

THE REASON FOR GRATITUDE

Oct 16, 2020

Psalm 136

¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

His love endures forever.

² Give thanks to the God of gods.

His love endures forever.

³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

His love endures forever.

I Thessalonians 5: 16 – 18

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

This month we've been talking about the spiritual practice of gratitude and giving you lots of ideas for different ways to practice gratitude. There is a lot of information available about gratitude but why is it a spiritual practice?

A quick search of Scripture will bring up verses like those above which tell us that giving thanks to God is a command from him. I've learned that God's commands are always for my own good.

Gratitude is a loving and thankful response to God for his presence in our lives and in the world. There is a saying by the 15th Century Dutch philosopher Erasmus that translated means "bidden or unbidden, God is present". By that we mean that no matter what the circumstances, or whether we realize it or not, God is present with us.

As we give thanks for this reality, we begin to increasingly see our lives through a God lens. Giving thanks does not change our circumstances, rather it changes our response to our circumstances. Even more importantly, it changes our response to God.

Though "blessings" can move us toward gratitude, it is not at the root of a thankful heart. Delight in God is the heartbeat of thankfulness. Our desire is to be sensitive to the

Holy Spirit's prompting to live with a grateful heart, aware of God's work in our life and the abundance of our resources.

The book, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun (p. 31) lists the following God given fruits of living with grateful towards God and others

- keeping company with Jesus no matter what happens
- being aware of the abundance of gifts, benefits, mercies and grace that have been poured into your life
- 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

Gratitude is remembering who is the creator of our life and everything in it. Even when life is really difficult and there doesn't seem to be anything to give thanks for, we can give thanks to God that he is present with us in the midst of the darkness. As Deuteronomy 31:8 says "*The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.*" This promise is the greatest reason for giving thanks.

And in case you are wondering, here are some videos that talk about the science of gratitude.

The Gratitude Experience

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5IZBjWDR_c&list=PL5CFC35F6775BC8BD&index=42&t=9s

The Science of Gratitude

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5IZBjWDR_c&list=PL5CFC35F6775BC8BD&index=42&t=9s