

ReDay

Renew...Refresh...Restore...Retreat



A grateful heart...

Another year has ended and a new one begins.

We pause at the threshold of this new year and take the time to look backwards with gratefulness, and forward with thankful hope.

Perhaps at first glance, as you look back on the past year, it might seem there is little to be thankful for – it might take some digging, some reflecting, maybe even some re-evaluating, but hopefully you will indeed find that God has been faithful and has been present in ways you didn't expect.

Perhaps right now, your heart is brimming over with thankfulness for the myriad ways you have encountered God and experienced his blessings in the past year and you can't help but sing, and even dance, with joy.

Most of us probably fall somewhere in between these two spaces – recognising there have been many reasons for thanksgiving, yet acknowledging that sometimes it has been incredibly hard to be grateful.

This month we take the opportunity to reflect on how we have experienced God in the past year, offer our gratitude for his goodness and faithfulness, and strengthen our faith that his love and mercy will accompany us into the uncertain days ahead.

Here is the video link if you would like to follow this on-line:- <https://youtu.be/xsYDzcKkdJc>

A grateful heart...

Call to worship

Raise your voices; make a beautiful noise to the Eternal, all the earth.
Serve the Eternal gladly; enter into His presence singing songs of joy!
Know this: the Eternal One Himself is the True God.
He is the One who made us; we have not made ourselves;
we are His people, like sheep *grazing* in His fields.
Go through His gates, giving thanks; walk through His courts, giving praise.
Offer Him your gratitude and praise His *holy* name.
Because the Eternal is good, His loyal love *and mercy* will never end,
and His truth will last throughout all generations.
Ps 100 (VOICE)



Scripture

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!"
³² Let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them!
³³ Let the trees of the forest sing, let them sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth.
³⁴ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.
1 Chron 16:31-34

Prayer

Lord, we give you thanks, for you are good. *Your love endures forever.*
God of gods, we give you thanks. Your love endures forever.
Lord of lords, we give you thanks: *Your love endures forever.*

Lord, we give you thanks for your unfailing love
and your wonderful deeds for mankind,
for you satisfy the thirsty and fill the hungry with good things.

*We give you thanks, Lord, for your unfailing love
and your wonderful deeds for mankind.
We will sacrifice thank offerings and
tell of your works with songs of joy.*

We exalt you in the assembly of the people
and praise you in the council of the elders.

Thank you, Lord.

From Ps 136:1-3; Ps 107:8-9, 21-22,32



Song Suggestion: Give thanks with a grateful heart...

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Col 3:15-17

Reflection

We have a thanksgiving jar. Throughout the year, when we experience something unexpectedly good, or God blesses us in a new way, we note it down on a slip of paper and pop it into our thanksgiving jar.

On New Year's Eve we pull the slips out of the jar and read them through. The first time we did this, we were amazed to read of things God had done throughout the year, or blessings we had received from other people, that we had totally forgotten about. Yes, we had expressed our gratitude at the time – but there was something special about taking time, at the end of the year, to gather all these blessings together and to remember the many weird and wonderful ways that God has lavished us with his love and grace. (One such weird example was someone giving us a large piece of gourmet meat at a Farmer's Market to take home and cook up!!)

It also enabled us to look back over the year with more of a bird's-eye view. Recognising that we can sometimes get stuck in the doldrums, when nothing much is happening, or feel like we're drowning when storms abound, it was such encouragement to us to look above and beyond those times to see the faithfulness of God, stretched out like a canopy over us through the year.

Most, if not all, of the festivals ordained by God in the Old Testament were intended as a way to keep his faithfulness and provision in the minds of his people.

The Passover was to be celebrated as a reminder of how God freed his people from Egypt (Deut 16).

The crossing of the Jordan River was to be remembered and celebrated by the pillar of stones left there afterwards (Joshua 4:1-7).

The Festival of Purim was to remember how God once again delivered his people from their enemies (Esther 9:28).

Again and again, God calls his people to remember what he has done:

Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced ...
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.
1 Chron 16:12, 34

When we look back and remember, we give thanks.

We celebrate.

We sing and praise, and if we are like Miriam (after the crossing of the Red Sea)
we dance with our tambourines!

When we remember and give thanks – we strengthen our faith for the future.

If God *did* this... (*whatever it might be*),
if God *is* this... (*loving, merciful, giving...etc*),
then we can trust him for today, tomorrow and whatever lies ahead in the new year.

Looking back with gratitude enables us to move forward with hope.

There may be stormy seas ahead of us in this new year
– but we have survived them in the past because God has led us through.

There may be times of sadness, loss, and darkness – but we have come through them before,
because we have not had to go through those times alone.

We may at times feel alone, confused, and uncertain – but we remember with gratitude that every time we
have felt that way before, God was there with us, even if at the time we didn't know it.

As one year ends, and a new one begins,
the one certainty we have is that the God who walked with us in 2019 will walk with us in 2020.

As we look back with grateful hearts,
we affirm the goodness, grace and mercy of God that is new every morning.

*What would you find in **your** thanksgiving jar if you were to look back over the past year?*

What 'stones' would you use to build a memorial to the wonders God has done?

Silence

Scripture

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord,
continue to live your lives in him,
rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught,
and overflowing with thankfulness.
Col 2:6-7



Prayer

Come, let us give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness;
Let us sing the praises of the name of the LORD Most High.

*I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.
I will be glad and rejoice in you;
I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High.*

Praise the LORD.
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.
From Ps 7:17; Ps 9:1-2; Ps 106:1

Scripture

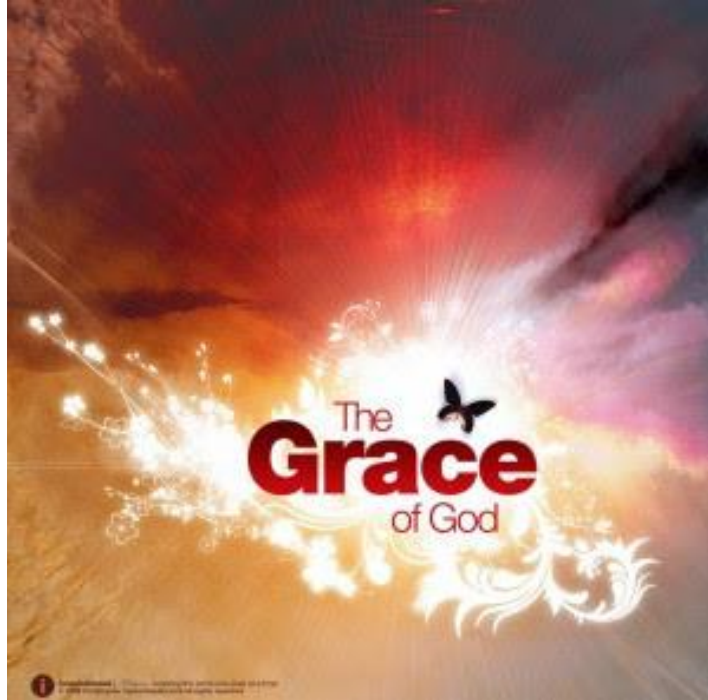
Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all.
The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
Phil 4:4-7

Benediction

May your heart be filled with thankfulness as you notice
God's great love and grace poured out on you during this past year.

May you see his goodness and mercy in all things.

And may you be filled with grateful hope as you embrace all that this new year holds for you,
knowing that the One who created you is walking with you and holding you in his arms.¹



¹ JTB

GOING DEEPER: some suggestions that may help you in your time of reflection.

- **Reflect:** Read through the Reflection again. Notice what stands out for you and think about why this might be. Notice the words: what moved you? What challenged you? When do you find it easy to be thankful? When is it harder? Where in your life do these words resonate?
- **The Bible** is full of the call to give thanks and the Psalms overflow with thanksgiving, even in difficult circumstances. Here are some passages which you might like to read again that have something to say about giving thanks: Phil 4:4-7; 1 Thess 5:18; 1 Chron 16:31-34; Ps 9:1-2 (of David); Psalm 100 (VOICE); Matthew 15:29-39; Luke 22:17-20; Col 1:9-14; Eph 5:15-20; Rev 11:16-17

Choose one (or more) of these passages (or any other that comes to mind) and think about what God is saying to you through his Word. Reflect on the words used in these passages and how they might or might not impact your life today.

- Use one of the Bible passages or songs provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**. (see below)
- **Visualise Scripture!** Choose a Scripture passage that speaks to you of thankfulness. The story of the thankful leper is a good one to use (Luke 17:11-19). Slowly read the passage through. Close your eyes and picture what is being described. What do you see, smell, hear? What would it feel like to imagine your life like that today? How is God speaking to you through this? You could either record this experience in your journal or share it with someone.
- **Meditate** on a verse that reminds or inspires you to give thanks. It might be a verse from the material above, or you could use a concordance to find a verse that speaks to your heart at this moment. Simply sit quietly and slowly repeat the verse until you feel it settling into your heart.
- **Be creative:** think of ways you can creatively express your thankfulness to God for all he has done for you – think about everything you can be thankful for and how you can creatively depict some of those. You could also express some new insight you have gained from the above Scripture passages. Ideas include creating a collage, drawing, painting or sculpting some of the things you are thankful for. You could write a poem, prayer, or song that challenges or inspires others, or simply write your own love song or prayer.
- Go for a **walk**. What do you see in the world around you that fills you with thanksgiving? Are there some places where you find it hard to be thankful? Does this challenge you in any way? In what ways can you encourage those around you to be more thankful?
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time sharing your reflections or insights. Share what God might be saying to you about this topic. Pray together.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:
 - Thank God** for who he is and what he is doing in your life
 - Notice** what is happening around you and in you
 - Respond** to what God has shown you, by thanking him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him
- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.
- **Give thanks...** when you are having trouble sleeping, or you feel consumed with worry, start with the letter 'A' and go through the alphabet, finding something to be thankful for starting with each letter – yes, even the trickier ones!!

EVEN DEEPER

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

Mars Hill Bible Church marshill.org/teaching/sp

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN - Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

This is something that can be done throughout the day or at the end of the day. It helps us to become more aware of and focused on the presence of God in the midst of everyday life.

1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

Mars Hill Bible Church marshill.org/teaching/sp