



# How Gratitude Works: Six Readings

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## ONE: GRATITUDE SHIFTS OUR FOCUS TO WHAT IS IMPORTANT.

When we express thanks we are focusing on the good things in our lives. We look at what is working, instead of what is not working. What we have instead of what we don't have. Who we love instead of who we don't love. We are reminded of what is really important in our lives, our values, family, friends, goals and achievements.

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*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Philippians 4:8*

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***“In the entire history of the universe, let alone in your own history, there has never been another day just like today, and there will never be another just like it again. Today is the point to which all your yesterdays have been leading since the hour of your birth. It is the point from which all your tomorrows will proceed until the hour of your death. If you were aware of how precious today is, you could hardly live through it. Unless you are aware of how precious it is, you can hardly be said to be living at all.” Frederick Buechner***

Focusing on the lovely, admirable things in our lives reminds us of God's goodness.

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*O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His loving-kindness is everlasting. 1 Chronicles 16:34*

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## TWO: GRATITUDE LOWERS ANXIETY.

When we think too much about the future we worry. The “what ifs” kick in and we can begin to become anxious. We can focus on what we think we will need in the future and miss the blessings that we have today.

Do we have something to eat today? Thank God.

Are our families well today? Thank God

Do we have on some clothes? Thank God.

Are we breathing today? Thank God.

God tells us his name is I Am – present tense. He is the God of now. Our gratitude for what we have today reminds us that God has provided for us and lowers our anxiety about the future.

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*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, **with thanksgiving**, present your requests to God. Philippians 4:6*

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***Here dies another day***

***During which I have had eyes, ears, hands***

***And the great world around me;***

***And with tomorrow begins another.***

***Why am I allowed two?***

***GK Chesterton***

What if we could just be thankful for today?

## THREE: GRATITUDE INCREASES SELF-ESTEEM.

Saying thank you acknowledges that someone has done something for us. And if we acknowledge that someone has done something for us then it follows that they value us.

In a way every time we say thank you to another person, we are admitting that we have value. And when we thank God for our blessings we become aware that He loves us.

***“To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything He has given us - and He has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of His love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense graces from Him.***

***Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference.”***

— **Thomas Merton**

Saying “thank you” blesses us and reinforces our sense of self -esteem. God esteems us greatly.

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*Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Psalm 106:1*

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## FOUR: GRATITUDE EXPANDS OUR OPTIONS.

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*The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart exults, And with my song I shall thank Him.*

*Psalm 28:7*

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When we are stuck in a problem we can only see the problem. We are in fight or flight mode and our bodies trigger chemical reactions to narrow our mental focus to the perceived threat. We can only see the negative.

Gratitude is an intentional act to focus on the positive things in our lives. We force our minds to expand the view of the world and remember the positive and good events and people around us.

All of a sudden we see new possibilities. We can move forward. Gratitude opens our eyes and widens our view.

Are you stuck today? Gratitude might be the way out.

***“Thanksgiving creates abundance.”***

***— Ann Voskamp***

## FIVE: GRATITUDE DEEPENS RELATIONSHIPS.

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*I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers . . .*

*Philemon 1:4*

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We are made for relationships--with God and with other people. Relationships can't happen unless we can come to each other with a humble spirit. Gratitude for the other opens in us humility and allows us to enter more deeply into our relationships.

***"I try hard to hold fast to the truth that a full and thankful heart cannot entertain great conceits. When brimming with gratitude, one's heartbeat must surely result in outgoing love, the finest emotion we can ever know." Bill W.***

***"In normal life we hardly realize how much more we receive than we give, and life cannot be rich without such gratitude. It is so easy to overestimate the importance of our own achievements compared with what we owe to the help of others." Dietrich Bonhoeffer***

***"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." Albert Schweitzer***

Who are you thankful for today?

## SIX: GRATITUDE GLORIFIES GOD.

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*Psalms 69:30–32*

*I will praise the name of God with a song;*

*I will magnify him with thanksgiving.*

*This will please the Lord more than an ox*

*or a bull with horns and hoofs.*

*Let the oppressed see it and be glad;*

*you who seek God, let your hearts revive!*

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***When David says, "I will magnify God with thanksgiving," he does not mean: "I will make a small God look bigger than he is. He means: "I will make a big God begin to look as big as he really is." We are not called to be microscopes, but telescopes. Christians are not called to be con-men who magnify their product out of all proportion to reality, when they know the competitor's product is far superior. There is nothing and nobody superior to God. And so the calling of those who love God is to make his greatness begin to look as great as it really is. The whole duty of the Christian can be summed up in this: feel, think, and act in a way that will make God look as great as he really is. Be a telescope for the world of the infinite starry wealth of the glory of God.***

***I Will Magnify God With Thanksgiving John Piper***

When we are thankful, God gets the glory! Are you thankful to God? Be a telescope.