



# GRATITUDE

## A Grounding Understanding of Gratitude

Gratitude is a way of noticing. It is a practice of attention that widens the heart without denying reality. Scripture does not present gratitude as denial or spiritual bypass, but as truthful remembrance... voices that lament honestly while also bearing witness to God's steadfast love (Ps 136; 1 Thess 5:16–18; Phil 4:6).

In this sense, gratitude becomes a form of spiritual sight. It awakens perception to recognize God's presence not only in moments of joy, but also in landscapes marked by strain, uncertainty, or sorrow. Gratitude does not ask feelings to change. Instead, it allows awareness and compassion to meet whatever is present.

Over time, gratitude shapes how we move through the world. It forms memory... small moments of grace held together... that remind us we are not abandoned, even when life is fractured. Gratitude does not require certainty, strength, or positivity. It is often a modest turning of attention toward God, who meets us from within our embodied, unfinished humanity.

Gratitude is not perfection.  
It is presence.  
God is nearer than breath.

## A Breath Practice for Settling Into Gratitude

### Invitation

Choose a posture that offers enough steadiness for this moment... sitting, standing, or lying down. Allow your body to be supported. You may keep your eyes open or closed.

### Breath

Breathe in slowly through the nose.  
Pause briefly.  
Exhale a little longer than the inhale.

Repeat this rhythm two or three times, letting the exhale signal permission to arrive.

### **Awareness**

Notice sensations in your body... weight, warmth, tightness, ease.  
Nothing needs to be corrected or interpreted.

With the next breath, receive this truth:

God meets you here with attentiveness and care, without expectation that you feel a certain way.

### **Gratitude Practice**

You are free to engage one movement or several. Let pace, depth, and timing remain responsive to what feels supportive.

#### **1. Arriving With Awareness**

Sense your feet on the ground or the surface holding you.

If helpful, roll your shoulders, stretch your hands, or shift your weight.

**When ready, consider:**

*What small detail, moment, or memory carries a sense of goodness today?*

This may be simple... a sound, a color, a breath that felt steady, a brief interaction.  
Let awareness rest there without forcing meaning.

If gratitude feels inaccessible, that reality is welcome too.

#### **2. Remembering Traces of Care**

Allow your attention to drift across the past few days or weeks.

*What moments of care, support, or relief rise into your awareness?*

These may include rest, encouragement, a word from Scripture, or help you did not expect.  
Notice how your body responds as you remember.

#### **3. Holding Hardship and Hope Together**

Bring to mind a current challenge.

Let your breath stay steady as you name the reality of it.

**Now consider:**

*What signs of God's presence seem to accompany you in this place?*

This may be subtle... strength to keep going, the compassion of another, a moment of peace, or the reassurance that God understands suffering from the inside.

If nothing comes to mind, there is no failure here. Simply sit with the question and let it be.

#### 4. Extending Gratitude Toward Others

Let someone come to mind... recently present or from long ago.

*What memory of this person awakens appreciation or warmth?*

You may later choose to express gratitude outwardly, or simply hold this awareness in prayer.

#### 5. Attending to What Nourishes Gratitude

Notice what tends to open your heart toward thankfulness... connection, beauty, creativity, rest, movement, or shared laughter.

*What rhythms or practices feel supportive of gratitude taking root over time?*

Not as obligation, but as nourishment.

#### 6. Practicing Freedom From Comparison

When comparison arises... about pace, capacity, or story... pause.

*What aspects of your life feel meaningful, sustaining, or life-giving right now?*

Allow the breath to hold space around these without judgment.

## Reflection Companions

Let one question accompany you. There is no need to engage them all.

1. What seems to be stirring as gratitude comes to mind today?
2. What parts of your story feel illuminated through moments of goodness?
3. What feels tender, layered, or complicated in this practice right now?
4. What sensations or images reflect God's presence in your body or imagination?
5. What subtle invitations seem to be emerging as gratitude lingers?
6. What memories or bodily responses feel connected to gratitude today?
7. What spaciousness or insight unfolds as you reflect on recent experiences?

## A Closing Blessing

May gratitude walk beside you  
not demanding, not denying pain,  
but bearing witness to God's faithful presence.

May moments of goodness... small and real  
strengthen hope within you  
as you continue in the way of Christ.

*"Give thanks... for God's steadfast love endures forever."*

**Scriptural Anchors:** Ps 136, 1 Thess 5:16-18, Phil 4:6

**Footnote:** This framework draws from biblical theology and Christian formation, informed by insights from Barbara Holmes, Howard Thurman, Thomas Keating, Lisa Sharon Harper, Sheila Wise Rowe, Lisa Fields (Jude3 Project), and Tim Mackie (BibleProject).