

INTRO

- Do you enjoy writing? Writing thoughts? Writing prayers?
- Paper & pen? Digital?
- When you were a child did your family pray at meals or at bedtime? Did you have a favourite family prayer?

READ

Luke 1:46-56

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, **so walk in Him**, having been firmly rooted *and now* being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, **and overflowing with gratitude.**

Colossians 2:6-7 (NASB)

REFLECT

Gratitude gives us a firm foundation to build our life on.

1. Gratitude - A foundation to build on (past)

Mary knew this of God, “He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

Qu: What expressions of gratitude for the past faithfulness of God are helpful to face challenges you may encounter?

2. Gratitude - Strength for today (present)

Though her future was unknown, Mary could speak with certainty of God’s goodness towards her, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.”

Paul said in Colossians as we walk in Christ our lives would be overflowing with gratitude.

Qu: Do you have any daily personal practices of gratitude?

3. Gratitude - Hope for tomorrow (future)

Mary spoke with confidence about the future: “For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”

She knew this about God, “And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.”

Qu: Can you see ways in which gratitude can help you look hopefully to the future?

Qu: What might it look like to express gratitude in the midst of life’s uncertainties?

RESPOND

Qu: What prayer practices are you trying to implement from this series?

PRAY

Our English word gratitude is derived from the Latin word *gratia*, which means grace, graciousness, or gratefulness.

1 Timothy 6:17 reminds us that it is “...God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.”

James 1:17 tells us, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...”

Also, in 2 Peter 1:3, we are told, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...”

In light his grace, pray specific prayers of gratitude the evidence of God’s goodness you see in your lives.

A Daily Examen

1. Become aware of God's presence. Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. Review the day with gratitude. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures.

3. Pay attention to your emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings? God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these sins and faults. But look deeply for other implications.

4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

- Ask God for light. Look at the day with God's eyes, not merely your own.
- Renew your awareness of God's love for you as your one true and perfect Father.
- Give thanks. The day you have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it.
- Review the day. Look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit.
- Doing a deep, honest reflection of the past day causes us to learn more about ourselves.
- If you have placed your faith in Christ, you're reviewing your life from a place of love and acceptance. In other words, you're not trying to earn his approval or acceptance — but because Christ has gained acceptance for you, you can respond in gratitude to his grace.
- Ask God to help you as you look forward to a new day tomorrow. Resolve to cooperate and trust in the loving guidance of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.