

THE POWER OF GRATITUDE: A 5-DAY JOURNEY



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If you spend any amount of time around parents and their small children, it won't be long before you hear the parent nudge their child and ask, "Now what do you say?" The child, probably having been prompted many times before, will say, "Thank you." For parents, teaching their children gratitude is a valuable lesson. Something parents hope their children will continue throughout their lifetime.

But practicing gratitude becomes a bit harder as we get older. Many of us begin to focus on what is bad not what is good. We see things that need to be fixed, things that shouldn't be happening, and often things we lack.

In order to foster a grateful heart, we must notice the good and celebrate it. There is something good in every day. Whether big or small, it's important to thank God for what he does for us.

For the next five days, we invite you to explore how powerful it is to give God thanks. Allow gratitude to transform your life as you train your heart to see God's goodness in every situation. Each day you'll discover a benefit of practicing gratitude. Hopefully by the end of this journey through God's Word, your heart will rise every morning to declare Psalm 9:1 (GNT), "I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all the wonderful things you have done."

DAY 1: GRATITUDE DRAWS US CLOSER TO GOD

Thankfulness is a powerful means of drawing near to God. It makes us take notice of how God is present in our lives. When we pause to acknowledge what God has done and what he has given us we become more aware that God is gracious, loving, and kind and is fully deserving of our appreciation.

The story of the ten lepers in Luke's Gospel illustrates how gratitude can draw us closer to God. Jesus of Nazareth, while traveling along the border of Samaria and Galilee, sees ten men suffering from leprosy. They begin to call out to him to heal them of the horrible disease. Jesus heals them but only one shows gratitude.

"When one of them saw that he was healed, he came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself to the ground at Jesus's feet and thanked him. The man was a Samaritan. Jesus spoke up, 'There were ten who were healed; where are the other nine?'" (Luke 17:15–17).

Jesus's question reflects disappointment that only one leper had come back to thank God. The Samaritan leper had taken the time to express his gratitude and found himself at the feet of Jesus who told him, "your faith has made you well"



(verse 19). Since all the men had been healed, this pronouncement suggests that not only was this Samaritan healed of leprosy, but he was also made well in a way the other nine had not experienced.

Like the leper, when our hearts are filled with gratitude to God for all that he's done and continues to do for us, we are drawn into his presence.

Reflection questions

Reflect on Psalm 100:1-4. What do these verses say about how we should approach God?

How does practicing gratitude bring you closer to God?

What is something for which you can give God thanks, today?

Prayer

God, thank you that every day I have an opportunity to draw closer to you through gratitude. I pray that as I take time to thank you for your goodness towards me, I'll grow in my appreciation and affection towards you.

DAY 2: GRATITUDE IS GOD'S WILL FOR US

God's will for us is to be thankful, not just on the good days but on the hard ones as well. It's easy to practice gratitude when things are going well. But when times are hard, we may struggle to find something to be thankful for. Stress, grief, disappointment, and heartache often prevent us from seeing God's goodness in difficult situations. But Scripture challenges us to do just that. In the apostle Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians he writes, "be thankful in all circumstances" (5:18).

But how can we grow a heart of gratitude in all circumstances? We must choose to believe that God is good even when life's circumstances aren't. Believe that despite our suffering God is still with us. Jesus sees us and he cares for us. He walks with us in the valleys. We are not alone. Thinking of Jesus's nearness can help generate feelings of gratitude.

If you're going through a tough situation today, take time to answer these questions to help you practice gratitude despite your circumstances.

Reflection questions

What difficult situation are you currently facing? Tell God all about it. He wants to listen to you.

How have you experienced God's nearness in this difficult time?



Is there anything for which you can be grateful in this circumstance?

Prayer

God, thank you for being with me amid my pain and suffering. Help me see all the ways that you have been with me and never left me. God, I pray for a heart of gratitude in all circumstances.

DAY 3: GRATITUDE LEADS TO JOY

Often times, we associate happiness with what's happening in our lives. We think, I'll be happy when I have sufficient income, my health is great, or my work is less stressful. But true joy doesn't come from having an ideal life. Joy comes from knowing Jesus Christ. He is the source of our joy. And the interesting thing about joy is that it's connected to gratitude!

Gratitude is the door of entry to joy! In Psalm 100:4 (GNT) we are encouraged to, "Enter the Temple gates with thanksgiving; go into its courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise him." Today, if you need joy in your life, start thanking God. He invites us to approach him with a thankful heart, to give him thanks for all that he has done in our lives. And in exchange he gives us his joy. Joy that makes us strong in every circumstance.

That's the power of gratitude! It leads to joy. Studies have found that gratitude is associated with better health, more optimism, improved self-esteem, and greater happiness. There's something about giving thanks that allows negative emotions to be replaced with positive ones.

Reflection questions:

What words describe your moods these days? Write down how you're feeling and why.

What is one thing you can thank God for today?

How do you feel after expressing gratitude? What positive emotions are you experiencing?

Prayer

God, lately I have been feeling anxiety, anger, and restlessness. Today I choose to let go of my stress and embrace your joy as I thank you for all the ways you have rescued me. Thank you for pouring out your joy in my life.

DAY 4: GRATITUDE STRENGTHENS OUR FAITH

Gratitude should spring from your heart when you look back on the many things God has done in your life and recall how kind he has been to you, even through trials, challenges, and disappointments.

Scripture encourages us to remember. Psalm 105:4-5 (CEV) notes, “Trust the LORD and his mighty power. Remember his miracles and all his wonders and his fair decisions.” Remember the times that God has come through for you. Remember when you were sick, and God healed you. Remember when you were grieving, and God comforted you. Remember all the times you felt like giving up, but God was there to strengthen you.

And as you remember God’s track record of faithfulness, it will affirm that you have every reason to trust God for the future. Moses understood this well, that’s why he encouraged the Israelites, saying, “Remember this day—the day on which you left Egypt, the place where you were slaves. This is the day the LORD brought you out by his great power” (Exodus 13:3 GNT).

Moses encouraged them to remember because it would strengthen their faith for what challenges lay ahead.

Reflection questions:

Can you recall a time in your life when God came through for you? Write about what happened and thank God for his faithfulness.

Is there a situation you’re currently facing that requires you to look back on God’s faithfulness? Do you believe God will come through for you again?

How can being thankful to God for your past affect your future?

Prayer

God, time and time again you have shown me your kindness. Thank you for being an ever-present help in times of need. Today I pray that my faith will grow stronger as I trust you to carry me through every circumstance in life.

DAY 5: GRATITUDE GUARDS OUR HEARTS

The best defense against the fiery darts of Satan and his lies is gratitude. Gratitude guards our hearts from the ways the enemy tries to attack us with doubt, discouragement, disillusionment, and dissatisfaction. Satan whispers things like, “If God loves you, why did he let that happen to you?” He wants you to believe that God isn’t good and that he is withholding good from you.

In fact, that's how he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. When God commanded Eve not to eat from the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad, Satan lied to Eve to get her to question God's motive. Satan, disguised as a snake, said, "God understands what will happen on the day you eat fruit from that tree. You will see what you have done, and you will know the difference between right and wrong, just as God does" (Genesis 3:5 CEV). Just like that Satan tricked Eve into doubting God's character and his goodness.

But gratitude reminds us of who God is, what he has done, and what he has promised. Gratitude guards our hearts from Satan's lies. Thanking God means we choose to believe he is good, as noted in Psalm 84:11 (GNT): "The LORD is our protector and glorious king, blessing us with kindness and honor. He does not refuse any good thing to those who do what is right."

Reflection questions:

**Has there been a situation that made you believe God is withholding good from you?
How has Psalm 84:11 changed your perspective?**

How can reflecting on God's love encourage gratitude?

Ask God to help you recognize the devil's lies, and make a commitment to fill your heart and mind with God's Word of truth.

Prayer

God, today I renounce the lies of the enemy. Please guard my heart and my mind from believing that you are anything but good. I thank you for always wanting what's best for me and for blessing me in abundance.