

THANKSGIVING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE PACKET

Thank you for downloading the handouts for the thanksgiving teaching by Susanne Hassell. You can find more resources from Susanne at <http://holypaths.org>.

Page 2: Expression of Gratitude for Individuals and Small Groups

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Pages 4–6: A liturgy to read personally or with a group with a giving thanks theme.

Expression of Gratitude for Individuals and Small Groups

- **Read psalms of thanksgiving.**
Psalm 30, 34, 40, 138 were written by individuals who complained to God and God responded.
Psalms 65, 66, 107, 124, 129 are examples when the entire community complained, were saved, and then offered their collective thanks.
- **Write your own Psalm of Thanksgiving, using the attached sheet as an aid.**
- **Reflection Questions for Personal Journaling or Small Group Discussion:**

Do I believe in a God who rouses Himself just now and then to spill a bit of benevolence on hemorrhaging humanity? A God who breaks through the carapace of this orb only now and then, surprises us with a spared hand, a reprieve from sickness, a good job and a nice house in the burbs—and then finds Himself again too impotent to deal with all I see as suffering and evil? A God of sporadic, random, splattering goodness—that now and then splatters across a gratitude journal? Somebody tell me:

What are all the other moments?

What is good? What counts as grace? What is the heart of God?

Ann Voskamp, *One Thousand Gifts*

What does Gratitude have to do with Grace?

“Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth.” - Karl Barth

“Grace evokes gratitude like the voice of an echo. Gratitude follows grace as thunder follows lightning.” – Winn Collier

To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything God 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 gift of 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 man knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference.

--Thomas Merton

There are few things more subversive in this world than someone who sees grace in every corner, who chuckles easy and loves easy and has both whimsy and mirth mixed in with even their honest assessments of the way things truly are. These glad-hearted people have discovered that thankfulness is not merely a discipline but the only sane way to live in a world offering so much gritty beauty, so much possibility for love, so many joys.

These unlikely provocateurs have not caved to rose-tinted glasses or withdrawn from bitter reality. They simply know that sorrow does not finally own the day. They do not ignore the pain. Quite the opposite, their heart has grown so large that the life they know possesses the courage to see all that is wrong and yet has strength enough to gather the afflictions into itself, allowing love to tend to the wounds. They know that joy, not misery, holds the ace. And they are so very, very thankful.

Ann Voskamp, *One Thousand Gifts*

Psalms of Thanksgiving and Praise

How would you like to name God in your psalm?

What praise or thanks can you offer to God?

How or where do you wish to give God thanks?

What has God done for you, your community, your nation, or the earth?

List other things that would cause or inspire you to give God thanks.

Who would you want to invite to join you in giving thanks to God?

What trouble or adversity is behind you now?

Psalms of thanksgiving have these features in common (see Ps. 107 as an example):

- Address God
- Tell God the trouble
- Admit need and helplessness
- Deliverance – what God has done for individuals or communities
- Thank God for His deeds

Walter Brueggemann says that these psalms are not written in innocence, but in context and full awareness of life's obstacles. They tell the stories of God's people going into trouble (disorientation) and coming out of trouble with radical gratitude (new orientation.)

Sometimes psalms of thanksgiving lead into **psalms of praise**.

Praise psalms are often "list" psalms, listing places, people, things, occasions, and reasons to praise God. Read Psalms 146, 147, 148, 149, 150 as examples.

List people, places, creatures, and occasions that inspire you to give praise to God.

Using words or phrases such as *holy, praise, thanks, wondrous, blessing and honor* – all introduce aspects of praise for God. Using repetitive phrases like "Praise God" help to structure a psalm (see Ps. 148 as an example.)

Thanksgiving Liturgy Reading

Call to Worship

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands!

Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

For all the times we laughed till our sides ached;

for all the times we were troubled

and friends we didn't know we had

sprang up from nowhere and ministered to us;

for all the times we could have been hurt, but weren't;

for all the times we could have died suddenly and unprepared, but didn't.

O Lord, we thank you.

Know that the Lord is God!

It is he that made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

For the sheer wonder of our creation, preservation, and redemption;

for the privilege of prayer, the gift of the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit;

for the everlasting arms beneath us,

the watchful eye above us,

the friends around us,

and the trust within us;

O Lord, we thank you.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,

and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him, bless his name!

For the Lord is good.

For seedtime and harvest and food enough;

for every good night's sleep and every good day's work;

for every good friend and every grand sunset;

for warm memories of the past

and the promise of an eternal tomorrow;

for eyes to see beauty,

ears to hear a bird's songs,

hands to hold someone else's hands,

and someone else's hands to hold;

O Lord, we thank you.

His steadfast love endures forever

and his faithfulness to all generations.

For all persons whose love for us is unconditional,

and in whose presence we can drop all pretense,

be ourselves,
and know that we shall be accepted;
for the one who calls us long distance
and the one who calls us beloved,
and the one who calls us Dad or Mom;
for the one who shall one day call us into eternity;

O Lord, we thank you.

What shall we render to the Lord for all his bounty to us?

We will offer to him the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Amen.

—based on Psalm 100; 116:12, 17 by Louis Lotz. *For His Excellent Greatness.*

SELAH (let us pause to meditate on these things)

Deuteronomy 8:10-18 (The Message)

Great God of our lives,
for all that is gracious in our lives,
revealing the image of Christ,
we give you thanks.

For the beauty and wonder of your creation, in earth and sky and sea,

we give you thanks.

For our daily food and drink,
our homes and families, and our friends,

we give you thanks.

For minds to think and hearts to love and hands to serve,

we give you thanks.

For health and strength to work, and leisure to rest and play,

we give you thanks.

For this country and the opportunity to better ourselves,

and for all valiant seekers after truth, liberty, and justice,

we give you thanks.

For the great mercies and promises given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord;

we praise you, God.

For your help in times of doubt and sorrow:

for healing our diseases,

for preserving us in temptation and danger,

we praise you, God.

For the universal church into which we have been called:
for the good news we receive by Word and sacrament,
for our life together in the Lord,

we praise you, God.

For your Holy Spirit,
who guides our steps and brings us gifts of faith and love,
who prays in us and prompts our grateful worship,

we praise you, God.

For your Son Jesus Christ,
who lived and died and lives again for our salvation:
for our hope in him,
for the joy of serving him,

we give you thanks.

we praise you, God.

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