



Gratitude!

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit.” - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19

DAY #1 | Gratitude Visit

Listen to Martin Seligman’s Ted Talk called “The New Era of Positive Psychology.” You can find the video at: http://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology?language=en (what we’ll discuss is at 16:51). Seligman teaches the “gratitude visit.” He invites you to think of a living person who did something that changed your life for the better, someone you never properly thanked. Write a 300-word testimonial to that person expressing your gratitude. Then call that person and arrange to visit, without explanation, and read the testimonial out loud to them. When people are asked a week, a month, even three months later about how their gratitude visit went, they report a marked difference in their life. They are happier, less depressed, and more content after expressing gratitude to someone else. **Why do you think a gratitude visit could make your life more satisfying and meaningful several months later? What has changed? How could one brief visit make such a big difference? How do you feel about the gratitude visits? Would you ever do this? Why, or why not? Who would you visit?**

DAY #2 | Blessing Bowl

Another resource is the “blessing bowl.” This is the ancient practice of counting your blessings, which helps us to focus on the many ways God provides for us each day. Get a bowl and a little bag of rolled-up scrolls of paper, each one folded up or tied with a little ribbon. Take a few minutes each evening to focus on a couple of good things that have happened over the course of the day and write them down on one of the little pieces of paper. Pretty soon you’ll have a bowl full of blessings. Add to the bowl each day. You can also take a scroll and read it to be reminded again of the good things in your life. **Does counting your blessings change your focus? How does that work? Why does that work?**

DAY #3 | Re-wired

Have you ever been in a work performance review, or perhaps a conference at a school, when you’re told six nice things about yourself or your child, and then one area that could use improvement? What sticks with you, the compliments or the constructive criticism? Why is that? Sometimes it seems as if our brains are wired for the negative. What would change if we could re-wire them for the positive? 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 tells us to: *“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”* Seeing things through the lens of God’s will in Christ Jesus includes learning to focus your brain on the positive, on the good things, on gratitude. **How could this simple little exercise actually change your life?**

DAY #4 | Community Thankfulness

We could practice gratitude as a community of faith. Over the past fifty years, Campus Lutheran, as a congregation, has experienced innumerable blessings – from Bible studies to mission opportunities, from friendships to spiritual growth. **Could you take some time every week to recount how the ministry of this community of faith has touched your life? Does being intentional about being grateful to God for these blessings nurture a more content, deeply satisfying, meaningful community of faith? A more content, deeply satisfying, meaningful future together? Can we learn to reflect this kind of gratitude to the community as we step forward into our vision of reaching UP, reaching OUT and reaching IN?**

DAY #5 | Keeping Track

There is an app called “Day One” that, at the same time every day, sends an alert, reminding users that it’s time to write in their Day One journal. When the alert comes in, it’s a time to “prime the gratitude pump” by reflecting on the day and landing on the thing for which you’re the most grateful. This is a good opportunity to name it by simply writing a sentence or two in your journal. It doesn’t have to be monumental, and nothing is too small or insignificant to include. Grateful for the hour you took to walk the dog last night. Grateful for your kids’ health, and for grandchildren. Grateful for a nice email, for a cup of coffee, for that ray of sunshine you saw this morning. Having a running list all of the time is a reminder that God has been faithful in so many ways, and it’s an opportunity to express more gratitude. **Have you ever used a gratitude or journaling app? How could keeping a journal remind you of God’s grace and faithfulness? What difference would such reminders make in how you live each day?**

DAY #6 | The heart of God

When we’re driven back into the heart of God – when we are able to see ourselves there, held in God’s amazing, loving grip, that changes everything. By God’s grace we’re invited into a more content, deeply satisfying, meaningful way of living. And that will change your life. **How do you feel about that line, “when we’re driven back into the heart of God?” What does that mean to you? What is the heart of God? Is that a good place to be? Why? Can practicing gratitude get you there?**

DAY #7 | Make a plan

Do any of these ideas – gratitude visits, blessing bowls, journaling apps – work for you? Do you have any other ideas to try? What is the best way for you to begin living in intentional gratitude? Make a plan, write it down, and share it with someone else. Check in again over the coming weeks and months and reflect on your progress. **Has it been difficult? Has it been transformational? In what ways?**