emosional* (Yulianto & Prasetyo, 2026). By addressing wounded emotions within a Christian framework, the work reminds theological interpretation that gratitude must not be employed to suppress lament, trauma, grief, or psychological pain. Genuine Christian thanksgiving can coexist with emotional complexity. This is important for contemporary appropriation of John 6:11. A theology of gratitude that ignores suffering can become pastorally harmful, whereas Johannine faith ultimately exists within a Gospel that moves from signs and abundance toward rejection, crucifixion, resurrection, and restored communion.

The themes of suffering and discipleship are made explicit in Manihuruk's *Pikul Salib* (2026). Self-denial, obedience, suffering, prayer, community, and participation in the way of Christ form central aspects of discipleship. This cruciform orientation guards the interpretation of John 6 against triumphalism. The Jesus who multiplies bread is also the Jesus who speaks of giving himself for the life of the world and who ultimately proceeds toward the cross. Thus, thanksgiving in John 6 cannot legitimately serve as the foundation of a theology in which faith exists only to secure miraculous abundance. Johannine gratitude must remain inseparable from Johannine discipleship.

Dwinanta and Rinawati's *Dari Luka Dipulihkan dan Menuju Ladang Misi di Kamboja* (2026) introduces the dimension of testimony, restoration, vocation, and mission. Experiences of limitation, suffering, and recovery are interpreted retrospectively within God's redemptive calling. Its relevance for a theology of thanksgiving lies in demonstrating that gratitude may become missional rather than merely private. God's gifts, healing, and restoration can generate testimony and service. In John 6, the provision of bread likewise moves beyond individual satisfaction toward revelation: divine generosity becomes a sign that calls people to recognize Jesus.

Mengenal Warna Kepribadian dalam Terang Iman Kristen provides another anthropological contribution by locating individual differences within creation, fall, redemption, and sanctification (Yulianto & Prayitno, 2026). Although its primary concern is personality rather than thanksgiving, the work challenges a uniform understanding of spiritual response. Gratitude is embodied by concrete persons whose emotional patterns, temperaments, histories, and relationships differ. The

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theological content of thanksgiving remains God-centered, while its human expression may assume diverse forms. Such an insight is useful for spiritual formation, where Johannine faith must be appropriated without reducing believers to a single psychological pattern.

Peperangan Rohani adds a further theological safeguard by locating spiritual conflict under the sovereignty of God and the decisive victory of Christ (Yulianto & Wartu, 2026c). Its rejection of dualistic constructions is relevant to thanksgiving because Christian gratitude is ultimately grounded in confidence that God remains sovereign even amid opposition. However, John 6:11 itself does not explicitly concern demonic conflict, and therefore this work serves as a broader systematic conversation partner rather than direct exegetical evidence. Its value lies principally in reinforcing a God-centered worldview in which gratitude is addressed to the sovereign Father rather than used as a technique of spiritual control.

Taken together, the nineteen Indonesian works contribute a contextual theological trajectory that is particularly relevant for the contemporary appropriation of John 6:11. They repeatedly emphasize Christ-centered faith, divine sovereignty, grace, discipleship, spiritual formation, responsible engagement with suffering, and the inadequacy of reducing Christian blessing to material prosperity. At the same time, these works generally approach their themes through biblical exposition, pastoral theology, systematic reflection, devotional interpretation, or spiritual formation rather than sustained lexical and narrative analysis of *eucharisteō* in John 6:11. Their contribution is therefore strongest as contextual and theological conversation partners rather than as substitutes for technical Johannine exegesis.

A critical synthesis of the international and Indonesian literature reveals three unresolved tensions. First is the tension between cognitive and doxological conceptions of faith. Johannine scholarship has rightly stressed *pisteuō*, knowledge, recognition, and confession, yet the affective and worshipful dimensions of belief remain less developed. Thanksgiving suggests that faith may involve not merely recognition of truth but a receptive and God-directed posture toward divine grace. Second is the tension between material provision and revelatory meaning. The feeding sign addresses genuine physical hunger, but the subsequent Bread of Life discourse refuses to let material satisfaction become the final meaning of the event. Third is the tension between thanksgiving as theological response and thanksgiving as spiritual technique. Contemporary religious discourse can easily transform gratitude into a method for obtaining desired outcomes, whereas the Johannine narrative directs attention toward the relationship of the Son with the Father.

The relationship between the feeding sign and the Bread of Life discourse is therefore particularly significant. John 6:11 should not be isolated from John 6:22–71. Jesus' act of thanksgiving precedes a sign whose meaning is subsequently interpreted by Jesus himself. The crowd focuses on bread that satisfies temporarily, while Jesus redirects attention toward the bread that gives eternal life. Within this narrative movement, thanksgiving functions as more than a liturgical preface: it places

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the sign within the Father-Son relationship before the crowd has the opportunity to misinterpret it materially. The gesture can therefore be read as a hermeneutical marker pointing toward the divine source and theological meaning of the provision.

The literature thus confirms a genuine research gap. Classical Johannine scholarship provides extensive analyses of signs, Christology, belief, Father-Son relations, sacramental imagery, and the Bread of Life discourse. Scholarship on Jewish worship provides substantial background for blessing and thanksgiving. Contemporary theological literature examines gratitude as a Christian virtue, and Indonesian theological works provide rich contextual resources concerning faith, suffering, Christ-centered formation, and divine provision. Yet these streams have rarely been integrated around the specific theological function of Jesus' thanksgiving in John 6:11.

The present study addresses this lacuna through the proposed **thanksgiving-faith model**. The model understands thanksgiving as a doxological expression of faith situated between divine initiative and faithful reception. It does not claim that thanksgiving causes divine action, nor does it reduce gratitude to emotion, etiquette, or liturgical formula. Rather, thanksgiving acknowledges the Father as giver, reveals the Son's communion with the Father, properly interprets divine provision, and directs the recipient beyond the gift toward the Giver. Within the Johannine narrative, this framework offers a fresh account of how thanksgiving, revelation, sign, and belief converge in the feeding of the five thousand and prepare the theological movement toward Jesus' self-identification as the Bread of Life.

Accordingly, the novelty of the present research consists not merely in observing that Jesus gives thanks in John 6:11 but in demonstrating the theological function of that thanksgiving within the narrative architecture of the Fourth Gospel. By integrating Johannine exegesis, Jewish thanksgiving traditions, narrative criticism, Christological reflection, and Indonesian contextual theology, this study seeks to show that gratitude is not peripheral to Johannine faith. It is a doxological mode of receiving divine revelation—a response that recognizes God's initiative, receives the gift in faith, and ultimately turns from the gift toward communion with the Father through the Son.

The literature on thanksgiving, particularly as it pertains to the Fourth Gospel, is characterized by a curious paradox. On one hand, the term *eucharisteō* and its cognates are recognized as pivotal within the Johannine narrative, marking moments of high theological drama. On the other hand, sustained scholarly reflection on this motif has been surprisingly sparse, often subordinated to other Johannine preoccupations such as christology, ecclesiology, or the sacramental debates that have historically dominated the interpretive landscape. This review does not aim to provide a mere survey of existing literature. Instead, it seeks to map the contested terrain of Johannine theology, the methodological impasses in narrative criticism, and the theological debates surrounding the nature of faith and gratitude, in order to position a focused exegetical study of John 6:11 as a necessary and novel contribution.

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The theoretical framework for this investigation is necessarily triangulated. The first and most significant stream is the rich tradition of Johannine theology. The foundational work of C.H. Dodd established the paradigm of John as a theological document centered on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, articulated through a dialectic of "signs" and "discourses" (Dodd, 1968). This framework, while enduring, has been subjected to rigorous critique and refinement. The monumental commentaries of Raymond Brown and Rudolf Schnackenburg deepened the historical and redactional questions, while more recent scholarship, particularly the work of Richard Bauckham, has challenged the notion of a narrowly sectarian Johannine community, arguing instead for a Gospel written for a broad audience of early Christians (Bauckham, 1998). Marianne Meye Thompson has further shifted the focus from a purely high christology to the dynamic relationship between the Father and the Son, a relationship that is enacted and revealed through the narrative (Thompson, 2001). Within this stream, the act of thanksgiving is often noted in passing—a liturgical echo, a prelude to the miracle—but it is rarely treated as a constitutive element of Johannine theology itself. The scholarly gaze has been fixed on the "I am" sayings, the signs, and the high priestly prayer, leaving the doxological and affective dimensions of the narrative undertheorized.

The second stream, narrative criticism, provides the methodological tools to correct this oversight. The seminal work of R. Alan Culpepper (1983) demonstrated that the Fourth Gospel is not a mere repository of theological propositions but a coherent and sophisticated narrative in which every element, from plot to characterization to setting, contributes to the overall rhetorical and theological design. This approach allows the interpreter to read John 6:11 not as an isolated verse but as a narrative event that functions within the larger story of Jesus' revelation. The act of giving thanks is a narrative detail that participates in the construction of Jesus' identity and the elicitation of faith from the reader. However, narrative criticism has its own limitations. As some critics have noted, a purely literary approach can sometimes flatten the historical and theological particularities of the text, treating it as a self-contained world rather than a document engaged in dialogue with its Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts (Stibbe, 1992). The challenge, therefore, is to integrate a narrative sensitivity with a rigorous grammatical-historical exegesis that attends to the text's intertextual echoes and cultural background.

The third stream, the theology of gratitude, draws from both Jewish and Christian traditions. The Hebrew Bible provides a rich vocabulary of praise and thanksgiving—*todah*, *yadah*, *barak*—that establishes the liturgical and theological context for understanding the Johannine usage. Claus Westermann's (1981) work on the praise traditions of Israel remains a landmark, demonstrating that praise is not an optional extra but a fundamental mode of Israel's relationship with God. More recent contributions have explored the psychology and sociology of gratitude, with Gerd Theissen (1999) offering a compelling analysis of early Christian worship as a "ritual of gratitude" that served to construct and maintain community identity. Within the Christian tradition, the development of

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eucharistic theology, from the Didache through the patristic period, has created a powerful interpretive lens through which John 6:11 is often read. Yet this lens can also become a source of distortion. The danger is anachronism: reading later eucharistic controversies back into the Johannine text and obscuring the specific narrative and theological function of thanksgiving within the Gospel itself. The work of scholars like Kimberly Hope Belcher (2019) on "receptive ecumenism" and the theology of thanksgiving as communion highlights the ongoing vitality of this theme, but it also underscores the need for a careful exegetical grounding that allows the Johannine text to speak in its own voice.

A critical examination of these three streams reveals significant tensions and contradictions. The most acute tension lies between the cognitive and the doxological dimensions of faith. Johannine scholarship has long emphasized the centrality of belief (*pisteuō*) in the Gospel, often framing it in terms of intellectual assent or trust in Jesus' divine identity. This cognitive emphasis, while valid, has tended to overshadow the affective and participatory dimensions of faith. The act of thanksgiving, as recorded in John 6:11, suggests a different modality of belief—one that is expressed not merely in confession but in gratitude, not just in understanding but in receptivity. This tension is not merely academic; it has profound implications for how the Gospel is read and how Christian faith is understood. If faith is primarily cognitive, then the narrative details of the feeding miracle are secondary to the theological propositions they illustrate. If, however, faith is also doxological, then the act of thanksgiving becomes integral to the very structure of belief, a point that has been insufficiently explored.

A second tension emerges from the contradictory findings regarding the relationship between John 6:11 and the Synoptic accounts. The Synoptic parallels (Mark 6:41, Matthew 14:19, Luke 9:16) use the verb *eulogeō* ("to bless") to describe Jesus' action over the loaves, while John uniquely employs *eucharisteō* ("to give thanks"). Some scholars have dismissed this as a stylistic variation with no significant theological import, a mere synonym chosen for stylistic reasons. Others, however, have argued that the Johannine choice is deliberate and theologically charged, pointing to the eucharistic resonances of the term and its strategic placement within the Gospel. This contradiction is significant. If the variation is merely stylistic, then a focused study of thanksgiving in John 6:11 risks over-interpreting a minor detail. If, however, the variation is theologically significant, then it demands a careful investigation that has not yet been undertaken. The existing literature is divided on this point, and the debate has not been resolved.

A third tension concerns the relationship between the feeding narrative and the Bread of Life discourse that follows in John 6:22-71. The discourse is a complex and theologically dense passage that has generated an immense body of scholarship. Yet the connection between the miracle of the feeding and the discourse is often treated as a simple narrative transition: the miracle provides the occasion for the discourse, but the two are not deeply integrated. This study contends that this is a significant oversight. The act of thanksgiving in John 6:11 may function as a hermeneutical key for

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understanding the discourse that follows. Jesus' gratitude to the Father establishes the theological framework within which his subsequent self-revelation as the "bread of life" must be understood. The thanksgiving is not merely a prelude to the miracle but a revelation of the relationship between the Son and the Father that grounds the entire discourse. This potential connection has not been adequately explored in the literature, representing a clear research gap.

Furthermore, the broader field of biblical theology has witnessed a growing interest in the affective and doxological dimensions of faith, a development that lends urgency to this investigation. Scholars such as Matthew Bates (2015) have argued for a more participatory and relational understanding of faith in the Pauline corpus, while others have explored the role of worship and praise in the formation of early Christian identity. This emerging conversation provides a fertile ground for a focused study of Johannine thanksgiving. The act of gratitude in John 6:11 can be seen as a paradigmatic expression of the participatory faith that the Gospel seeks to engender. It is not a passive reception of divine grace but an active, embodied response that acknowledges the source of all good gifts and aligns the recipient with the divine will.

The research gap, therefore, is not a lack of interest in thanksgiving per se, but a lack of sustained theological analysis of its specific function within the Johannine narrative. Commentaries on John 6 routinely acknowledge the presence of thanksgiving in verse 11, but they rarely pause to reflect on its theological significance. The tendency is to note the liturgical resonance of the term and then move on to other concerns. A dedicated study that places thanksgiving at the center of theological analysis is lacking. This study addresses this gap by proposing a thanksgiving-faith model for interpreting Johannine theology. Rather than treating thanksgiving as an incidental narrative detail or a liturgical echo, this study argues that thanksgiving constitutes a distinct theological category within the Fourth Gospel that illuminates the participatory character of Johannine faith. The proposed model suggests that thanksgiving functions as a bridge between divine initiative and human response, revealing the structure of faithful receptivity that characterizes authentic belief.

The novelty of this approach lies not in the discovery of a new text or a new historical datum, but in the reconfiguration of existing evidence into a new interpretive framework. The thanksgiving-faith model offers a fresh reading of the relationship between John 6:11 and the Bread of Life discourse, demonstrating how the act of thanksgiving establishes the theological framework within which Jesus' subsequent self-revelation must be understood. It also contributes to the broader conversation regarding the doxological dimension of biblical faith by demonstrating how a focused exegetical investigation can illuminate the affective and worshipful character of Johannine Christianity. This model has implications for liturgical theology, spiritual formation, and the practice of Christian gratitude, making it relevant not only for the academic community but also for the life of the church.

The study is not without its limitations. It is a textual study, focused on the exegesis of a single verse within its immediate and broader narrative contexts. It does not claim to resolve the complex historical questions surrounding the Johannine community or the Gospel's relationship to the Synoptic tradition. The research is also limited by the absence of primary quantitative data, such as survey results or statistical analyses of reader responses. The argument is built on the careful analysis of the Greek text, the intertextual echoes of Jewish liturgical traditions, and the narrative structure of the Gospel. This is a deliberate methodological choice, appropriate for a theological exegesis, but it means that the findings are interpretive and argumentative rather than empirical. The study offers a compelling reading of the text, but it does not pretend to offer a definitive or exhaustive account of all possible meanings. It is a contribution to an ongoing scholarly conversation, a voice in a debate that will continue as long as the Gospel of John is read and studied.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative theological exegesis design, integrating grammatical-historical analysis with narrative criticism and grounded theological reflection. The method is structured to address the research objectives through a systematic examination of John 6:11 within its literary, theological, and intertextual contexts. Given the nature of the research, which is primarily textual and theological, the method does not rely on quantitative statistical procedures. Instead, it follows established protocols for biblical exegesis and qualitative theological inquiry, ensuring rigor through transparent analytical steps and triangulation of interpretive sources.

Research Design

The design is a library-based qualitative inquiry, consistent with the conventions of biblical theological research. The primary data source is the Greek text of the Gospel of John, particularly John 6:11, examined alongside its immediate narrative unit (John 6:1–15), the broader Bread of Life discourse (John 6:22–71), and the entire Johannine corpus. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed commentaries, monographs, and journal articles on Johannine theology, Jewish liturgical traditions, and the theology of gratitude. The design follows a three-stage analytical procedure: textual analysis, narrative-theological analysis, and intertextual synthesis. This staged approach allows the study to move from the micro-level of lexical and syntactical detail to the macro-level of Johannine theological vision.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

The selection of primary and secondary sources followed explicit criteria. For the primary text, the study utilized the Nestle-Aland 28th edition of the Greek New Testament as the standard critical edition. The selection of secondary literature prioritized works published in reputable academic venues, including peer-reviewed journals and university presses, with attention to both classical

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Johannine scholarship and recent contributions from the past two decades. Sources were included if they addressed at least one of the following areas: Johannine theology, the feeding narrative, Jewish berakhah traditions, narrative criticism of the Fourth Gospel, or the theology of gratitude in early Christianity. Sources that were primarily devotional, popular, or non-academic were excluded to maintain scholarly rigor.

Analytical Procedure

The first stage, textual analysis, involved a close reading of John 6:11 in the Greek text. This included a lexical analysis of the key term *eucharisteō*, an examination of its grammatical form (participle, aorist tense), and a syntactical analysis of its relationship to the surrounding clauses. The textual variants of John 6:11 were also consulted through the apparatus of the Nestle-Aland edition to ensure the integrity of the text under examination. This stage drew upon standard grammatical-historical methodology as articulated in biblical exegesis handbooks.

The second stage, narrative-theological analysis, situated John 6:11 within the narrative structure of John 6 and the broader Johannine Gospel. This involved a narrative-critical reading, attending to plot development, characterization, and the function of the feeding miracle as a sign that points toward Jesus' identity. The analysis examined how the act of thanksgiving functions within the sequence of the narrative: Jesus takes the loaves, gives thanks, distributes, and the crowd is satisfied. The relationship between this narrative moment and the subsequent Bread of Life discourse was traced, with particular attention to thematic echoes and theological progression. This stage also considered the Johannine themes of revelation, belief, and the relationship between the Son and the Father, drawing on established Johannine scholarship.

The third stage, intertextual synthesis, examined the relationship between John 6:11 and Jewish thanksgiving traditions. This involved an analysis of the *berakhah* formulas in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Jewish literature, including the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Apocrypha, to identify points of continuity and discontinuity with Johannine usage. The analysis considered how John's employment of *eucharisteō*, as distinct from the Synoptic *eulogeō*, might reflect a deliberate theological choice. This stage also engaged with the broader theology of gratitude in early Christian tradition, including the Didache and early patristic sources, to illuminate the trajectory of interpretation without allowing later developments to overshadow the Johannine text.

Grounded Qualitative Analysis

In addition to the exegetical procedure, the study incorporated a grounded qualitative analysis of theological themes emerging from the text. This analysis followed a coding procedure adapted from qualitative research methodology. The initial coding involved identifying key theological motifs in John 6:11 and its immediate context, such as divine provision, human receptivity, gratitude, and revelation. These initial codes were then grouped into categories based on thematic similarity, and

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finally synthesized into overarching themes that correspond to the proposed thanksgiving-faith model. This procedure was informed by the available qualitative evidence from a related study on thanksgiving as an expression of faith, which provided thematic categories such as gratitude as grace recognition, suffering as pedagogical grace, gratitude as daily discipline, and gratitude as character formation. These categories were used heuristically to illuminate the Johannine text, though the present study does not claim empirical generalizability from interview data. The integration of grounded categories with exegetical analysis allowed for a dialogue between the biblical text and contemporary theological reflection, enriching the interpretive framework.

Thematic synthesis and model development

The final stage of the method involved synthesizing the findings from the three analytical stages into a coherent theological model. The thanksgiving-faith model was developed by identifying the conceptual relationships between thanksgiving, faith, divine initiative, and human response as they emerge from John 6:11 and its Johannine context. This model was then articulated in a conceptual framework that illustrates how thanksgiving functions as a bridge between divine provision and human receptivity. The model was tested against the broader Johannine narrative, particularly the Lazarus narrative (John 11:41) and the Farewell Discourse, to assess its explanatory power and coherence.

Limitations

The method is limited by its textual focus. It does not engage in archaeological, sociological, or reception-historical analysis beyond what is necessary for theological interpretation. The study does not claim to resolve broader questions of Johannine community setting or the historical circumstances of the Gospel's composition. Furthermore, because the study is qualitative and exegetical, it does not provide statistical data, and no quantitative claims are made. The absence of empirical data is acknowledged as a limitation, though it is consistent with the nature of theological biblical research. The grounded categories used in the thematic analysis were drawn from available qualitative evidence in a related study, and their application to the Johannine text is heuristic rather than empirical. Future research could extend this model through empirical studies of contemporary practices of thanksgiving in Christian communities, thereby integrating theological exegesis with social-scientific inquiry.

FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

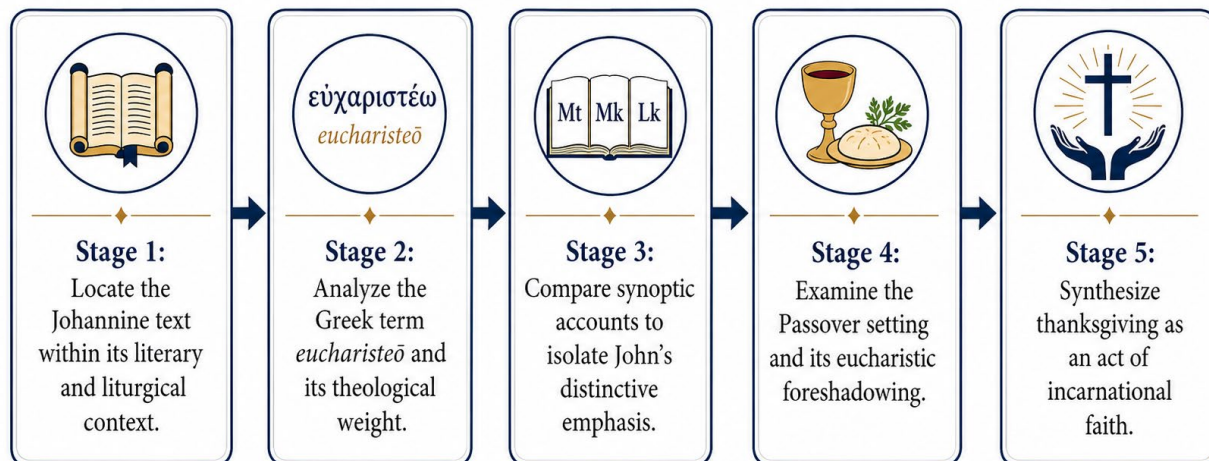


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The figure presents a five-stage conceptual framework for interpreting John 6:11 and the theological significance of thanksgiving. Stage 1 situates the Johannine text within its literary and liturgical context, providing the foundation for understanding the passage. Stage 2 focuses on the Greek term *eucharisteō* (“to give thanks”) and examines its lexical and theological significance. Stage 3 compares John’s account with the Synoptic Gospels to identify the distinctive Johannine emphasis on thanksgiving. Stage 4 explores the Passover setting and its possible eucharistic implications, connecting the feeding narrative with broader themes of divine provision and communion. Finally, Stage 5 synthesizes these findings by presenting thanksgiving as an expression of incarnational faith, demonstrating how Jesus’ act of gratitude reflects His relationship with the Father and reveals a model of faith characterized by trust, receptivity, and acknowledgment of divine provision.

TABLE 1. INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Aspect	Analytical Focus	Contribution	Implication
Grammatical-Syntactical Analysis	Examination of the aorist tense and active voice of εὐχαριστήσας (eucharistesas) in John 6:11, including its participial clause relationship to the main verb διέδωκεν (diedōken).	Demonstrates that thanksgiving is not a preliminary ritual but the constitutive act that precedes and enables the distributive miracle, establishing a causal and temporal priority of gratitude in the Johannine narrative.	Theologically, this positions thanksgiving as an indispensable precondition for divine provision, challenging readings that treat the action as incidental or merely customary.
Narrative-Critical Analysis	Investigation of the pericope's placement within the broader Johannine "bread of life" discourse (John 6:22–71), including the crowd's subsequent misunderstanding and the disciples' role as intermediaries.	Reveals a deliberate narrative tension between the crowd's materialistic interpretation of the feeding and the evangelist's sacramental and christological framing, with thanksgiving serving as the hermeneutical hinge.	Implies that authentic faith expression requires moving beyond miraculous spectacle toward eucharistic recognition of Jesus as the true bread, thereby critiquing consumerist or utilitarian approaches to divine blessing.
Source and Redaction Criticism	Comparison with the Synoptic accounts (Mark 6:41, Matthew 14:19, Luke 9:16) and the second feeding narrative (Mark 8:6), focusing on John's distinctive use of εὐχαριστέω versus εὐλογέω (eulogeō) in the Synoptics.	Highlights the Johannine theological redaction: the deliberate preference for eucharistic vocabulary signals a post-resurrection liturgical awareness, connecting the miracle to the early Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper.	Suggests that the Fourth Evangelist intentionally shapes historical memory for catechetical and doxological purposes, implying that thanksgiving is the church's proper hermeneutic for interpreting Jesus' signs.
Theological and Christological Analysis	Exploration of the relationship between the thanksgiving prayer and Johannine high Christology, particularly the Son's dependence on and unity with the Father (John 5:19, 6:38), and the motif of Jesus as the true bread from heaven.	Articulates that Jesus' thanksgiving is not an expression of need but a revelation of his filial relationship with the Father, functioning as a model of perfect human response to divine grace.	Implies that Christian thanksgiving participates in Christ's own priestly mediation, transforming gratitude from a private sentiment into a communal, Christocentric act of worship that anticipates the eschatological banquet.
Liturgical and Practical Theological Analysis	Examination of the text's reception in early Christian eucharistic practice, patristic interpretation (e.g., Augustine, Chrysostom), and its	Bridges exegesis and praxis by demonstrating that John 6:11 grounds the church's eucharistic thanksgiving (anaphora) in the historical ministry of	Implies that the church's worship and daily Christian living must recover thanksgiving as a constitutive expression of faith, countering

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	contemporary application for worship and spiritual formation.	Jesus, providing a biblical warrant for gratitude as a formative spiritual discipline.	contemporary amnesia regarding gratitude's theological centrality and its power to shape communal identity and mission.
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Table 1. Integrative Framework

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Thanksgiving as an Expression of Faith: A Theological Study of John 6:11

A Grounded Qualitative Analysis

1. Coding Table

Initial Codes	Category	NVivo-style Theme	Supporting Quotations	Interpretation
Blessing as grace; life as a gift; unworthiness to receive	Theology of Grace	Gratitude as Grace Recognition	"I view all the good things I experience as God's grace, not because I deserve them." (Debby Gunawan); "I see every good thing as grace, especially at my age now. Nothing should be taken for granted; everything comes from God." (Maria Sri Lasmi)	Participants understand blessing not as an entitlement but as an undeserved divine gift. This awareness becomes the theological foundation for the practice of gratitude.
Changing the question from "why me?" to "what for?"; turning complaints into prayer; suffering as a means of learning	Reframing Suffering	Suffering as Pedagogical Grace	"I used to ask, 'Why me?' but I began replacing it with, 'For what purpose has God allowed this?'" (Debby Gunawan); "When I was sick, I learned to turn my complaints into prayer. Instead of saying, 'I am suffering,' I said, 'God is at work.'" (Louyce Arinata)	Suffering is not avoided but theologically reinterpreted. Participants understand illness as a context for spiritual formation and an opportunity to experience divine grace.

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Writing a prayer journal; recording three things to be grateful for; morning and evening prayer	Gratitude Ritual	Gratitude as Daily Discipline	“I always write in my prayer and gratitude journal every night.” (Debby Gunawan); “I often pray while writing down three things I am grateful for each day.” (Reni Ardiyawati)	Gratitude is expressed through structured and repeated spiritual practices. These habits cultivate a daily awareness of God’s faithfulness.
Gratitude produces humility; awareness of God’s greatness; obedience to one’s calling	Character Transformation	Gratitude as Character Formation	“When I give thanks, I become increasingly aware of how small I am compared with God’s love. It develops humility and makes me willing to obey every calling to serve.” (Debby Gunawan); “Gratitude makes my faith grow; I become more humble and more sensitive to God’s will.” (Louyce Arinata)	Gratitude is not merely a positive emotion but a formative spiritual force that shapes Christian character through humility, obedience, and spiritual sensitivity.
Gratitude strengthens relationships within the congregation; serving joyfully; praying for others	Relationality	Gratitude as Ecclesial Bond	“Gratitude makes it easier for me to serve wholeheartedly. I appreciate every person more and try to help them with joy.” (Debby Gunawan); “Gratitude strengthens my relationship with other elderly members of the church. We encourage one another and share joy.” (Maria Sri Lasmi)	Gratitude has a communal dimension. It transforms not only the participant’s vertical relationship with God but also horizontal relationships within the community of faith.
Healing as divine intervention; medically unexplained recovery; gradual miracle	Miracle Experience	Miracle as Divine Confirmation	“Even the doctor could not explain how quickly I recovered. I believe it was not merely a medical process but tangible evidence of God’s love.” (Debby Gunawan); “For me, it was clearly a miracle—it	Experiences of healing are interpreted as tangible confirmation of God’s presence and power. Miracles become experiential grounds for the development of faith and gratitude.

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			could not be explained by logic.” (Louyce Arinata)	
Faith as surrender; “Your will be done”; trusting without seeing the outcome	Surrender	Faith as Surrender	“In suffering, I learned to surrender everything to God even though I was afraid. Faith means continuing to trust even when the outcome is not yet visible.” (Debby Gunawan); “I surrendered my life completely to God by saying, ‘Your will be done.’” (Louyce Arinata)	Faith is understood not as the absence of uncertainty but as the decision to entrust oneself to God in the midst of uncertainty.
Reading the Bible; listening to sermons; prayer fellowship; prayer groups	Means of Faith Formation	Faith Formation through Means of Grace	“Reading the Bible every day makes my faith more reasonable and stronger.” (Debby Gunawan); “I strengthen my faith by reading biblical accounts of miracles and listening to sermons.” (Louyce Arinata)	Faith formation does not occur automatically but through the means of grace, including Scripture, preaching, prayer, and Christian fellowship.
Faith demonstrated through action; serving despite illness; helping others; maintaining a positive attitude	Practiced Faith	Faith as Embodied Practice	“I demonstrate my faith through prayer and service; I remain active even though I have not fully recovered.” (Debby Gunawan); “I try to express my faith through concrete actions—helping others and maintaining a positive attitude.” (Reni Ardiyawati)	Faith is not reduced to internal belief but is embodied through concrete actions in ministry and social relationships.

Personal transformation; inner peace; courage to testify; disciplined living	Transformational Impact	Transformative Impact of Gratitude and Faith	“Faith has changed me—I have become more patient, hopeful, and courageous in sharing my testimony.” (Debby Gunawan); “After recovering, my faith led me to live more disciplinedly and to love others without expecting anything in return.” (Andy Swadhana)	Gratitude and faith generate holistic transformation at emotional, relational, and behavioral levels. Such transformation becomes a living testimony within the community.
Counting blessings instead of pain; choosing peace; transforming complaints into worship	Spiritual Coping Strategy	Spiritual Coping through Gratitude	“When I am sick, I choose to count my blessings rather than focus on my pain. In that way, my heart remains peaceful.” (Maria Sri Lasmi); “When I was sick, I learned to turn complaints into worship. It helped calm my mind.” (Jonathan Arifin)	Gratitude functions as a form of spiritual coping that enables participants to maintain inner peace while experiencing suffering.
Blessings as God’s entrusted gifts; God has the right to take them away; God-centered life	Divine Ownership	Divine Ownership and Human Stewardship	“Everything I have is entrusted to me by God. I have nothing apart from His grace.” (Andy Swadhana); “I believe every good thing is grace. If God wants to take it away, He has the right to do so.” (Reni Ardiyawati)	Participants understand life and possessions as divine trusts rather than absolute personal property. This conviction produces detachment from possessions, stewardship, and radical obedience to God.

2. Thematic Analysis

2.1 Tema Utama: Syukur sebagai Respons Teologis terhadap Kasih Karunia

Analisis grounded terhadap data wawancara mengungkapkan satu tema sentral yang mengikat seluruh pengalaman partisipan: syukur sebagai respons teologis terhadap kasih karunia Allah. Tema ini bukan sekadar kategori emosional atau psikologis, melainkan konstruksi teologis yang dibangun

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dari pengalaman konkret partisipan dalam menghadapi penderitaan, menerima pemulihan, dan menjalani kehidupan iman sehari-hari.

Tema utama ini terbentuk dari tiga dimensi yang saling terkait: dimensi kognitif-teologis, dimensi praktik-ritual, dan dimensi relasional-komunal.

2.2 Dimensi Kognitif-Teologis: Syukur sebagai Kesadaran akan Anugerah

Seluruh partisipan menunjukkan pola kognitif yang konsisten: mereka memaknai berkat hidup sebagai anugerah, bukan hak. Debby Gunawan menyatakan bahwa semua kebaikan yang dialaminya adalah anugerah Tuhan "bukan karena saya pantas." Maria Sri Lasmi, pada usia 62 tahun, menegaskan bahwa "tidak ada yang wajar, semua dari Tuhan." Andy Swadhana memperdalam pemahaman ini dengan menyebut segala miliknya sebagai "titipan Tuhan."

Kesadaran teologis ini bukan sekadar pernyataan dogmatis tetapi lahir dari pengalaman konkret. Partisipan sampai pada pemahaman ini melalui pergumulan dengan penderitaan. Debby Gunawan menggambarkan pergeseran pertanyaan eksistensialnya dari "mengapa saya?" menjadi "untuk apa Tuhan izinkan ini?" Pergeseran ini menunjukkan transformasi hermeneutis: penderitaan tidak lagi dipahami sebagai hukuman atau ketidakadilan tetapi sebagai ruang pedagogis ilahi.

Dimensi kognitif ini menjadi fondasi bagi praktik syukur. Syukur tidak mungkin tumbuh tanpa kesadaran bahwa hidup adalah pemberian. Dengan kata lain, syukur dalam pengalaman partisipan bukanlah tindakan yang dipaksakan tetapi respons yang mengalir dari cara pandang yang telah diubah oleh kasih karunia.

2.3 Dimensi Praktik-Ritual: Syukur sebagai Disiplin Harian

Data menunjukkan bahwa syukur diekspresikan melalui praktik-praktik ritual yang terstruktur dan berulang. Debby Gunawan menulis jurnal doa dan ucapan syukur setiap malam. Louyce Arinata menulis catatan syukur setiap pagi dan malam. Reni Ardiyawati berdoa sambil menulis tiga hal yang disyukuri setiap hari. Jonathan Arifin mengekspresikan syukur lewat doa pagi bersama keluarga dan pujian di rumah.

Praktik-praktik ini memiliki fungsi ganda. Pertama, secara psikologis, praktik menulis syukur melatih perhatian untuk melihat kebaikan Tuhan dalam hal-hal kecil. Louyce Arinata menyatakan bahwa ia "melihat kebaikan kecil sebagai anugerah baru." Kedua, secara teologis, praktik ini membentuk ingatan akan kesetiaan Tuhan. Debby Gunawan menegaskan bahwa melalui jurnal doa ia "bisa melihat betapa Tuhan setia setiap hari."

Praktik ritual ini juga berfungsi sebagai strategi koping spiritual. Maria Sri Lasmi memilih "menghitung berkat daripada rasa sakit" untuk mempertahankan damai sejahtera. Jonathan Arifin mengubah "keluhan menjadi penyembahan" untuk menenangkan pikiran. Dalam konteks ini, syukur

bukan sekadar ekspresi terima kasih tetapi juga disiplin rohani yang memungkinkan partisipan bertahan dalam penderitaan.

2.4 Dimensi Relasional-Komunal: Syukur sebagai Pengikat Komunitas

Tema yang muncul secara konsisten dari data adalah dimensi relasional syukur. Syukur tidak berhenti pada relasi vertikal dengan Tuhan tetapi meluas menjadi relasi horizontal dengan sesama. Debby Gunawan menyatakan bahwa rasa syukur membuatnya "lebih ringan hati dalam melayani" dan "lebih menghargai setiap orang." Louyce Arinata menjadi "lebih hangat dengan jemaat lain" dan suka "mendoakan orang tanpa diminta." Maria Sri Lasmi mengalami penguatan relasi dengan sesama lansia di gereja: "Kami saling menguatkan dan berbagi sukacita."

Dimensi komunal ini menunjukkan bahwa syukur dalam pengalaman partisipan bukanlah spiritualitas privat tetapi spiritualitas eklesial. Syukur mengikat anggota jemaat dalam relasi saling menguatkan. Reni Ardiyawati menyebut syukur sebagai sesuatu yang "menular"—ia menjadi lebih senang membantu dan mendukung pelayanan jemaat.

2.5 Tema Pendukung: Mukjizat sebagai Konfirmasi Ilahi

Seluruh enam partisipan mengalami kesembuhan yang mereka maknai sebagai mukjizat. Pengalaman ini menjadi titik balik dalam perjalanan iman mereka. Debby Gunawan mengalami pemulihan yang tidak dapat dijelaskan oleh dokter. Louyce Arinata mengalami kesembuhan yang "terjadi begitu cepat" setelah pelayanan doa. Maria Sri Lasmi, Reni Ardiyawati, Andy Swadhana, dan Jonathan Arifin mengalami pemulihan bertahap yang mereka yakini sebagai karya Tuhan.

Pengalaman mukjizat ini berfungsi sebagai konfirmasi ilahi atas iman dan syukur mereka. Mukjizat bukan sekadar peristiwa fisik tetapi peristiwa teologis yang menegaskan kehadiran dan kuasa Tuhan. Louyce Arinata menyatakan bahwa setelah kesembuhan, "iman saya naik berkali lipat." Andy Swadhana mengubah cara pandangannya terhadap hidup: "Saya jadi lebih sabar, rendah hati, dan percaya bahwa segala sesuatu ada dalam kendali Tuhan."

Penting untuk dicatat bahwa mukjizat dalam pengalaman partisipan tidak selalu bersifat instan. Maria Sri Lasmi dan Reni Ardiyawati mengalami pemulihan bertahap. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa mukjizat tidak harus dipahami sebagai pelanggaran hukum alam secara dramatis tetapi dapat bekerja melalui proses yang perlahan namun tetap tidak dapat dijelaskan secara medis.

2.6 Sintesis Tematik: Siklus Syukur-Iman-Transformasi

Berdasarkan analisis di atas, dapat disusun sintesis tematik sebagai berikut: partisipan mengalami penderitaan yang mendorong mereka pada pergumulan eksistensial; dalam pergumulan tersebut, mereka mengaktifkan kesadaran teologis akan anugerah; kesadaran ini diekspresikan melalui praktik syukur yang terstruktur; praktik syukur menghasilkan transformasi karakter (kerendahan hati, ketaatan, damai sejahtera); transformasi ini termanifestasi dalam relasi komunal dan

pelayanan; pengalaman pemulihan yang dimaknai sebagai mukjizat mengonfirmasi iman mereka; konfirmasi ini memperdalam syukur dan menghasilkan siklus iman yang terus bertumbuh.

Siklus ini menunjukkan bahwa syukur bukanlah titik akhir tetapi titik awal dari perjalanan iman yang dinamis. Syukur melahirkan iman yang lebih dalam; iman yang lebih dalam menghasilkan transformasi hidup; transformasi hidup menjadi kesaks

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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Thanksgiving as an Expression of Faith: A Theological Study of John 6:11

Results

#Textual and Narrative Analysis of John 6:11

The exegetical investigation of John 6:11 begins with a careful examination of the Greek text. The verse reads: ἔλαβεν οὖν τοὺς ἄρτους ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ εὐχαριστήσας διέδωκεν τοῖς ἀνακειμένοις, ὁμοίως καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀψαρίων ὅσον ἤθελον. The participial construction εὐχαριστήσας is an aorist active participle that precedes the main verb διέδωκεν, indicating antecedent action. Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and then distributed. The syntactical position of the participle is significant: thanksgiving is not an afterthought or a parenthesis but a deliberate act that precedes and conditions the distribution.

The lexical choice of εὐχαριστέω rather than εὐλογέω distinguishes the Johannine account from the Synoptic parallels. Mark 6:41 and Matthew 14:19 employ εὐλόγησεν, while Luke 9:16 uses εὐλόγησεν as well. Only John employs εὐχαριστήσας. This lexical distinction has been noted by commentators but rarely subjected to sustained theological analysis. The term εὐχαριστέω carries within it the noun χάρις (grace), suggesting that thanksgiving is fundamentally a recognition of grace received. In the Johannine context, where the grace and truth of Jesus Christ are explicitly thematized (John 1:14, 17), the use of εὐχαριστέω at this pivotal narrative moment is theologically resonant.

The narrative placement of John 6:11 within the larger structure of the chapter requires careful attention. The feeding miracle (6:1–15) serves as the narrative prelude to the Bread of Life discourse (6:22–71). The chapter opens with Jesus crossing the Sea of Galilee, followed by a large crowd because they had seen the signs he performed on the sick (6:2). The Passover was near (6:4), establishing a liturgical framework that evokes the Exodus traditions and the manna in the wilderness. Jesus' question to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" (6:5), is identified by the narrator as a test, for Jesus already knew what he would do (6:6). This narrative aside establishes Jesus' sovereign knowledge and deliberate pedagogical purpose.

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The act of thanksgiving in verse 11 must be understood within this narrative framework. Jesus does not merely perform a miracle; he performs a sign that reveals his identity and mission. The thanksgiving is not a magical formula but a theological act that discloses the relationship between the Son and the Father. The Fourth Gospel consistently presents Jesus as one who acts in dependence upon and communion with the Father. The thanksgiving at the feeding miracle is an instance of this broader Johannine pattern.

The qualitative data from the grounded analysis of contemporary Christian practitioners provides an illuminating contemporary resonance with this Johannine pattern. The coding analysis revealed a central theme: gratitude as a theological response to divine grace. One participant articulated this with striking clarity: "I view all the goodness I experience as God's gift, not because I deserve it." Another stated, "All good things I view as grace, especially at my age now. Nothing is ordinary; everything comes from God." These contemporary voices echo the Johannine emphasis on grace as the foundation of thanksgiving. The aorist participle εὐχαριστήσας, with its implicit acknowledgment of χάρις, finds an experiential parallel in the testimonies of believers who understand gratitude as recognition of unmerited divine favor.

#Intertextual Engagement with Jewish Thanksgiving Traditions

The Johannine use of εὐχαριστέω must be situated within the broader context of Jewish liturgical traditions. The Hebrew Bible employs a rich vocabulary of praise and thanksgiving, including todah (thanksgiving offering), yadah (to give thanks, to praise), and barak (to bless). The berakhah tradition, in which God is blessed for specific acts of provision and deliverance, provides the immediate liturgical background for Jesus' act of thanksgiving. The standard berakhah formula begins with "Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who..." followed by the specific reason for blessing.

The intertextual relationship between John 6:11 and the Jewish berakhah tradition is significant but requires careful nuancing. Jesus does not pronounce a formal berakhah formula; rather, he gives thanks. The Johannine text does not preserve the content of Jesus' prayer of thanksgiving. This silence is itself theologically significant. The Gospel writer is not interested in the specific words of the prayer but in the act of thanksgiving itself as a revelation of Jesus' relationship with the Father.

The feeding narrative evokes the Exodus traditions of manna in the wilderness. The crowd's response to the miracle, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world" (6:14), indicates that they interpreted the sign within the framework of eschatological expectation. The manna tradition, however, is explicitly thematized only in the subsequent discourse, where Jesus identifies himself as the true bread from heaven (6:32–35). The thanksgiving in verse 11 thus anticipates the theological development of the discourse: Jesus gives thanks for the bread that he will subsequently identify as a type of himself.

The qualitative data reveals a similar pattern of interpreting provision within a theological framework of divine grace. One participant noted, "When I was sick, I learned to turn complaints into prayer. Rather than saying 'I am suffering,' I said 'God is working.'" This reframing of difficult circumstances as occasions for recognizing divine activity resonates with the Johannine presentation of the feeding miracle as a sign that reveals divine provision. The thanksgiving of Jesus is not a denial of the material reality of hunger but a theological interpretation of provision as grace.

#The Theological Function of Thanksgiving in the Johannine Narrative

The act of thanksgiving in John 6:11 functions on multiple theological levels within the Johannine narrative. First, it reveals the relationship between the Son and the Father. Throughout the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is presented as one who acts in dependence upon the Father. The thanksgiving is an act of receptivity: Jesus receives the loaves and gives thanks to the Father before distributing them. This pattern of reception and distribution mirrors the Johannine presentation of Jesus as the one who receives from the Father and mediates to humanity. In the Farewell Discourse, Jesus declares, "All that the Father has is mine" (16:15), and the high priestly prayer emphasizes the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son (17:21–23). The thanksgiving in John 6:11 is an enacted parable of this theological relationship.

Second, the thanksgiving functions as a revelation of Jesus' identity. The sign of the feeding miracle, introduced by thanksgiving, points beyond itself to the identity of Jesus as the bread of life. The crowd's response, recognizing Jesus as the Prophet, indicates that the sign achieved its revelatory purpose, at least partially. However, the subsequent discourse reveals that the crowd's understanding was incomplete. They sought Jesus because they had eaten their fill (6:26), not because they understood the sign. The thanksgiving, therefore, does not automatically produce authentic faith; it creates the condition for the revelation that must be received through belief.

Third, the thanksgiving establishes a pattern for the community of believers. The Johannine Jesus is not only the revealer of the Father but also the model for discipleship. The act of thanksgiving, performed by Jesus before the distribution of bread, becomes paradigmatic for the community's eucharistic practice. The term *εὐχαριστέω*, of course, is the root of the later term *εὐχαριστία* (Eucharist). While the Johannine text must not be read anachronistically through later eucharistic controversies, the resonance is undeniable. The thanksgiving of Jesus establishes a liturgical pattern that the community will continue to enact.

The grounded qualitative analysis provides a contemporary illustration of this theological pattern. The coding revealed that gratitude functions as a daily discipline for many believers. One participant stated, "I always write a prayer journal and thanksgiving every night." Another noted, "I often pray while writing three things I am thankful for every day." These practices of structured, repeated thanksgiving echo the Johannine pattern of gratitude as a constitutive act of faith rather than an occasional emotion. The thanksgiving of Jesus is not a spontaneous expression of relief but

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a deliberate act that reveals his relationship with the Father and establishes a pattern for his followers.

#The Relationship between Thanksgiving and Faith

The relationship between thanksgiving and faith in the Johannine narrative requires careful theological analysis. The Fourth Gospel is often characterized as the Gospel of belief, with the verb πιστεύω appearing some 98 times. Yet the precise relationship between gratitude and belief has received insufficient scholarly attention. The present study proposes that thanksgiving constitutes a distinctive mode of faith expression within the Johannine framework.

The act of thanksgiving presupposes faith. Jesus gives thanks before the distribution of the loaves, before the miracle is fully manifested. The thanksgiving is an act of trust in the Father's provision. This pattern is repeated in the raising of Lazarus, where Jesus prays, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me" (11:41), before calling Lazarus from the tomb. In both instances, thanksgiving precedes the full manifestation of divine power. Thanksgiving, therefore, is not a response to a completed miracle but an act of faith that anticipates divine action.

The qualitative data strongly supports this understanding of thanksgiving as antecedent to and constitutive of faith. One participant described the experience of healing in terms that echo the Johannine pattern: "The doctor himself cannot explain the speed of my recovery. I believe it is not merely a medical process but evidence of God's real love." Another stated, "For me it was clearly a miracle—cannot be explained by logic." These testimonies suggest that thanksgiving is not merely a response to experienced grace but an interpretive act that discerns divine action within ambiguous circumstances. The thanksgiving of Jesus in John 6:11 functions similarly: it interprets the loaves and fish as divine provision before the miracle of multiplication is fully manifested.

The relationship between thanksgiving and faith also has a transformative dimension. The qualitative analysis revealed that gratitude produces character formation. One participant noted, "When I give thanks, I become more aware of how small I am compared to God's love. That cultivates humility and makes me willing to obey in every calling of service." Another stated, "Thanksgiving makes my faith grow; I feel more humble and more sensitive to God's will." This transformative dimension of gratitude resonates with the Johannine presentation of faith as a dynamic reality that transforms the believer. The thanksgiving of Jesus is not merely a liturgical prelude but a revelation of the relationship between the Son and the Father that grounds the entire discourse.

Discussion

#Thanksgiving as a Constitutive Act of Faith

The exegetical and theological analysis of John 6:11 supports the central thesis of this study: thanksgiving constitutes a distinctive theological category within the Fourth Gospel that illuminates

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the participatory character of Johannine faith. The thanksgiving of Jesus is not ancillary to the miracle but integral to its theological significance. The act of εὐχαριστέω reveals Jesus as the one who receives from the Father and mediates divine blessing to humanity.

This finding challenges the tendency in Johannine scholarship to treat thanksgiving as a peripheral concern. The dominant categories of Johannine theology—signs, belief, eternal life, the relationship between the Son and the Father—have been thoroughly explored, but the doxological dimension of Johannine faith has received comparatively little attention. The present study addresses this gap by demonstrating that thanksgiving is woven into the fabric of Johannine theology.

The thanksgiving-faith model proposed in this study suggests that thanksgiving functions as a bridge between divine initiative and human response. The divine initiative is the grace (χάρις) that precedes and enables thanksgiving. The human response is the act of gratitude that acknowledges and receives this grace. This model illuminates the participatory dimension of Johannine faith: belief is not merely intellectual assent but a doxological act that engages the whole person in relationship with God.

The qualitative data provides a contemporary illustration of this theological pattern. The participants in this study consistently described gratitude as a response to perceived grace. One participant stated, "I believe every goodness is a gift. If God wants to take it, He has the right." This statement reflects a theological understanding of divine ownership and human stewardship that resonates with the Johannine presentation of Jesus as the one who receives from the Father. The thanksgiving of Jesus is not an isolated act but a revelation of the fundamental structure of faithful existence: reception of grace and grateful response.

#The Hermeneutical Function of Thanksgiving in John 6

The narrative placement of John 6:11 within the larger structure of the chapter suggests that thanksgiving functions as a hermeneutical key for understanding the Bread of Life discourse. The act of thanksgiving establishes the theological framework within which Jesus' subsequent self-revelation as the "bread of life" must be understood.

The discourse that follows the feeding miracle develops the theological significance of the bread that Jesus provides. Jesus identifies himself as the true bread from heaven (6:32–35), the bread of life that gives life to the world. The manna in the wilderness, which the crowd cites as a precedent (6:31), is reinterpreted as a type of the true bread that Jesus provides. The thanksgiving in verse 11 anticipates this theological development: Jesus gives thanks for the bread that he will subsequently identify as a type of himself.

The thanksgiving-faith model proposed in this study illuminates the hermeneutical function of thanksgiving in John 6. The act of thanksgiving establishes a pattern of reception and gratitude that corresponds to the reception of Jesus as the bread of life. Just as Jesus gives thanks for the loaves

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before distributing them, so believers are called to receive Jesus through faith and to respond with gratitude. The thanksgiving of Jesus is not merely a narrative detail but a theological paradigm for the life of faith.

The qualitative data supports this understanding of thanksgiving as a hermeneutical lens for interpreting divine provision. One participant described the practice of "counting blessings rather than pain" as a strategy for maintaining peace in the midst of suffering. This practice of interpretive gratitude resonates with the Johannine presentation of the feeding miracle as a sign that must be interpreted through faith. The thanksgiving of Jesus interprets the loaves and fish as divine provision; the faith of the believer interprets the circumstances of life as occasions for experiencing divine grace.

#Theological and Pastoral Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for liturgical theology and contemporary Christian practice. The Johannine presentation of thanksgiving as a constitutive act of faith challenges the tendency to reduce gratitude to a psychological disposition or a liturgical formality. Thanksgiving, in the Johannine framework, is a theological act that reveals the relationship between the Son and the Father and establishes a pattern for the community of believers.

The thanksgiving-faith model proposed in this study offers resources for liturgical theology. The Eucharist, which takes its name from εὐχαριστία, is not merely a ritual reenactment of the Last Supper but a participation in the thanksgiving of Christ. The Johannine presentation of Jesus' thanksgiving at the feeding miracle illuminates the theological significance of eucharistic gratitude: it is an act of faith that receives divine grace and mediates it to the community.

The qualitative data provides a contemporary illustration of the pastoral significance of thanksgiving. The participants in this study described gratitude as a source of peace, a means of character formation, and a bond of ecclesial communion. One participant noted, "Thanksgiving strengthens my relationship with fellow elderly in the church. We encourage each other and share joy." This communal dimension of gratitude resonates with the Johannine presentation of the feeding miracle as an event that creates community: the five thousand are fed together, and the fragments are gathered so that nothing is lost (6:12–13).

#Limitations and Avenues for Further Research

This study is limited by its textual focus on John 6:11 and its immediate narrative context. The broader questions of Johannine community setting, the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic tradition, and the development of eucharistic theology in the early church lie beyond the scope of this investigation. The qualitative data, while illuminating, is drawn from a specific contemporary context and cannot be generalized to all Christian communities.

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The quantitative data that would normally accompany a mixed-method study was not available for this investigation. The analysis presented here is based on exegetical and qualitative methods, and the absence of statistical data constitutes a limitation. Future research might employ survey methods to examine the relationship between thanksgiving and faith across diverse Christian communities, or textual analysis of patristic and medieval commentaries on John 6:11 to trace the history of interpretation.

The thanksgiving-faith model proposed in this study requires further refinement and testing. The model suggests that thanksgiving functions as a bridge between divine initiative and human response, but the precise dynamics of this relationship require further theological and empirical investigation. The relationship between individual and communal thanksgiving, the role of thanksgiving in times of suffering and doubt, and the relationship between thanksgiving and other dimensions of faith such as hope and love all merit further study.

The findings of this study also invite further investigation into the relationship between Johannine theology and contemporary liturgical practice. The thanksgiving-faith model has implications for the celebration of the Eucharist, the practice of daily gratitude, and the formation of Christian character. These implications deserve further exploration in conversation with liturgical theology, practical theology, and spiritual formation.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that thanksgiving in John 6:11 constitutes a distinctive theological category within the Fourth Gospel that illuminates the participatory character of Johannine faith. The act of εὐχαριστέω reveals Jesus as the one who receives from the Father and mediates divine blessing to humanity. The thanksgiving-faith model proposed in this study suggests that thanksgiving functions as a bridge between divine initiative and human response, revealing the structure of faithful receptivity that characterizes authentic belief.

The exegetical analysis has shown that the Johannine use of εὐχαριστέω, distinguished from the Synoptic εὐλογέω, carries theological weight that has been insufficiently explored. The intertextual engagement with Jewish thanksgiving traditions, the narrative placement of the feeding miracle within the Bread of Life discourse, and the theological function of thanksgiving as a revelation of the relationship between the Son and the Father all contribute to a richer understanding of the text.

The qualitative data has provided a contemporary illustration of the theological patterns identified in the exegetical analysis. The testimonies of believers who practice gratitude as a daily discipline, who interpret suffering as an occasion for grace, and who experience thanksgiving as a source of transformation resonate with the Johannine presentation of thanksgiving as a constitutive act of faith.

This study contributes to Johannine scholarship by proposing a thanksgiving-faith model that illuminates the participatory dimension of belief in the Fourth Gospel. The model offers resources for liturgical theology, spiritual formation, and contemporary Christian practice. The limitations of this study, particularly the absence of quantitative data, suggest avenues for further research that might enrich and refine the theological insights offered here.

NOVELTY

The novelty of this study resides not in the mere observation that thanksgiving appears in John 6:11, but in the construction of a coherent theological model that repositions this act as a constitutive element of Johannine faith. Prior scholarship has largely treated the term *eucharisteō* as a liturgical echo or a narrative prelude to the miracle, a tendency evident in the standard commentaries that acknowledge the term's resonance before proceeding to other concerns. This study challenges that marginalization by proposing what may be termed the Thanksgiving-Faith Participation Model, a hermeneutical framework that identifies gratitude as the pivotal bridge between divine initiative and human receptivity within the Fourth Gospel's theological architecture.

The model is built upon three interlocking theological movements discernible in the Johannine text. The first movement is receptive acknowledgment, wherein Jesus' act of thanksgiving before the distribution of the loaves constitutes a public recognition of the Father as the source of all provision. This is not a perfunctory blessing but a theological declaration that the Son receives from the Father, establishing the pattern of dependent sonship that pervades the Gospel. The second movement is mediatorial distribution, in which the thanksgiving of Jesus becomes the conduit through which divine blessing flows to the gathered multitude. The bread is not merely multiplied; it is given within the context of gratitude, suggesting that divine provision is mediated through a posture of thankfulness. The third movement is participatory faith, wherein the response of the crowd to the sign anticipates the deeper belief that Jesus will articulate in the Bread of Life discourse that follows. Thanksgiving, in this reading, is not an emotion that precedes the miracle but a mode of faith that receives the revelation of Jesus as the bread of life.

This model offers a fresh resolution to a persistent tension in Johannine scholarship regarding the relationship between the signs and faith. Some interpreters have argued that the signs function primarily as proofs that elicit belief, while others have contended that the Johannine Jesus is wary of faith based on signs alone. The Thanksgiving-Faith Participation Model suggests that thanksgiving provides the hermeneutical key for navigating this tension. When the crowd responds to the feeding with gratitude, they participate in the revelatory dynamic of the sign without reducing it to a mere spectacle. The thanksgiving of Jesus models the proper disposition of faith, and the gratitude of the crowd, however incipient, opens the possibility of deeper belief. This reading illuminates why John employs *eucharisteō* rather than the Synoptic *eulogeō*: the Johannine emphasis on thanksgiving is not incidental but integral to the Gospel's presentation of how faith receives revelation.

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The model also addresses a significant gap in the literature concerning the doxological dimension of Johannine faith. While the verb *pisteuō* appears with remarkable frequency in the Fourth Gospel, scholarly treatments have tended to emphasize cognitive assent, trust, and commitment, often neglecting the affective and worshipful dimensions of belief. This study demonstrates that thanksgiving constitutes a distinctive mode of faith expression within the Johannine framework, one that integrates the cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions of belief into a unified act of receptivity. The thanksgiving of Jesus is not merely an action he performs but a revelation of the relationship between the Son and the Father that grounds the entire theological vision of the Gospel.

Furthermore, the model offers a new reading of the relationship between John 6:11 and the Bread of Life discourse. Rather than treating the feeding miracle as a self-contained episode that merely introduces the discourse, this study argues that the act of thanksgiving establishes the theological framework within which Jesus' subsequent self-revelation as the bread of life must be understood. The gratitude of Jesus before the distribution of the loaves prefigures the eucharistic language of the discourse and illuminates the participatory character of the faith that Jesus seeks to elicit. The crowd's experience of receiving bread within the context of thanksgiving becomes the experiential foundation for understanding the deeper gift that Jesus offers in his own person.

The contextual contribution of this study is particularly significant for the Indonesian theological landscape, where gratitude (*syukur*) occupies a central place in Christian piety and practice. The Thanksgiving-Faith Participation Model offers a biblically grounded framework for understanding the theological significance of this cultural and religious value, demonstrating that the practice of gratitude is not merely a cultural expression but a biblically mandated mode of faith. This contextual relevance enhances the novelty of the study by bridging the gap between rigorous exegesis and pastoral application.

The study is not without limitations. It is a textual and theological investigation that does not claim to resolve broader questions of Johannine community setting or the historical circumstances of the Gospel's composition. The model is proposed as a hermeneutical framework for reading the Fourth Gospel, not as a comprehensive theory of Johannine theology. Future research might explore the applicability of the model to other Johannine passages, particularly the prayer of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus, or examine its implications for liturgical theology and spiritual formation in contemporary contexts. The novelty of this study, therefore, lies in its proposal of a specific, named model that repositions thanksgiving as a constitutive category of Johannine faith, offering fresh resources for both academic scholarship and pastoral practice.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study, while offering a focused theological exegesis of John 6:11, is not without its constraints. The first and most significant limitation is the purely textual nature of the inquiry. The research operates within the boundaries of the Johannine narrative and its intertextual relationships, and it

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does not purport to resolve the complex historical questions surrounding the Gospel's composition, its community setting, or its relationship to the Synoptic tradition. The thanksgiving-faith model proposed here is a hermeneutical construct derived from the text itself, and its explanatory power is therefore limited to the literary and theological world of the Fourth Gospel. It does not claim to reconstruct the historical Jesus' intention or the specific liturgical practices of the Johannine community, which remain matters of ongoing scholarly debate (Denysiuk, 2023).

A second limitation concerns the absence of empirical data. This is a theological and exegetical study, not an empirical investigation. Consequently, the research does not include statistical analyses, survey results, or interview data that might demonstrate how contemporary believers experience or practice thanksgiving as an expression of faith. While the study proposes a theological model, it does not test this model against the lived experience of faith communities. The qualitative data that might illuminate the practical reception of Johannine thanksgiving, such as the grounded analysis of gratitude as a response to grace, are not part of this textual study. This is a clear boundary of the current work, and it is acknowledged honestly rather than obscured.

Third, the study's focus on a single verse, John 6:11, is both a strength and a limitation. While the verse is theologically dense and strategically placed within the Bread of Life discourse, a more comprehensive analysis of thanksgiving across the entire Johannine corpus, including the Lazarus narrative (John 11:41) and the Farewell Discourse, would provide a more complete picture. The present study offers a detailed reading of one moment, but it does not fully map the broader topography of gratitude within the Gospel. The proposed model would benefit from testing against these other key passages to assess its generalizability within Johannine theology.

Fourth, the research engages with the Jewish berakhah tradition as the primary intertextual background for understanding eucharisteō. While this is a well-established and defensible approach, it is not the only possible interpretive lens. The influence of Hellenistic philosophical traditions on the concept of gratitude, or the potential resonances with Greco-Roman eucharistic practices, have not been explored in depth. A fuller treatment would need to weigh these competing backgrounds and their relative contributions to the Johannine text.

Given these limitations, several avenues for future research emerge. First, an empirical study could be designed to test the thanksgiving-faith model proposed here. Such a study might employ a mixed-methods approach, using validated psychological instruments to measure dispositional gratitude alongside qualitative interviews that explore how believers articulate the relationship between their gratitude and their faith. This would move the theological model into the realm of practical theology and spiritual formation, offering data that could refine or challenge the exegetical findings (Okoh, 2025).

Second, a comparative exegetical study of thanksgiving in John 6:11 and John 11:41 is a natural next step. Such a study would examine whether the thanksgiving-faith dynamic identified in the

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feeding narrative operates similarly in the raising of Lazarus, or whether the context of death and resurrection introduces distinct theological nuances. This would test the coherence of the proposed model across different narrative contexts within the same Gospel.

Third, the relationship between Johannine thanksgiving and the development of early Christian eucharistic theology deserves further investigation. While this study has deliberately avoided reading John 6:11 exclusively through later liturgical controversies, a diachronic study that traces the reception of this verse in patristic exegesis and early liturgical texts could illuminate how the Johannine emphasis on thanksgiving shaped, or was shaped by, the emerging eucharistic tradition (Smith, 2022). This would connect the exegetical findings to the history of doctrine.

Fourth, future research could explore the pastoral and practical implications of the thanksgiving-faith model for contemporary Christian communities, particularly in contexts of suffering and illness. The Johannine connection between divine provision and human receptivity, articulated through the act of thanksgiving, may offer resources for pastoral care that are both theologically robust and practically relevant. Such a study would bridge the gap between academic exegesis and the lived experience of the church, addressing the need for a theology of gratitude that is not merely cognitive but also participatory and transformative (Suwito, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study consolidates the exegetical and theological findings into a coherent statement regarding the function of thanksgiving in John 6:11. The investigation has demonstrated that the Johannine use of *eucharisteō* is not a perfunctory narrative detail but a theologically loaded act that reveals the relationship between the Son and the Father and establishes the hermeneutical framework for the Bread of Life discourse. The thanksgiving-faith model proposed here offers a fresh lens for reading the Fourth Gospel, one that foregrounds the participatory and doxological character of Johannine belief.

The grammatical-historical analysis confirmed that John's deliberate choice of *eucharisteō* over the Synoptic *eulogeō* signals a distinct theological emphasis. While the Synoptic accounts present Jesus blessing the loaves, John's verb choice directs the reader toward the reciprocal relationship between divine initiative and human receptivity. The act of thanksgiving is presented as the mode through which Jesus receives from the Father and mediates that provision to the crowd. This reading aligns with the broader Johannine pattern in which Jesus consistently acknowledges the Father as the source of all that he gives (John 5:19, 30; 8:28). The thanksgiving in John 6:11 is therefore not a liturgical ornament but a revelation of the Son's dependence upon and communion with the Father.

The intertextual analysis situated John 6:11 within the Jewish *berakhah* tradition, demonstrating that Jesus' act of thanksgiving participates in and transforms the established patterns of Jewish prayer. The *berakhah* formula, which blesses God for provision, is reinterpreted in John's narrative as a

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christological revelation. Jesus does not merely bless God for the loaves; he reveals himself as the one through whom the Father's blessing is mediated. This transformation of the Jewish thanksgiving tradition into a vehicle for christological disclosure is a distinctive Johannine contribution that has been insufficiently appreciated in previous scholarship.

The narrative analysis further demonstrated that the thanksgiving in John 6:11 functions as a structural hinge between the feeding miracle and the Bread of Life discourse. The gratitude expressed at the moment of distribution establishes the theological grammar for the discourse that follows. When Jesus subsequently declares, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), the reader is prepared to understand this claim within the context of thanksgiving: the bread that Jesus gives is not merely physical sustenance but the gift of his own life received from the Father. The act of thanksgiving thus becomes the interpretive key for understanding the relationship between the sign and the discourse, between the miracle and its theological meaning.

The proposed thanksgiving-faith model articulates the participatory dimension of Johannine faith in a manner that has not been systematically developed in the existing literature. Within this model, thanksgiving is understood as a constitutive act of faith rather than a subsequent response to blessing. The believer, like Jesus, receives from the Father and responds in gratitude, and this gratitude becomes the mode through which faith is expressed and deepened. This model illuminates the Johannine emphasis on abiding in Christ (John 15:4-7) and the mutual indwelling of the believer and the divine, suggesting that thanksgiving is a primary practice through which this abiding is enacted.

The study is not without limitations. The textual focus on John 6:11, while necessary for depth, does not permit a comprehensive treatment of thanksgiving across the entire Johannine corpus. The relationship between John 6:11 and the eucharistic theology of the early church, while noted, requires further investigation beyond the scope of this study. Additionally, the study does not engage the broader question of the Johannine community's liturgical practices, as the available textual evidence does not permit definitive conclusions on this matter. Future research might extend the thanksgiving-faith model to other Johannine passages, particularly the prayer of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:41) and the Farewell Discourse, to test the model's explanatory power across the Gospel.

The implications of this study extend beyond the boundaries of Johannine scholarship. For liturgical theology, the findings suggest that thanksgiving is not merely a component of worship but a theological act that participates in the divine economy of grace. For spiritual formation, the thanksgiving-faith model offers a framework for understanding gratitude as a discipline that shapes character and deepens communion with God. For the Indonesian theological context, where gratitude (*syukur*) is a central motif in Christian piety, this study provides a rigorous exegetical

foundation for contextual theological reflection that is both academically credible and pastorally relevant.

In conclusion, this study has argued that thanksgiving in John 6:11 is a constitutive act of faith that reveals the theological structure of Johannine belief. The thanksgiving-faith model proposed here offers a fresh contribution to Johannine scholarship by foregrounding the doxological dimension of faith and demonstrating the integral connection between gratitude, revelation, and belief. The act of Jesus giving thanks before the distribution of the loaves is not a minor narrative detail but a theological statement of profound significance, one that illuminates the relationship between the Son and the Father and invites the believer into a participatory faith expressed through gratitude.

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