

*Prayer is sitting in the silence until it silences us,
Choosing gratitude until we are grateful
And praising God until we ourselves are an act of praise.
(Richard Rohr)*

PREPARATION

- Review the handouts for each gratitude station.
- Copy Gratitude Station Instructions (several of each)
- Copy Responsive Reading for closing (enough for each participant)

Materials:

- Chimes, gong or bell to signal moving from one station to another
- Computer or CD player
- Songs on CD or computer: on gratitude and a praise song for closing. Suggested: "Thank You, God" by Julie True (download at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIYZWVfUlvI>)
- Materials for each station:
 - #1
 - Photos of faces from magazines: young, old, babies, men, women
 - Blank notecards and envelopes
 - Colored Pens
 - Postage Stamps
 - #2
 - Photos of nature: changing seasons, mountains, deserts, forests, ocean, fields, flowers, clouds, night sky
 - #3
 - Rocks (purchased or collected), enough for each participant to have one
 - #4
 - A Bible, a journal, a communion cup, a pitcher of water, a candle, a small bouquet of flowers

Room Set-up

- A comfortable room with enough room to set up 4 gratitude stations
- Set chairs up in a circle to establish intimacy within the group for the beginning of the workshop
- Set up 4 stations in corners of the room with tables, chairs and materials.

I. Welcome and Introduction

- ▶ Welcome participants and ask:
 - *What drew you to a workshop on gratitude?*
 - *Why do you think gratitude might be included as a spiritual discipline?*

▶ Read:

*To be grateful for the good things that happen in our lives is easy, but to be grateful for all of our lives—the good as well as the bad, the moments of joy as well as the moments of sorrow, the successes as well as the failures, the rewards as well as the rejections—that requires hard spiritual work. Still, we are only truly grateful people when we can say thank you to all that has brought us to the present moment. As long as we keep dividing our lives between events and people we would like to remember and those we would rather forget, we cannot claim the fullness of our beings as a gift of God to be grateful for. Let's not be afraid to look at everything that has brought us to where we are now and trust that we will soon see in it the guiding hand of a loving God. (Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*)*

▶ Ask: How does this quote color your idea of gratitude as a spiritual discipline?

▶ Explain: Gratitude, or praise, is known as the “gateway” spiritual discipline. Consider what Psalm 100:1-4a says:

Lift up a great shout of joy to the Lord!

Go ahead and do it—everyone, everywhere!

As you serve him, be glad and worship him.

Sing your way into his presence with joy!

And realize what this really means—

we have the privilege of worshiping the Lord our God.

For he is our Creator and we belong to him.

We are the people of his pleasure.

You can pass through his open gates with the password of praise.

*Come right into his presence with thanksgiving. (Poetry on Fire, *The Passion Translation*)*

▶ Play “Thank You, God” by Julie True or other song of gratitude.

▶ Ask: What words in the song made an impression on you? Why?

II. Gratitude Stations

▶ Divide participants into 4 groups.

▶ Explain:

▪ You will 25 minutes at each station. It is important that you give one another the gift of solitude while at each station.

▪ Please do not to interrupt one another with questions or chatter.

▪ There are instructions posted at each station.

▪ You hear (bell, chime, gong . . .) when it is time to move to the next station.

▶ Feel free to take bathroom breaks in between stations.

▶ Guide groups to their first stations and signal the start of the practice.

III. Closing

▶ Reconvene and debrief, asking: *What will you take home with you today?*

▶ Play a praise song that most people will know, such as “This is the Day”

▶ Join in the responsive reading of Psalm 136:1-9; 23-26

Gratitude Station #1 Meditation Suggestions

Station #1

Look at the photos on the table and let them remind you of the people in your life that you are thankful for. Close your eyes and let those people rise up in your mind. There will be the obvious ones, but some will undoubtedly surface from your unconscious. The piano teacher you had as a child. Your 9th grade algebra teacher or middle school English teacher. The person who waits on you every day when you stop for coffee. Take a few moments to reflect back on your childhood, your adolescence, your college years, years as a young parent, today. In your journal, jot down the names that come to the surface. How have they blessed your life? Write a note of thanks to one or two of these people. Address a card and place a stamp on it, and mail it after the workshop. If you enjoy videoing a message, or calling someone in person to thank them, find a quiet spot to do so where you will not disturb anyone else.

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Gratitude Station #2 Meditation Suggestions

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Let the skies be filled with praise
and the highest heavens with the shouts of glory!

² Go ahead—praise him, all you his messengers!
Praise him some more, all you heavenly hosts!

³ Keep it up, sun and moon!
Don't stop now, all you twinkling stars of light!

⁴ Take it up even higher—up to the highest heavens,
until the cosmic chorus thunders his praise!^[a]

⁵ Let the entire universe erupt with praise to God.
From nothing to something he spoke and created it all.

⁶ He established the cosmos to last forever,
and he stands behind his commands
so his orders will never be revoked.

⁷ Let the earth join in with this parade of praise!
You mighty creatures of the ocean's depths,
echo in exaltation!

⁸ Lightning, hail, snow, and clouds,
and the stormy winds that fulfill his word.

⁹ Bring your melody, O mountains and hills;
trees of the forest and field, harmonize your praise!

¹⁰⁻¹² Praise him, all beasts and birds, mice and men,
kings, queens, princes, and princesses,
young men and maidens, children and babes,
old and young alike, everyone everywhere!

¹³ Let them all join in with this orchestra of praise.
For the name of the Lord is the only name we raise!
His stunning splendor ascends higher than the heavens.

¹⁴ He anoints his people with strength and authority,
showing his great favor to all his godly lovers,
even to his princely people, Israel,
who are so close to his heart.
Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

-Psalm 148 (The Passion)

- Take some time to look at the pictures on the table.
- What photo holds the most energy for you? Pick it up and let yourself enter the picture. Place yourself there. Close your eyes and let all 5 senses notice what is going on around you. What do you see, hear, smell? What can you touch? What can you taste? Remain there for several minutes. Ask yourself, "In this very moment, what am I thankful for?"
- Write a hymn or psalm of praise to God.

Gratitude Station #3 Meditation Suggestions

Station #3

Read the following texts.

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us." 1 Samuel 7:12

*One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.*

*They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.*

*They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds. Psalm 145:4-6 (NIV)*

In 1 Samuel, Samuel puts up a stone of remembrance, which he calls an Ebenezer, to remind the Israelites that God has delivered them by his might and power. In other Old Testament stories, our biblical forefathers do the same, naming the place where they met God. Sit in silence for a few moments, meditating on those places where God has met you; where God has delivered you; where God has saved you. It may help to jot these stories down in your journal. Choose one of the places where God has met you in a powerful way. Choose a rock, letting their colors and shapes speak to you. Take some time to meditate on a good name for your rock. Write a story in your journal about how God met you in this particular situation, and how you have chosen and named a rock of remembrance. You may want to write a prayer of thanksgiving. If you wish, take the rock home and put in a prominent place in your home—maybe your bedside table or on a shelf in the kitchen or bathroom. This is a rock that you can actually pick up and hold, or slip into your pocket on those really hard days. Consider sharing the rock and the story with someone you love.

Gratitude Station #4 Meditation Suggestions

Station #4

Each of us has his or her own personal pathway to God; a pathway that most readily leads us into God's presence. For some it's worship, for others it's service. For some it's intercessory prayer, and others, wordless meditation. Spending time with the body of Christ on Sunday morning may be the pathway for one, and time spent alone in nature may be the main pathway for another. The objects on the table are there as reminders or jump-off points for your meditation. Identify your chosen pathways. There will probably be more than one. Close your eyes and meditate on what pathways bring you joy in your walk with the Lord. Write them down in your journal. Write a prayer of thanksgiving that God readily waits for you in these places. You may want to find a scripture that speaks to your chosen pathway.

Take some time to reflect on how you can spend more time in God's presence; more time on those pathways where gratitude and praise wells up and spills over. If you have your calendar with you, get it out and find some times to plug in 30 minutes for a walk in the park, a cup of coffee with a friend who has lost a loved one, a regular time of meditation. Even if you don't have your calendar with you, jot down some regular times, on a weekly basis, to walk your most joy-giving pathway to the Lord.

Station #4

Each of us has his or her own personal pathway to God; a pathway that most readily leads us into God's presence. For some it's worship, for others it's service. For some it's intercessory prayer, and others, wordless meditation. Spending time with the body of Christ on Sunday morning may be the pathway for one, and time spent alone in nature may be the main pathway for another. The objects on the table are there as reminders or jump-off points for your meditation. Identify your chosen pathways. There will probably be more than one. Close your eyes and meditate on what pathways bring you joy in your walk with the Lord. Write them down in your journal. Write a prayer of thanksgiving that God readily waits for you in these places. You may want to find a scripture that speaks to your chosen pathway.

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Responsive Reading

Psalm 136:1-9; 23-26 The Passion Translation (adapted)

Let everyone thank God, for God is good, and easy to please!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Give thanks to God, our King over all gods!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!!

Give thanks to the Lord over all lords!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Give thanks to the only miracle working God!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Give thanks to the Creator who made the heavens with wisdom!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

To the One who formed dry ground, raising it up from the sea!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Praise the One who created every heavenly light!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

God set the sun in the sky to rule over day!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Praise the One who set in place the moon and stars to rule over the night!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

He's the God who chose us when we were nothing!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

God has rescued us from the power of our enemies!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

God provides food for hungry men and animals!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Give thanks to the great God of the heavens!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

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