

Hope

A Long Obedience in the Same Direction (Ch 12)

Gratitude

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Combine a theological understanding of components of the Christian life with practical experience.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE INTRODUCTION

Desire	to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting to live with a grateful heart, cognizant of God's work in my life and my abundant resources
Definition	Gratitude is a loving and thankful response toward God for his presence with us and within this world. Though "blessings" can move us into gratitude, it is not at the root of a thankful heart. Delight in God and his good will is the heartbeat of thankfulness.
Scripture	Psalm 136:1-2 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Philippians 4:6
Practice Includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- prayers and songs that focus on God's generosity- gratefully giving and sharing all you are and have as a sign of your thankfulness to God- expressing gratitude to others; the habit of saying "thank you""I am so grateful," you are so kind" and so forth- gratefully noticing God's presence and gifts throughout the day- practicing an abundance mentality; counting the blessings of life- keeping a gratitude journal of the myriad gifts God has brought you
God-Given Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- keeping company with Jesus no matter what happens- being aware of the abundance of gifts, benefits, mercies

	<p>and grace that have been poured into your life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - curbing critical tendencies by upstaging them with thanksgiving - seeing what you have as quickly as you see what you don't have - treasuring and valuing people by thanking them often and clearly for who they are to you or to someone else - daily thanking the Lord for his presence in your life - noticing your lack of gratitude and repenting of the idol that has your heart at that moment - receiving everything you have as a gift rather than as an entitlement
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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When you feel at the bottom of the food chain and dead last in terms of priority, how do you move toward gratitude?
2. When have you found that in retrospect you could have been thankful for something that you were not grateful for at the time it was happening? How can this perspective inform your life now?
3. How has a grateful person affected your own vision of what matters in life? How has someone who lives out of bitterness affected your life?
4. How does your disposition influence your attitude toward gratitude?
5. How are you addicted to criticism, analysis and negativity? How might thankfulness be an antidote to a critical spirit?

{Usually spiritual exercises are meant to be discussed/practiced in group but if prayer partners have been established feel free to give these out for individual or partner practice}

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1. Begin a gratitude journal by keeping a record of the "abundances" God has given you. Next to each abundance write what it means to you to have a God who interacts and intervenes in your life. • Notice what you have been given that you did not deserve. What do you want to say to God about these things?
2. End every day by saying thank you to God for at least one thing. Then tell God what that one thing meant for you.

3. Write a letter of thanks to someone who has touched your life in the past year, the past month, the past week.
4. Get a current hardship firmly in mind. How do you feel about this hardship? Tell the truth to God. • Where is there evidence of God's presence in this hardship? Is there anything you can be thankful for? • If you cannot find God in your hardship, spend some time with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. What does he want to tell you?
5. What sorts of things tend to encourage you in thankfulness? Praise songs? Worship? Time spent with friends? Giving and receiving presents? • Plan ways of incorporating the things that encourage thankfulness into your life on a regular basis.
6. Hold a thank you party. Invite the people you want to honor with a thank you.
7. Create a thank you scrapbook. Beside photos and pictures, write your prayers of thanksgiving.
8. Notice your tendency to make comparisons that result in feelings of dissatisfaction or entitlement. Practice abstaining from comparative statements about what you don't have. Instead give thanks for what you do have.