

# **SIMPLY COUNTING MY BLESSINGS**

## **The Attitude of Gratitude Primer**

**Jesus' prayer of thanksgiving:** "Dear God, I am thankful that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me." --John 11:41-42

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances."--1Thessalonians 5:28

"This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." --Psalm 118:24

"...giving thanks to God the Father at all times..."--Ephesians 5:20

"My cup runneth over."--Psalms 23:5

"O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever."--Psalm 30:12

"Life without thankfulness is devoid of love and passion. Hope without thankfulness is lacking in fine perception. Faith without thankfulness lacks strength and fortitude. Every virtue divorced from thankfulness is maimed and limps along the spiritual road." -- John Henry Jowett

"God thank you for my pain,  
for without it I would not know joy.  
Thank you for my weariness,  
for without it rest would have no meaning.  
Thank you for my weakness,  
for without it I could not develop strength.  
Thank you for my ignorance,  
for without it there would be nothing to learn.  
Thank you for my failures,  
for without them I would not know the satisfaction of success.  
Show me always to accept what is that I might strive  
for what might be " — Joseph R Davis

"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity." — Melody Beattie from *The Language of Letting Go*

"We ought all to make an effort to act on our first thoughts and let our unspoken gratitude find expression. Then there would be more sunshine in the world and more power to work for what is good." — Dr. Albert Schweitzer from *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth*

"A hundred times a day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends on the labors of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the measure as I have received and am still receiving."--Albert Einstein

"There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." —Albert Einstein

"Every single thing we have has been given to us, not necessarily because we deserved it, but gratuitously, for no known reason. And whatever source we believe is the giver – some concept of God or simply the breathtaking randomness of the universe – when we give thanks, we take our place in the great wheel of life, recognizing our connection to one another and to all of creation." --David Steindl-Rast

"It is impossible to be grateful and unhappy at the same time."

"In relation to others, gratitude is good manners; in relation to ourselves, it is a habit of the heart and a spiritual discipline."--Daphne Rose Kingma

"Meditation is a continuous song of gratitude that God is love that God is here, and that God is now." — Joel S. Goldsmith from "The Art of Meditation"

"Thanksgiving is a sure index of spiritual health." (Maurice Dometz)

"One of life's gifts is that each of us, no matter how tired and downtrodden, finds reasons for thankfulness." --J. Robert Maskin

"Gratitude is the memory of the heart." --Massieu

"Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes of which all men have some." --Charles Dickens

"Hem your blessings with thankfulness so they don't unravel." --Anonymous

"No longer forward nor behind I look in hope or fear; But, grateful, take the good I find, The best of now and here." -John Greenleaf Whittier

### **BE THANKFUL**

Be thankful that you don't already have everything you desire.

If you did, what would there be to look forward to? Be thankful when you don't know something,

for it gives you the opportunity to learn.  
Be thankful for the difficult times.  
During those times you grow.  
Be thankful for your limitations,  
because they give you opportunities for improvement.  
Be thankful for each new challenge,  
because it will build your strength and character.  
Be thankful for your mistakes.  
They will teach you valuable lessons.  
Be thankful when you're tired and weary,  
because it means you've made a difference.  
It's easy to be thankful for the good things.  
A life of rich fulfillment comes to those who  
are also thankful for the setbacks.  
Gratitude can turn a negative into a positive.  
Find a way to be thankful for your troubles,  
and they can become your blessings.  
--Author Unknown

### **I Love You, God, I Thank You God**

"I love You and give thanks not only for what You  
are, but for what I am when I am with You.  
I love You and give thanks not only for what You  
have made of yourself, but for what You are making  
of me.  
I love You and give thanks for the part of me that  
You bring out.  
I love You and give thanks for putting Your hand  
into my heaped-up heart, and passing over all the  
foolish, weak things You can't help dimly seeing  
there.  
And for drawing out into the light all the beautiful  
belongings that no one  
else has looked quite far enough to find.  
I love You, God, I thank You, God."  
—by Roy Croft, revised by Steve Colladay

"A heart filled with gratitude and thanksgiving fills  
the whole being with song—an anticipation of life's  
happiness and peace." —Declaration of World  
Thanksgiving, 1995

"When a person doesn't have gratitude, something is  
missing in his or her humanity. A person can almost  
be defined by his or her attitude toward gratitude." —  
Elie Wiesel

"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what  
we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into  
acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can  
turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a  
stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our  
past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for  
tomorrow." —Melody Beattie

"Nothing is more honorable than a grateful heart." —  
Seneca

"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the  
parent of all the others." —Cicero

"Hem your blessings with thankfulness so they don't  
unravel." —Unknown

"Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from  
the soul." —Henry Ward Beecher

"Love wholeheartedly, be surprised, give thanks and  
praise—then you will discover the fullness of your  
life."

—Brother David Steindl-Rast

"True thanksgiving means that we need to thank God  
for what He has done for us, and not to tell Him what  
we have done for Him." —George R. Hendrick

"In ordinary life we hardly realize that we receive a  
great deal more than we give, and that it is only with  
gratitude that life becomes rich." —Dietrich  
Bonhoeffer

"Gratitude is heaven itself." —William Blake

"A single grateful thought toward heaven is the most  
complete prayer." —Gotthold Lessing

"Can you see the holiness in those things you take for  
granted—a paved road or a washing machine? If you  
concentrate on finding what is good in every  
situation, you will discover that your life will  
suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that  
nurtures the soul." —Rabbi Harold Kushner

### **GRATITUDE AFFIRMATIONS**

My attitude of gratitude today creates the space for  
God's grace.

Through my faith in God, I see God's hand in all  
things, and I am thankful, knowing that all things  
work together for good.

When I thank God for all things, I acknowledge my  
belief that there is only one Presence and one Power  
active as the universe and as my life, God the good,  
omnipotent.

I am thankful for the many gifts within me and  
around me today.

I am thankful for the beauty of the earth and all  
creation.

Developing thankfulness is more than seeing the  
glass half-full. It involves humility, awe,  
mindfulness and compassion toward myself and  
others.

I develop thankfulness when my gratefulness becomes an attitude, not just a reaction when good things happen.

Saying "thank you" in all my relationships is nurturing and healing, and a statement of love and caring.

I focus on what is right and positive in all my relationships, and expressing my gratitude for their contributions, I say "thank you." As my attitude is full of gratitude, I am receptive to life's unending blessings.

A test of my happiness is my thankfulness.

I continually thank God for my many blessings.

### **Attitude of Gratitude...**

I woke up early today, excited over all I get to do before the clock strikes midnight.

I have responsibilities to fulfill today. I am important. My job is to choose what kind of day I am going to have.

Today I can complain because the weather is rainy or ... I can be thankful that the grass is getting watered for free.

Today I can feel sad that I don't have more money or ... I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely and guide me away from waste.

Today I can grumble about my health or ... I can rejoice that I am alive.

Today I can lament over all that my parents didn't give me when I was growing up or ... I can feel grateful that they allowed me to be born.

Today I can cry because roses have thorns or ... I can celebrate that thorns have roses.

Today I can mourn my lack of friends or ... I can excitedly embark upon a quest to discover new relationships.

Today I can whine because I have to go to work or ... I can shout for joy because I have a job to do.

Today I can complain because I have to go to school or ... eagerly open my mind and fill it with rich new tidbits of knowledge.

Today I can murmur dejectedly because I have to do housework or I can feel honored because God has provided shelter for my mind, body and soul.

Today stretches ahead of me, waiting to be shaped. And here I am, the sculptor who gets to do the shaping.

What today will be like is up to me. I get to choose what kind of day I will have!

"It is easy to be grateful for what we 'think' we should be grateful for. Real gratefulness is inclusive of all things for all things are opportunities for lessons in love and forgiveness."

Every day that begins with a thank you creates an

attitude of gratitude -- creates a day of hopeful receptivity.

### **Giving thanks in all circumstances**

Corrie Ten Boom in *The Hiding Place* relates an incident which taught her this principle. She and her sister, Betsy, had just been transferred to the worst German prison camp they had seen yet, Ravensbruck. Upon entering the barracks, they found them extremely overcrowded and flea-infested. Their Scripture reading that morning in 1 Thessalonians had reminded them to rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks in all circumstances. Betsy told Corrie to stop and thank the Lord for every detail of their new living quarters. Corrie at first flatly refused to give thanks for the fleas, but Betsy persisted. She finally succumbed. During the months spent at that camp, they were surprised to find how openly they could hold Bible study and prayer meetings without guard interference. It was several months later when they learned that the guards would not enter the barracks because of the fleas.

**The Blessing Bowl.** The author, Peg Streep, who wrote *Spiritual Gardening: Creating Sacred Space Outdoors*, tells how she and her daughter take time each week to have a little Thanksgiving ceremony in which they light a candle and take turns recalling "the gifts of daily life." Sometimes they write blessings to be hoped for, for themselves or others, on little squares of colored paper and put them in a bowl. A few weeks later, they'll read some of them and give thanks for the ones that have come to pass. She ends with these words: "Two simple, ordinary words: 'Thank you.' Given space and time, they can summon up what lies deep within our souls."

### **AWE-ROBICS**

Lily Tomlin, coined. She suggested practicing "awe-robics" for our minds and hearts at least as often as we exercise our muscles and other talents. . To do this you can approach the ordinary miracles of life with mindfulness. Clean water pouring from the faucet can stretch you awe-robic-ly

Thank - full - ness is a constructive state, the attitude of the person who sees a glass half-full rather than half-empty. Research has proved that optimists tend to be more realistic than pessimists because they have an attitude of being able to overcome obstacles. Yes! – This is real research! If you like the idea of being in control, practicing constructive gratitude is one way to get there! It does, however, follow the Eastern path of the "road less traveled" since you gain control of yourself by giving up the need to control others!

If you tend to see the world in a negative perspective, you will really have to work to develop your awe-muscles! People without a sense of gratitude see problems instead of potential solutions, defects rather than respect, and danger instead of “growth opportunities.”.. The view of the “half-empty glass” is no more realistic than its opposite. However, it IS more destructive -- both physically and interpersonally. Robert Mabry Doss put it well: “Despair is a door to pass through, not a home for living in.”

I’ve asked many people lately what comes to mind when I say the word “gratitude?” I’m going to pause here and let you think of your own answer before I tell you the results of my limited survey. What comes to your mind when I say ‘GRATITUDE?’... (pause 15-20 seconds)

Keep this thought in mind for later.

But almost everyone felt grateful for something more than once a week. Sometimes it was a feeling that just welled up inside. Sometimes it was in response to a life circumstance. I did not think to ask how these people put their gratitude into practice. So I’m asking you to think about it now.

In our hunger and emptiness, we used to pause before a meal and thank some great spirit for bringing us food and water, for bringing us life and family.

In her book, *A Grateful Heart*, editor M. J. Ryan has collected blessing from the Buddha to the Beatles. However, she points out: we live in a fast-food world. and I have never seen anyone pausing over a Big-Mac to offer thanks.!! We’re here to consider changing all that!

Whenever I think of gratitude, I remember this Thanksgiving message from a service.

Emily was then a 3-year old zealot, as he called her. She used to take their hands before the evening meal and say, “Praise, PRAISE!!” Then each person around the table would list at least one thing he or she was thankful for that day. It may not have been profound but it was a daily reminder to praise:. I hope Emily continues to share this “attitude of gratitude!”

The busy-ness of the evening meal time may not be the best time for you or your family to practice gratitude. There could be other times of day – as we put the children to bed, before we fall asleep ourselves, In the few moments before we throw the covers off and rush into morning.

Dawn is a good time to consider the following prayer paraphrased from Ann Landers “This is the beginning of a new day. I have been given this day to use as I will. I can waste it or use it for some good purpose. But what I do this day is important because I have exchanged a day of my life for it. When tomorrow comes, today will be gone forever. I hope I will not regret the price I paid for it.”

Dusk may be the time for those of you presently surviving life “one day at a time.” To quote Tennessee Williams: “When your candle burns low, you’ve got to believe that the last light shows you something besides the progress of darkness.”

### **Be in the practice of cultivating an attitude of gratitude**

Dan Millman, author of *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*, described a time when his mentor, named Socrates, challenged Dan to sit out on a large, flat stone until he had "something of value" to share. Dan sat out on the rock for hours and hours. On more than one occasion, believing he had come up with something, he went to tell Socrates. Each of these times, Socrates decided the statement was not good enough, and he sent Dan back to the rock for more hours of pondering. Finally, Dan had an insight that he knew was something of value. When Dan shared this insight, Socrates looked up, smiled, and welcomed Dan back inside. The "something of value" that Dan had realized was this: "There are no ordinary moments." This is the essence of gratitude. No moment, nothing in life, should be taken for granted. In developing gratitude for every moment -- for the simple joys, and even for the challenging times in our lives -- we come to truly enjoy and appreciate life. Then we are able to see the magic that surrounds us every second of every minute of every day.

**Take the time, each night, to think about the things for which you feel grateful. Remind yourself about what is good.**

**Be thankful for everything in your life:** “*Whatever doesn't kill us, only makes us stronger.*”

A friend of mine says that virtually every morning he awakes with these words on his lips "What a DAY!" Yes, that is a powerful, positive affirmation--bound to get us off to a good start. But what about turning it into an even more powerful prayer: "What a DAY! Thank you, God!"

Many believe that giving thanks is the most important of all prayers. When we give thanks we are acknowledging God as an ever-present force of

good expressing in our lives.

Einstein said that giving thanks for the *little things he took for granted* were very important to him. Before drifting off to sleep, do you recall and give thanks for the blessings of your day?

*Giving thanks in advance creates a powerful expectation of receiving:* **Jesus prayer of thanksgiving:** "Dear God, I am thankful that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me."

In each of us there is a spark that can reverse the trends of violence and depression spiraling within us and in the world around us. By setting in motion the spiral of **gratefulness** we begin the journey toward peace and joy. Gratefulness is the **key to joy**. Gratefulness is a **universal human value**. Gratefulness has **power to change and heal society**.

"Being grateful is more than a social grace; it creates an awareness and consciousness of receptivity," says the Rev. Chris Michaels of the Center for Spiritual Living in Kansas City.

"When you receive, you claim, accept and acknowledge ownership," Michaels says. "An attitude of gratitude is an attitude of being able to receive the good that is already available."

As such, gratitude can be used as a diagnostic tool. "As a therapist, gratitude is also my best friend. It is a diagnostic tool. If a person can feel gratitude, they will definitely get better," says Mark Sichel, a licensed clinical social worker in New York and founder of **www. psybersquare.com**.

Some of the reasons Sichel suggests being grateful include:

It is probably the best and only treatment for self-pity.

It is a motivational speaker inside every one of us.

When we feel gratitude and acknowledge our higher power's generosity, then we are motivated to be the best we can be.

When we are struck by personal tragedy, often the only way to get a perspective is by focusing on that for which we all have to be grateful.

"Often it is difficult to remember our best friend, gratitude, particularly when we feel trapped under a black cloud of despair and hopelessness," Sichel says.

"Those who attend religious services of any kind are helped to focus on gratitude within the rituals and

liturgy of their faith. Some of us have no such outlet, and it is to that end we learn to create various reminders to ourselves to draw upon our gratitude."

Whether used as a spiritual practice or as a social consciousness, expressing gratitude can be a gratifying experience.

**The Rev. Vicky Combs, founding minister of Gaia Community, a Unitarian Universalist Pagan-Theme Congregation in Overland Park**, says: "I'm a firm believer in the old adage, 'There but for the grace of God go I.' It's a sense of recognizing that all blessings and good fortune are not of our own making. Gratitude is an important part of my spiritual life and my social consciousness because I look at a situation and see that it is not a coincidence that I received the educational benefits I did.

"I've often taught classes on economic justice, and it always amazes me that in our system we have this myth of the meritocracy, where people who are well off like to tell themselves it's because they worked hard and deserve it. All of the studies of wealth in this country show that the vast majority of people are where they are on a socioeconomic scale because of their parents' socioeconomic situation. I am always aware that my good fortune was a blessing given to me. Not that I don't work hard, I do, but that's not the point."

Your state of mind is key, Michaels says. "When you cultivate an attitude that is thankful it is highly receptive to greater good," he says. "That's your responsibility to cultivate that awareness. No one can guilt or shame you into gratefulness. It is an awareness you are responsible for cultivating and maintaining in your own life."

To start acknowledging gratitude in your life create a gratitude journal. Write down five things for which you're grateful each day.

People who have kept gratitude journals over a period of time report that it helps them focus on what they have in the present.

**The Bible is filled with as many as 30,000 different promises from God to His children. Everyday we receive grace, favor, and the fulfillment of His promises — and yet these often go unnoticed.**

- **Recognizing God's Blessings**

We don't always recognize His goodness because it is contrary to our will. For example, when it rains on our family reunion, we don't appreciate His goodness.

But when that same rain waters the ground causing food to grow, then we eat it, and we see His goodness.

You may be wondering, "But how can I be thankful for pain and heartache?" God is not asking you to be thankful, but to give thanks. There's a difference between feeling thankful and giving thanks. One involves trusting our feelings, the other involves trusting God. While our feelings will mislead us, God won't. Sometimes we have to trust Him through difficult circumstances, recognizing that He is sovereign and in control. Even if we don't immediately see the fulfillment of His promise, it doesn't mean we won't see it fulfilled eventually.

- **Refusing To Be Satisfied**

An ungrateful heart is one that refuses to be satisfied, thereby rejecting both the Giver and the gift. We are warned that ungratefulness is associated with wickedness and is the opposite of loving God. The Bible describes unappreciative people as lovers of themselves and their accomplishments. Such an attitude breeds pride, rebellion, conceit, and a lack of self-control, ultimately causing separation from Christ.

- **Changing An Ungrateful Heart**

Gratitude begins with a tender heart of repentance. To obtain a repentant heart, we may need to ask ourselves how and if we have rejected God and His blessings. Have we said, "This is not enough," or "This is not what I asked for"? In what areas of our lives have we challenged His goodness, disbelieved His promises, and refused to give glory to Him? Begin to acknowledge who God is and what He has done even when you don't understand why. Our lack of understanding should never be an excuse not to give thanks. — "Give thanks in all things for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus," (I Thessalonians 5:18).

A heart of gratitude must be cultivated, and can be a sacrifice of time and effort. It is significant that even Paul said, "I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content," (Philippians 4:11). It takes faith to thank God for circumstances that we do not understand. But is it not when we step out in faith that we are rewarded abundantly?

Though we struggle with giving unconditional thanks, God is able to change our stubborn hearts into grateful hearts. By implementing some of the following ideas, our hearts will begin to soften and we will become appreciative women:

Be humble and focused on God.

Be thankful for everyday blessings.

Spend time in the Word of God to learn His promises and how He plans to fulfill them in your life daily.

Always thank God in the midst of adversity and trials.

Record blessings in your Bible or a journal and continually reference them when you encounter difficulty.

Express your gratitude publicly.

Continue God's cycle by blessing others in the Spirit of Christ.

A grateful spirit and a thankful heart are an integral part of a holy life. The woman who recognizes God's goodness and is thankful has a heart full of praise that brings joy to the Father and glory to His name. An attitude of gratitude will bring your heart a host of blessings and make you a channel of blessings to others.

**People have an attitude of gratitude - are satisfied and content with life.**

**People who do not have an attitude of gratitude - are never satisfied.**

No matter what happens, it's never good enough for them.

People who live without an attitude of gratitude are always waiting for something bigger and better before they'll be thankful. But the truth is that if you aren't thankful for the little miracles of life that come along today, you won't even see the big ones of tomorrow. That's why an attitude of gratitude makes a difference.

**2. People who have an Attitude of Gratitude are not stressed out.**

**3. People who have an Attitude of Gratitude are full of Joy.**

**II. An Attitude of Gratitude is an Issue of The Heart**

"I have everything I need for joy."

Friends, let me ask you - do you believe that about your life? That you have everything you need - right now - to be joyful? That's the key to an attitude of

gratitude.

"the situation is not good right now, but I can find something to appreciate about my life.

Let me give you an example. Let's say a person with an attitude of gratitude discovers they're going to lose their job. Here's what goes on in their heart ...

Initially they think, "this is devastating news. It's going to change life as I know it. It's going to set me back financially."

But soon, they begin to focus on the big picture: "I might lose my house, but I still have my family. My ego might be hurt, but I'm not going to die. My employer has rejected me, but God still loves me." And they choose to let their appreciation for the positive things rule their emotions instead of the pain and the bitterness over the loss of the job.

I'm not saying that's an easy thing to do. But that's where the second observation comes into play.

## **2. A person whose heart is filled with an Attitude of Gratitude view hard times with God's Divine purpose in mind.**

God is trying to accomplish something in my life.

The Bible illustrates this perspective when it says ...

Dear friends, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow, and don't try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete. James 1:2-4TLB

What's James saying? "Be thankful, even for the troubles, because good things can come from them; there can be a higher purpose - the growth of patience and of a character that's strong and full and complete - a higher purpose to your hard times, IF ... you choose to believe it."

Where do you get the strength to adopt this view? It comes from an intimate and personal relationship with God,

## **4. A person whose heart is filled with an Attitude of Gratitude understand that "I am indebted to someone else for every good thing I have."**

With a little effort, you can always discover the people to whom you are indebted. For example, if you're physically attractive, thank your parents. If you're educated, thank your teachers and the

taxpayers. If you're wealthy, thank the people who had enough faith in you to buy your product or to give you a job.

And if you're not attractive, or educated or wealthy, but you're alive - thank the plant life that produces the oxygen you breathe, and then thank the God of the universe who put them here in the first place.

## **III. Developing An Attitude of Gratitude.**

### **1. Live to celebrate life and be thankful.**

We need to learn to celebrate life. Life is too short and too precious to waste with an ungrateful attitude. God gave us life to enjoy our time here on this earth. If you are able to get out of bed and do your daily chores you need to celebrate. If you have biscuits and gravy to eat you need to celebrate. If you have a roof over your head you need to celebrate. There are people in this world that are not as fortunate as we are.

### **2. Reflect on what you have to be thankful for, not what you don't have.**

Set aside some time everyday, or one day a week and brainstorm a list of what you are thankful for.

### **3. Say thanks for all that God has blessed you with.**

Say it for everything you can think of. The more you do it, the more you'll develop an attitude of gratitude. Thank God, thank the people around you. In fact, let's all practice, right now. Turn to someone near you and say: "Thanks for being here this morning."

I know some of you are thinking, "why should I be thankful for that?" Let's just say that you'd look pretty stupid if you were here all by yourself!

### **4. Start Today not when things look better.**

Many say I will develop an attitude of gratitude when things get better. Folks I am going to let you in on a little secret. It may get worse before it gets better. We need to remember what the Psalmist said:

*"This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."* -- Psalm 118:24

This is the day to celebrate, to reflect and to say thanks. Not yesterday. Not tomorrow. Not even Thanksgiving Day. The time is now and the choice is ours.