

REFLECTION | Gratitude | 1 Corinthians 4:7 – Everything Is A Gift

Sometimes it can feel like we live worlds away from the lyrics of the song we've just sung. Our worlds are often dominated by grief over what we've lost, regret over what we've said or done, anger over what we're experiencing, or fear of what lies ahead. It doesn't feel like fields where God reveals deep peace to us, or like "I have all I want." It can feel like worlds away from anything that would prompt gratitude in us. **BUT...** what if gratitude is less a feeling, and more a mindset or a perspective, something we practice, not because we're thankful but in order to become more thankful?

In the New Testament it says: ***Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thess. 5:18)***. Let's be clear: it doesn't say "give thanks *for* every situation." We are not to be grateful for trauma, abuse, injustice, or global pandemics. But it does say, "Give thanks *in* every situation," because God is present in and to everything we experience, because there is always some grace to be grateful for (grace and grateful come from the same Latin word), there are always good gifts to notice, savour, and celebrate in everything.

So, we want to practice some gratitude this morning. It boosts the immune system, reduces the symptoms of depression and anxiety, is a bonding agent in relationship, and acts as a conduit of hope. And it reorients our hearts towards the God who is the source of every good thing we are privileged to experience in this life.

Here's how we are going to practice gratitude this morning, and how you can practice it all week long, either spontaneously throughout your day or by setting alarms to prompt you to remember to practice. The first step is simply to notice. You can't be grateful for things you don't notice. So, let's take a moment of awareness, noticing things we can be grateful for, whether things right here, right now, or things that you can call to mind in your mind's eye. Let's choose to notice some things we are grateful for, big or small, once in a lifetime things or everyday things. Take a moment to notice.

Notice things you are grateful for.

Now, let's take a moment to reflect again, this time, not on the things that we are grateful *for*, but for ways we are grateful *in* every situation. Perhaps these are things that, on the surface, we are not grateful *for*, because they are not what we would have ever wanted. But they are things that we can still be grateful *in*. Maybe we're grateful that people have risen to the surface as those who love and care about us. Or we can still be grateful at the ways that we are growing and changing because of what we're enduring. Or we can still be grateful that we can see God that God will never leave us or forsake us, despite how hard things get, despite how we feel. Or we can still be grateful that "this too shall pass." In what way can you still be grateful?

Notice ways that you can still be grateful "in every situation."

An essential final step in practicing gratitude is to express it. This is more than just a matter of good manners or being polite. It's about giving expression to your heartfelt appreciation. It's the proper culmination of our noticing and savouring. Take a minute now and imagine how you might try to genuinely express your deep gratitude this week to those you are grateful for, for the gift they are to you and for the gifts they have brought to your life. How could you express it?

Plan to express your gratitude to God and others.

The German theologian and mystic Meister Eckhart once said, "If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'Thank You,' that will be enough." Let's engage the regular practice of gratitude in a way that allows our whole lives to become prayers of thanksgiving to the God whose life and love in us *is* the greatest gift in life.