



What Does It Mean To Be a People of Gratitude?



November 2019

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Gratitude, in many religious teachings, is suggested as a first entry point in our relationship with the holy, within, among and beyond us. “If the only prayer you say in your entire life is thank you,” wrote the German theologian Meister Eckhart some 700 years ago, “it will be enough.” As we pause to consider what it means today, however, it is not as simple as this quote might make it seem.

Here in the United States, the month of November is laced with reminders – and laden with difficult questions – about gratitude. This is the month where the very holiday that calls on us to give thanks is fraught with frequently miss-told history precariously perching gratitude on a past perhaps better honored by last month’s theme of forgiveness. Both in honoring this holiday, and in our personal lives, exploring what it means to be “a people of gratitude” may require a more truthful telling of history and of where we are in the present moment.

This does not, in any way, diminish the importance of gratitude as a spiritual practice and a basis for right relationship with the holy, with our own lives and with one another. In fact, it may underscore its necessity. But it does urge us to deepen our practices of gratitude by intentionally widening our understanding of the context from which our gratitude rises. Or, in other words, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s well known warning of the “danger of a single story” asks us to let our gratitude be shaped and informed by multiple perspectives on the gifts each of us has been given.

This packet includes many practices, questions and resources to support that work. I’ve written an additional perspective on gratitude in Unity Church’s *CommUNITY* newsletter, available in printed form at the church and [here on-line](#).

I am grateful to be in community with so many of you reflecting on these rich and challenging questions in our own lives and together.

Karen Hering
Associate Minister

Our Spiritual Exercises

Option A: Moving with Gratitude

Set aside 10-20 minutes to take a walk or roll outside by yourself at least five days every week for the month. You might explore ways to do this on your way to/from work or on a lunch break. Try to stick to this schedule unless the weather is extremely bad.

As you move, try to notice as many positive things around you as you can. These can be sights, sounds, smells, or other sensations. For example, you could focus on the breathtaking height of a tree you never really noticed before, the intricate architecture of a building on your block, the dance of sunshine off a window or puddle, the smell of grass or flowers, or the way other people look out for each other as they navigate crowded streets.

As you notice each of these positive things, acknowledge each one in your mind—don't just let them slip past you. Pause for a moment as you hear or see each thing and make sure it registers with your conscious awareness, really take it in. Try to identify what it is about that thing that makes it pleasurable to you. Let the sensations around you conjure up feelings of gratitude for the gift of life and living that they represent. Explore ways that you can respond in gratitude, perhaps with a small or a silent return of positive thought directed at whom and what you see.

Try to walk a different route as often as possible so you don't become too accustomed to any of these things and start to take them for granted. Then, return to a previous route and see what you notice anew. Give thanks for fresh eyes.

Come to your group ready to discuss how this felt. What, if anything, changed for you as you looked at the physical spaces around you with a sense of gratitude?

Option B: Letters of Gratitude

At least once a week over the course of the month, call to mind someone who did something for you for which you are extremely grateful but to whom you never expressed your deep gratitude. Or perhaps you've said thank you many times, but know they would benefit from hearing "thank you" again. This could be a relative, a friend, a teacher, a colleague, or even someone you barely know, but pick someone who made an impact on you. Pick someone for whom you are grateful. Then, write a letter or email to the person you want to thank, guided by the following steps:

- Address person directly ("Dear _____")
- Describe in specific terms what this person did, why you are grateful, and how their behavior affected your life. Try to be as concrete as possible.
- Describe what you are doing in your life now and how you often remember their gift or efforts.
- Don't worry about perfect grammar or spelling. Gratitude doesn't need to be perfect.
- Try to keep your letter to a page or less.

- If the person is still alive, mail the letter to them.

Alternatively, if you've picked someone in the area, you could arrange to meet them face-to-face. Or, if you like the idea of going beyond mailing a letter, but physical distance keeps you from making a visit, you could arrange a phone or video chat. When you meet, let the person know that you are grateful to them and would like to read a letter expressing your gratitude; ask that they refrain from interrupting until you're done. Take your time reading the letter. While you read, pay attention to their reaction and yours. After you have finished, be receptive to their reaction and discuss your feelings together. Then offer them the letter when you leave.

Try to write and share at least four gratitude letters this month and come to your group ready to share how the practice of letter writing affected your sense of gratitude.

Option C: A Gratitude Journal

Write down up to five things every day for which you feel grateful. The physical record is important—don't just do this exercise in your head. The things you list can be relatively small in importance ("The tasty sandwich I had for lunch today.") or relatively large. ("My sister gave birth to a healthy baby boy.") The goal of the exercise is to remember a good event, experience, person, or thing in your life.

Sometimes—maybe every day—this practice may be difficult. Life does not always make it easy to feel grateful. But even on these days, try to find something, or someone, that makes you feel a sense of gratitude. See if you can find gratitude even in unwanted events and setbacks.

When you are making your list, be as specific as possible—specificity is one key to fostering gratitude. "I'm grateful that my co-workers brought me soup when I was sick on Tuesday" will be more effective than "I'm grateful for my co-workers." Go for depth over breadth. Elaborating in detail about a particular person or thing for which you're grateful carries more benefits than a superficial list of many things. And get personal. Focusing on people to whom you are grateful has more of an impact than focusing on things for which you are grateful.

Some days, you may need to try subtraction, not just addition. Consider what your life would be like without certain people or things, rather than just tallying up all the good stuff. Or, be grateful for the negative outcomes you avoided, escaped, prevented, or turned into something positive—try not to take that good fortune for granted. See good things as "gifts." Savor surprises.

Write as regularly as possible, but do not let thank you become a chore. Still, commit to a regular daily time for journaling or making lists and then honor that commitment whenever you can. Come to your group ready to share your learnings, slips, recoveries and best efforts.

Option D: Creating Gratitude

Create a “Thankful” poster or collage that you can look at every day. Use magazines, personal photos, markers to fill your poster with quotes, sayings, and pictures that resonate with you: the people, the places, the things that inspire a sense of gratitude in you.

Put the poster in a place where you can see it regularly. Promise yourself that you will spend a few moments every day reflecting on the images and words you have chosen for the poster. If you feel moved, add new images, new words, new quotes to your poster throughout the month. Come to the circle ready to discuss how this visual representation of your gratitude affected your mood and your actions over the course of the month.

Your Question

As always, don’t treat these questions like “homework” or try to answer every single one. Instead, make time to meditate and reflect on the list and then pick the one question that speaks to you most. The goal is to figure out which question is “yours.” Which question captures the call of your inner voice? Which one contains “your work”? What is it trying to get you to notice? Where is it trying to lead you?

1. How do you cultivate gratitude in trying times? Are there moments when gratitude feels impossible? How do you feel grateful in the face of hardship and despair?
2. What does a sincere thank you feel like? How do you feel when you receive one? Give one?
3. How is gratitude related to privilege? Does your own privilege ever make it difficult to be aware of all you have been given? Does your own lack of privilege influence your gratitude for what you have been given?
4. Is gratitude a prerequisite for happiness, or even contentment, or do happiness and contentment spring from gratitude?
5. Does gratitude ever become a tool for avoiding other healthy emotions — sorrow, anger, regret? Are there times you use gratitude to diminish or displace other emotions?
6. Are there people, events, places, and objects in your life that you regard as gifts? Do you feel a sense of obligation for what you’ve been given? Does this encourage or dampen your sense of gratitude?
7. What would a spiritual practice of gratitude look like? Is it a practice that calls to you? Why or why not?

8. Where are the deep places of gratitude in your life? How do you nurture and expand them?
9. Is gratitude a feeling or an action? Do feelings of thankfulness call for grateful actions?
10. Think back over your lifetime: Has getting older made you more or less grateful? Has the way you express your gratitude changed overtime? Why?
11. What is holy or divine about gratitude? Does saying thank you inform your spiritual practices or your understanding of the holy?

What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. We will not analyze these pieces in our group. Instead they are here to companion you on your journey this month, get your thinking started and open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be part of a people of Gratitude.

Word Roots

Gratitude: from the mid-15th century, “good will,” from Middle French gratitude; the state of being grateful, a strong feeling of appreciation

Wise Words

There are hard things to face in our world today, if we want to be of use. Gratitude, when it’s real, offers no blinders. On the contrary, in the face of devastation and tragedy it can ground us, especially when we’re scared. It can hold us steady for the work to be done. ~ Joanna Macy

We think we dare not be satisfied with the small measure of spiritual knowledge, experience, and love that has been given to us, and that we must constantly be looking forward eagerly for the highest good. Then we deplore the fact that we lack the deep certainty, the strong faith, and the rich experience that God has given to others, and we consider this lament to be pious. We pray for the big things and forget to give thanks for the ordinary, small (and yet really not small) gifts. How can God entrust great things to one who will not thankfully receive from Him the little things?
~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Hebrew term for gratitude is *hakarat hatov*, which means, literally, “recognizing the good.” Practicing gratitude means recognizing the good that is already yours. ~ Ilia Delio

I spent most of my time during my career ... just feeling grateful. Grateful to be one of the only women to have a seat at the table. I was so grateful to receive any respect at all for myself that I often missed opportunities to demand equality for all of us. But ... CHANGE. IS. HERE. Women have learned that we can be grateful for what we have while also demanding what we deserve. ~ Abby Wambach

The children of the revolution are always ungrateful, and the revolution must be grateful that it is so. ~ Ursula K. Le Guin

In the end, though, maybe we must all give up trying to pay back the people in this world who sustain our lives. In the end, maybe it’s wiser to surrender before the miraculous scope of human generosity and to just keep saying thank you, forever and sincerely, for as long as we have voices.
~ Elizabeth Gilbert

“Thank you” is the best prayer that anyone could say. I say that one a lot. Thank you expresses extreme gratitude, humility, understanding. ~ Alice Walker

Amidst the meditation of mountains, the humility of flowers—wiser than all alphabets—clouds that die constantly for the sake of God’s glory, we are hating, hunting, hurting. Suddenly we feel ashamed of our clashes and complaints in the face of the tacit glory in nature. It is embarrassing to live! How strange we are in the world, and how presumptuous our doings! Only one

response can maintain us: gratefulness for witnessing the wonder, for the gift of our unearned right to serve, to adore, and to fulfill. It is gratefulness which makes the soul great. ~ Abraham Joshua Heschel

You sanctify whatever you are grateful for.
~ Anthony De Mello, S.J.

I am grateful for what I am and have. My thanksgiving is perpetual... O how I laugh when I think of my vague indefinite riches. No run on my bank can drain it, for my wealth is not possession but enjoyment.” ~ Henry David Thoreau

Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.
~ Marcel Proust

Ancient religion and modern science agree: we are here to give praise. Or, to slightly tip the expression, to pay attention. Without us, the physicists who have espoused the anthropic principle tell us, the universe would be unwitnessed, and in a real sense not there at all. It exists, incredibly, for us. This formulation (knowing what we know of the universe’s ghastly extent) is more incredible, to our sense of things, than the Old Testament hypothesis of a God willing to suffer, coddle, instruct, and even (in the Book of Job) to debate with men, in order to realize the meager benefit of worship, of praise for His Creation. What we beyond doubt do have is our instinctive intellectual

curiosity about the universe from the quasars down to the quarks, our wonder at existence itself, and an occasional surge of sheer blind gratitude for being here.
~ John Updike

Wise women and men from every tradition teach that gratitude is at the heart of the spiritual life because it leads us to all the rest. ~ UU minister Kathleen McTigue

What separates privilege from entitlement is gratitude. ~ Brené Brown

Why should I cumber myself with regrets that the receiver is not capacious? It never troubles the sun that some of his rays fall wide and vain into ungrateful space, and only a small part on the reflecting planet. Let your greatness educate the crude and cold companion. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Do not let the empty cup be your first teacher of the blessings you had when it was full. Do not let a hard place here and there in the bed destroy your rest. Seek, as a plain duty, to cultivate a buoyant, joyous sense of the crowded kindnesses of God in your daily life. ~ Rev. Alexander MacLaren (Maclaren was an early nineteenth-century English non-conformist minister)

Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good.
~ Maya Angelou

Poetry

Jeanne Lohmann, To Say Nothing but Thank You

All day I try to say nothing but thank you,
breathe the syllables in and out with every step I
take through the rooms of my house and outside into
a profusion of shaggy-headed dandelions in the garden
where the tulips' black stamens shake in their crimson cups.

I am saying thank you, yes, to this burgeoning spring
and to the cold wind of its changes. Gratitude comes easy
after a hot shower, when loosened muscles work,
when eyes and mind begin to clear and even unruly
hair combs into place.

Dialogue with the invisible can go on every minute,
and with surprising gaiety I am saying thank you as I
remember who I am, a woman learning to praise
something as small as dandelion petals floating on the
steaming surface of this bowl of vegetable soup,
my happy, savoring tongue.

Ross Gay, Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude

Friends, will you bear with me today,
for I have awakened
from a dream in which a robin
made with its shabby wings a kind of veil
behind which it shimmied and stomped something from the south
of Spain, its breast aflame,
looking me dead in the eye
from the branch that grew into my window,
cooche-cooing my chin,
the bird shuffling its little talons left, then right,
while the leaves bristled
against the plaster wall, two of them drifting
onto my blanket while the bird
opened and closed its wings like a matador
giving up on murder,
jutting its beak, turning a circle,
and flashing, again,
the ruddy bombast of its breast
by which I knew upon waking
it was telling me

in no uncertain terms
to bellow forth the tubas and sousaphones,
the whole rusty brass band of gratitude
not quite dormant in my belly—
it said so in a human voice,
“Bellow forth”—
and who among us could ignore such odd
and precise counsel?

Find the rest of the poem here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/58762/catalog-of-unabashed-gratitude>

adrienne maree brown, radical gratitude spell

a spell to cast upon meeting a stranger, comrade or friend working for social and/or environmental justice and liberation:

you are a miracle walking
i greet you with wonder
in a world which seeks to own
your joy and your imagination
you have chosen to be free,
every day, as a practice.
i can never know
the struggles you went through to get here,
but i know you have swum upstream
and at times it has been lonely

i want you to know
i honor the choices you made in solitude
and i honor the work you have done to belong
i honor your commitment to that which is larger than yourself
and your journey
to love the particular container of life
that is you

you are enough
your work is enough
you are needed
your work is sacred
you are here
and i am grateful

**Jane Kenyon,
“Coming Home at Twilight in Late Summer”**

We turned into the drive,
and gravel flew up from the tires
like sparks from a fire. So much
to be done—the unpacking, the mail
and papers ... the grass needed mowing
We climbed stiffly out of the car.
The shut-off engine ticked as it cooled.

And then we noticed the pear tree,
the limbs so heavy with fruit
they nearly touched the ground.
We went out to the meadow; our steps
made black holes in the grass;
and we each took a pear,
and ate, and were grateful.

Denise Levertov, “Praise Wet Snow”

Praise wet snow
 falling early.
Praise the shadow
 my neighbor's chimney casts on the tile roof
even this gray October day that should, they say,
have been golden.
 Praise
the invisible sun burning beyond
 the white cold sky, giving us
light and the chimney's shadow.
Praise
god or the gods, the unknown,
that which imagined us, which stays
our hand,
our murderous hand,
 and gives us
still,
in the shadow of death,
 our daily life,
 and the dream still
of goodwill, of peace on earth.
Praise
flow and change, night and
the pulse of day.

Thanks, by W. S. Merwin

Listen
with the night falling we are saying thank you
we are stopping on the bridges to bow
 from the railings
we are running out of the glass rooms
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky
and say thank you
we are standing by the water thanking it
standing by the windows looking out
in our directions

back from a series of hospitals back
 from a mugging
after funerals we are saying thank you
after the news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying
 thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you
in doorways and in the backs of cars
 and in elevators
remembering wars and the police at the door
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you
in the banks we are saying thank you
in the faces of the officials and the rich
and of all who will never change
we go on saying thank you thank you

with the animals dying around us
taking our feelings we are saying thank you
with the forests falling faster than the minutes
of our lives we are saying thank you
with the words going out like cells of a brain
with the cities growing over us
we are saying thank you faster and faster
with nobody listening we are saying thank you
thank you we are saying and waving
dark though it is

from *Migration: New and Selected Poems*. (Copper Canyon Press, 2005)

Anne Sexton, Welcome Morning

There is joy
in all:
in the hair I brush each morning,
in the Cannon towel, newly washed,
that I rub my body with each morning,
in the chapel of eggs I cook
each morning,
in the outcry from the kettle
that heats my coffee
each morning,
in the spoon and the chair
that cry “hello there, Anne”
each morning,
in the godhead of the table
that I set my silver, plate, cup upon
each morning.

All this is God,
right here in my pea-green house
each morning
and I mean,
though often forget,
to give thanks,
to faint down by the kitchen table
in a prayer of rejoicing
as the holy birds at the kitchen window
peck into their marriage of seeds.
So while I think of it,
let me paint a thank-you on my palm
for this God, this laughter of the morning,
lest it go unspoken.
The Joy that isn't shared, I've heard,
dies young.

Joy Harjo, Perhaps the World Ends Here

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.

The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.

We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it.

It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women.

At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers.

Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children. They laugh with us at our poor falling-down selves and as we put ourselves back together once again at the table.

This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun.

Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.

We have given birth on this table, and have prepared our parents for burial here.

At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse. We give thanks.

Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.

Articles, Podcasts and Videos

ARTICLES

Ruth Abusch-Magder, The Power of Gratitude

June 2012. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/rabbi-without-borders/the-power-of-gratitude/>

A rabbi explores the power of gratitude to transform daily life. From the article: “The concept of gratitude is fundamental to Jewish life and practice. The miracle of opening the eyes deserves a prayer of thanksgiving, as does our ability to put our feet on the floor and going to the bathroom. Following the structures of our liturgy, much of life becomes worthy of gratitude. Gratitude is powerful stuff.”

Galen Guengerich, The Heart of Our Faith: Gratitude Should Be the Center of Unitarian-Universalist Theology

UU World, Spring 2007,

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/a-theology-gratitude>

From the website: “What should be our defining religious discipline? While obedience, love, and even submission each play a vital role in the life of faith, my current conviction is that our defining discipline should be gratitude. In the same way that Judaism is defined by obedience, Christianity by love, and Islam by submission, I believe that Unitarian Universalism should be defined by gratitude.”

Joanna Macy and Molly Brown, Healing Begins With Gratitude

<https://gratefulness.org/resource/healing-begins-with-gratitude/>

Macy and Brown meditate on the need for gratitude in the face of the climate crisis and explore the lessons taught by the Onondaga Nation and the Mohawk Thanksgiving Prayer.

Courtney E. Martin, The Shocking Clarity of Almost Losing It All

On Being, December 16, 2016, <https://onbeing.org/blog/the-shocking-clarity-of-almost-losing-it-all/>

From the website: “It is these moments that we fear, these moments that are inevitable, that put us in touch with a proportionate sense of gratitude for just how lucky we are to live on this earth for even one day.”

Courtney E. Martin, The Sensory Astonishment of Gratitude

On Being, November 26, 2015, <https://onbeing.org/blog/the-sensory-astonishment-of-gratitude/>

From the website: “Which is all to say, gratitude is not just about empty platitudes or forced dinner table exercises. It’s about marveling. It’s about witnessing people and telling them that you do. It’s about natural science and human anatomy. It requires, above all else, slowing down and noticing and letting yourself be astonished.”

Dina Nayeri, The ungrateful refugee: ‘We have no debt to repay’

The Guardian, April 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/04/dina-nayeri-ungrateful-refugee>

An Iranian immigrant, first to the United States and later to Europe, Nayeri brilliantly questions the idea that immigrants need to be “grateful” in order to be accepted.

Maria Popova, Seneca on Gratitude and What It Means to Be a Generous Human Being

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2018/06/29/seneca-letter-81-on-benefits/>

Popova explores Roman philosopher Seneca's understanding of gratitude and its broader implications for human life.

Christine C. Robinson and Alicia Hawkins, Practice Gratitude

UU World, Fall 2009, <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/practice-gratitude>

From the website: "Like hope, trust, and love, gratitude is both a feeling and a spiritual practice."

Sharon Salzberg, The Hardship We Accept, The Gratitude We Choose

On Being, September 20, 2016, <https://onbeing.org/blog/the-hardship-we-accept-the-gratitude-we-choose/>

Gratitude means "I can reset my thoughts, just like in meditation, and choose instead to gently settle my attention on something positive. We don't erase the pain — it's still there — but we can broaden our perspective by opening to our pain and also opening to things other than the suffering we feel."

PODCASTS

The Science of Gratitude, narrated by Susan Sarandon

WNYC, <https://www.wnyc.org/story/science-gratitude/>

From the website: "The Science of Gratitude combines scientific research with personal stories illustrating the benefits and obstacles to feeling truly grateful. Learn what chimpanzees and department stores have to do with gratitude, why the U.S. National Park Service provides evidence that gratitude can be passed down through generations, and more." (58 minutes)

The Gratitude Podcast

<https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/thegratitudepodcast/the-gratitude-podcast>

A regular podcast on gratitude. Benedictine monk David Steindl-Rast interviews successful people and asks them to share fascinating stories about how gratitude has helped them get to where they are now. "It's not happiness that makes us grateful; it's gratefulness that makes us happy."

Journey To Radiance: Gratitude

Campaign for Black Male Achievement,

<https://blackmaleachievement.org/podcasts/journey-to-radiance/journey-to-radiance-episode-10-gratitude>

From the website: "Is it possible to do what you love AND earn a living? In this end-of-year episode of our "Journey To Radiance" podcast series, we explore the journey to living your passion and fulfilling your heart's desire by demystifying a powerful secret ingredient of success and sustainability: an attitude of gratitude. (65 minutes)

Episode 7: How Gratitude Benefits Your Brain

The Science of Happiness Podcast,

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/podcasts/item/gratitude_benefits_your_brain

From the website: "Can you train your brain to be more grateful? Todd Zwillich, host of The Takeaway takes on the challenge." (24 minutes)

Brene Brown: On Gratitude, Vulnerability and Courage

(Good Life Project, October 2012. <https://www.goodlifeproject.com/podcast/brene-brown-radio/>

Good Life Project's Jonathan Field and author Brene Brown explore gratitude and the power of honoring the smallest moments, as well as a host of other topics in an emotional podcast from 2012. (52 minutes)

A.J. Jacobs: 10 Strategies to Be Happier Through Gratitude (#344)

The Tim Ferris Show, <https://tim.blog/2018/11/05/a-j-jacobs/>

In this episode, A.J. Jacobs, author of *Thanks a Thousand: A Gratitude Journey*, goes through 10 strategies for being happier through gratitude in these stressful times. Jacobs' voice is a little annoying, but it is an interesting episode. (54 minutes)

VIDEOS

5 Minute Guided Meditation for Gratitude

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCorEILKFQE>

From the website: "Take 5 minutes out of your busy day to practice the meditation for gratitude. It is a great guided meditation for first thing in the morning or last thing before you drift off to sleep."

Oprah on her Gratitude Practice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sazWjllwU8c>

In a short video (3 mins), Oprah Winfrey explains her daily gratitude practice.

Brian Doyle, 365 Days of Thank You

TEDxYouth@SanDiego 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNfAnkojhoE>

From the website: "Inspired by the spirit of gratitude that is amplified each Thanksgiving day, Brian Doyle set out to extend the power of gratitude beyond one holiday in his unique social experiment: "365 Days of Thank You." Learn how two words can change your world and world view." (8 minutes)

Kid President's 25 Reasons To Be Thankful!

SoulPancake, November 2015,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yA5Qpt1JRE4>

Kid President is adorable. From the website: "Life can be tough. It's important to always take time to remember the things that make life awesome. This is just the start of a list. It's only 25 things. Obviously, there are more! What else would you add? Let us know!" (7 minutes)

An Experiment in Gratitude: The Science of Happiness

SoulPancake, Jul 11, 2013,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHv6vTKD6lg>

A short, seven-minute video that features people calling the folks who made the biggest impact on their lives and telling them why. Very sweet.

Nouman Ali Khan, How Gratitude Shapes our Lives

Bayyinah Institute, Sep 30, 2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVAgSbxxfEU>

A Muslim interpretation of the importance of gratitude.

Louie Schwartzberg on Gratitude

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXDMoiEkyuQ>

This video starts with time-lapse photographs of flowers from Louie Schwartzberg and his thoughts on wonder. Then, Benedictine monk Brother David Steindl-Rast meditates on being grateful for every day. It's not a common format for TedTalks, but nicely combines gratitude with reverence. (10 minutes)

BOOKS

Diana Butler Bass, Grateful: The Subversive Practice of Giving Thanks (2018)

From the website: "We know that gratitude is good, but many of us find it hard to sustain a meaningful life of gratefulness. Four out of five Americans report feeling gratitude on a regular basis, but those private feelings seem disconnected from larger concerns of our public lives. In *Grateful*, cultural observer and theologian Diana Butler Bass takes on this 'gratitude gap' and offers up surprising, relevant, and powerful insights to practice gratitude."

Robert A. Emmons, Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier (2007)

The *Psychology of Gratitude* draws from multiple perspectives and borrows from multiple fields in its

exploration of gratitude. The books covers theories behind gratitude, including from an evolutionary perspective, from a moral viewpoint, and even with a focus on physiology.

L.M. Montgomery, Anne of Green Gables (1908)

The 1908 classic about a young orphan girl accidentally sent to live with a family in Newfoundland (they wanted a boy). Anne lives a life of exuberant gratitude: “I’m so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers.”

Oliver Sacks, Gratitude (2015)

In Sacks’s last published book, he offers four essays that reflect on the feelings of love, happiness, and gratitude that suffused his life as he faced death.

Mo Willems, The Thank You Book (An Elephant and Piggie Book) (2016)

The brilliant Mo Willems explores the complexities of saying “thank you.” What if Piggie forgets to thank someone who matters?

MOVIES

Groundhog Day (1993)

It’s a Wonderful Life (1946)

Up (2009)

This packet was primarily created by Kathryn Jay, using the Soul Matters Small Groups Model.
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