

Cultivating a Thankful Heart

14-Day Devotional
Pastor Ron Laney



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First Edition: November 2025

Cultivating a Thankful Heart

A 14-day Journey

READ • REFLECT • RESPOND



Autumn arrives with cooler temps, beautiful colors, and falling leaves. This season reminds us to reflect on what matters most. It's a time to re-focus, slow down, eat some great food and gather with those we love. It's Thanksgiving season - time to cultivate genuine gratitude rooted in who God is and the many blessings He has given.

Whether you're walking through your best season or worst, a focused season of gratitude will help change your perspective and heal your soul. My hope in writing this devotional is to help you see the beauty and glory all around. I pray for you to become more grateful for the little things, the big things and the eternal things that anchor us in all seasons of life.

Use this personally, with family, or a friend. Each daily devotion is in 3 sections: Read, Reflect and Respond. Work it into your life however fits you. Let the Word sink deep and watch how this season of thankfulness lifts your spirit to new heights.

Grace & Peace! -- Pastor Ron

Day 1

The Call to Thanksgiving



Day 1: READ

Psalm 100

Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.



Day 1: REFLECT

This psalm doesn't just suggest gratitude. It tells us to do it. Make a joyful shout. Serve with gladness. Enter His gates with thanksgiving. This is how we are meant to approach God.

The psalmist gives you three reasons to be grateful. First, God made you. You exist because He created you on purpose. Second, you belong to Him. You're His people, His sheep, under His care. Third, His mercy is everlasting and His truth endures forever.

Gratitude starts with remembering who God is. He's good. Not sometimes good or mostly good. He IS good. That's His nature, His character, His essence. God is good and His mercy is everlasting. Everything else you'll learn about gratitude flows from this truth. When you begin to see God's unchanging goodness, thanksgiving becomes your natural response.

Day 1: RESPOND

Read Psalm 100 out loud three times today. Let the words sink in. Then write down or think about three specific ways God has shown His goodness in your life lately. Thank Him for each one.

Psalm 100 says, “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.” Let this shape how you approach God. Start with thanks. It’s a great spiritual practice.



Day 2

Remember His Benefits



Day 2: READ

Psalm 103:1-5

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:

who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.



Day 2: REFLECT

David talked to himself. He told his own soul to bless God and remember His many benefits. That's intentional gratitude, not waiting for feelings to catch up.

Look at the list David made. God forgives ALL your iniquities. He heals ALL your diseases. He redeems your life from destruction. He crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies. He satisfies you with good things. That's a wonderful benefits package for God's children.

When you intentionally remember God's benefits, your perspective shifts. You must fight against forgetfulness. Learn to remember on purpose so you “forget not”. Your current struggles don't disappear, but they shrink in comparison to His proven faithfulness. The LORD has been good before and He'll be good again, in the here and now and for all eternity!

Day 2: RESPOND

Make your own list like David did. Write down specific benefits you've received from God. Include both spiritual blessings and practical blessings. Read your list out loud and thank Him for each one.



Day 3

The LORD is Merciful



Day 3: READ

Psalm 103:8-12

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.



Day 3: REFLECT

These verses paint a beautiful picture of God's mercy. God is slow to anger. He doesn't explode when you mess up. He doesn't give up on you when you fail. The fact you are still here testifies of this.

God hasn't abandoned you. He's still working on you, still shaping, still patient. He has not dealt with you according to your sins. If God gave you what you actually deserved, where would you be? But He's abounding in mercy, not keeping score of your failures. He stands ready to forgive and repair the relationship. It's proof of His desire to see you become who He created you to be.

I love the picture these words paint – “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” When we seek forgiveness, God is merciful. He removes our sins far from us – never to hold them against us. Jesus paid a high price for you to experience this kind of forgiveness and freedom. Be thankful to Him and bless His holy name!

Day 3: RESPOND

Do you need forgiveness? Ask the LORD and He will hear you and forgive you.

Take some time to thank Jesus for the mercy He has extended to you. His mercy is what makes everything possible.



Day 4

Yet Will I Rejoice



Day 4: READ

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Though the fig tree may not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor
of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no
food; though the flock may be cut off from
the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls
—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in
the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my
strength; He will make my feet like deer's
feet, and He will make me walk on my high
hills.



Day 4: REFLECT

Habakkuk was facing a disastrous situation. No fruit. No crops. Everything gone. Yet he chose joy anyway. This is the test of real faith. Anyone can be grateful when life goes smoothly. But can you rejoice when the bottom drops out? Can you thank God when circumstances are not good?

Notice where Habakkuk put His focus. He focused on God Himself. The Lord God is my strength. The God of my salvation. God's identity doesn't change when your situation collapses. He remains the same. He is the Everlasting God who does not change.

Your gratitude must not depend on what's happening around you. It must depend on who is with you in the middle of it all. God remains your strength whether the vines produce fruit or not. His presence is enough. Some seasons of life, God is all you've got. Be resolved to draw close to God in the good times and bad. You will discover this truth about The LORD, "in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Ps 16:11)

Day 4: RESPOND

Think of at least three truths about God's character that remain unchanged by your circumstances. Thank God for being who He is regardless of what you're facing. Ask the LORD to be your salvation and strength. Ask the LORD to empower you to walk through the tough places.



Day 5

Praise the LORD



Day 5: READ

Psalm 150

1 Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

2 Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

3 Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp!

4 Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!

5 Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals!

6 Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!



Day 5: REFLECT

All of creation is called upon to praise the LORD. Strike up the band, lift your voice, break out in dancing – God is worthy of it all! Make your praise extravagant. God has been good to you, don't remain silent or even quiet. Get with it! Praise the LORD! And on this side of the Cross, our praise should be even more evident.

Every breath you take is a gift from God. It's just right for us to lift up our Father and Creator. God has been so good to us.

“Praise the LORD” should be a phrase that jumps out of our mouths.

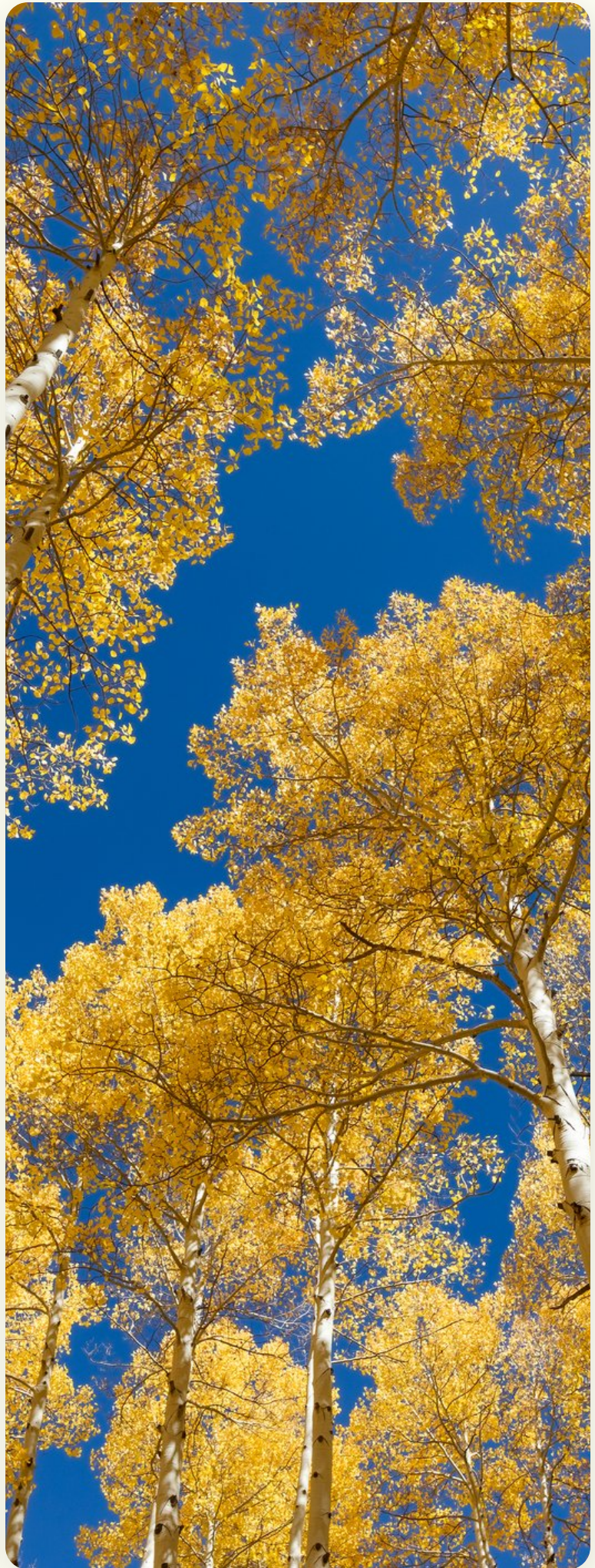
Listen to what comes out of your mouth on a typical day. Complaints? Criticism? Negativity? Or thanksgiving and praise? Grateful people speak differently. Let's make praise a habit, a reflex. It reshapes your perspective and attitude.

Train yourself to see God's hand in everything. Let's train our minds to worship instead of worry, praise instead of panic, thanks instead of complaints. Shift your eyes to the LORD and all He's done for you.

Day 5: RESPOND

Here's your challenge: Go complaint-free for the next 24 hours. Every time you catch yourself about to complain, replace it with a "Praise the LORD". If you slip, catch yourself and reset your heart to praise-mode.

Rinse and repeat! :-)



Day 6

Thank God for People



Day 6: READ

Philippians 1:3-7

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.



Day 6: REFLECT

Paul thanked God for the Philippians every time they crossed his mind. This is intentional gratitude for our God-given relationships. God did not design you to walk through life alone. To remedy this, God gives us people. There are specific people in your life that are truly gifts from God.

Someone who helps pick you up when you fall. Someone who celebrates your wins. Someone who speaks the truth in a loving way, because they care.

Think about who supports you, who prays for you, who shows up when life gets messy. God places people in your life on purpose. Don't take these people for granted. Don't abuse such gifts through neglect or entitlement. They are gifts.

Thank You, Jesus for people who love, who are present, who help, who sharpen, who challenge, and encourage. They're treasures worth celebrating. Paul called these folks, "partakers of grace." I like that. God's grace is just better when shared with others.

Day 6: RESPOND

Take some time today to text or call at least three people who have had a positive impact on your life. Tell them specifically what you appreciate about them. This kind of gratitude is good for you to practice.



Day 7

In Everything



Day 7: READ

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.



Day 7: REFLECT

In everything means IN everything -the good times and bad - the big things and small things – the ordinary moments and extraordinary ones – the exciting times and the boring times. The will of Jesus is for us to be thankful in all of life.

Our tendency is to wait for the big blessing, that major breakthrough. Our focus and attention can get wrapped up in this. Meanwhile, you are missing a thousand small blessings God gives every day. God hides blessings in ordinary moments – a sunrise, a sunset, a beautiful flower, a singing bird, a child's laughter...you get the point. Don't overlook these “in everything” moments. Teach your heart to be grateful. Gratitude in small, ordinary things trains your eyes to see God everywhere and in everything. It builds appreciation. Remember, it is “**in everything**” and not necessarily “for everything” . ”Some things are bad. But maintain a thankful heart in it, believing God is at work for your good.

Day 7: RESPOND

Think of several small things you might normally take for granted. Thank God for each one specifically. The old song says, “Count your blessings name them one by one, count your blessings see what God has done.”

You’ve got so much to be thankful for!



Day 8

Trials Produce Strength



Day 8: READ

James 1:2-4

"My brethren (brothers & sisters), count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.



Day 8: REFLECT

Difficulty is guaranteed. Life is not easy. The question is, how will you respond when tough times come? Count it all joy? That sounds a little crazy when you're walking through stuff. But James isn't asking you to pretend trials feel good. He's pointing you to what trials produce: patience, maturity, strength and completeness.

Hardly anyone grows in times of comfort. You develop spiritual muscle through resistance, through pushing against something hard. Trials test your faith and prove how strong it is. They strip away what's fake and strengthen what's genuine.

God works with you through all the hard stuff to make you more like Jesus. That process isn't easy, but the outcome is worth it. The stronger you on the other side of the trouble is something to be thankful for. Don't waste your struggles by complaining and becoming bitter. Look to the LORD in the middle of it all. He has a plan and a purpose. Be thankful!

Day 8: RESPOND

I'm certain you've been through difficulties in the past. Ask God to show you some ways difficulty has strengthened your faith and character. Thank Him for using hard things to shape you. Ask the LORD to strengthen your faith.

Thank Him for being with you through it all.



Day 9

Morning & Night



Day 9: READ

Psalm 92:1-6

It is good to give thanks to the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night, on an instrument of ten strings, on the lute, and on the harp, with harmonious sound. For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands. O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep. A senseless man does not know, nor does a fool understand this.



Day 9: REFLECT

The psalmist declares it is GOOD for us to give thanks to the LORD. God enjoys it when you give Him thanks. Plus, gratitude is good for your soul. It's also good for all those around who hear it. It's a good thing!

Notice the rhythm spoken of - morning & night. Bookending your day with God's lovingkindness on one end and His faithfulness on the other. Start off your day with the expectation to experience the depths of God's love. Then, reflect on God's faithfulness at the end of each day. This is a good habit to get into. This is a good rhythm to establish.

When you pay attention to what God is doing in your life, joy follows. You begin to see The LORD at work in you and all around you. Seeing God's handiwork builds your faith and brings gladness and hope.

“For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work”

Day 9: RESPOND

Let's put this morning & night thing into action.

For Morning: “declare Your lovingkindness in the morning.” Make a declaration that you will live in the love of God all day and experience His love throughout your day. This is speaking by faith knowing God is going to be with you.

For Night: Take some time to reflect back on God's blessings and faithfulness that was shown to you throughout your day. Be specific.

Build this rhythm into your life and watch how it changes your perspective.



Day 10

Fresh & Flourishing



Day 10: READ

Psalm 92:12-15

The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.



Day 10: REFLECT

The righteous are not meant to merely survive. We are meant to flourish. That word carries the idea of thriving, growing strong, and producing abundantly. God's design for you isn't bare-minimum existence. It's to flourish. This word reminds me of John 10:10 when Jesus talks about giving us abundant life.

Two trees get mentioned here – Palm trees and Cedar trees. Palm trees are known to be resilient, bending in storms without breaking. Cedars grow massive and strong, living for a long time. Both trees speak of resilience and longevity.

There is a key word: planted. You can't flourish if you're not rooted in good soil. Those planted in the house of the LORD flourish. Spiritual family matters. You need to be connected to God and God's people. Without the planting part, the flourishing is not able to happen. >>>

Did you hear the promise? You will still bear fruit in old age. Still fresh. Still flourishing. God doesn't retire you when you hit a certain birthday. Your most fruitful years might be ahead of you, if....

Why does God want you to flourish? Your fruitful life becomes evidence to those around you of God's faithfulness. When people see you thriving spiritually and in other areas of life, it gives us opportunity to lead people to Jesus.



Day 10: RESPOND

Here are a few questions:

- How planted or rooted are you in your relationship with Christ?
- How rooted are you in your local Church?
- Are there areas you are flourishing in?
- Are there areas you could use some improvement?

There is a direct connection between the root and the fruit. If the root is right and healthy, the fruit will come. Ask the Holy Spirit to help.



Day 11

His Mercy Endures Forever



Day 11: READ

Psalm 136

- 1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.
- 2 Oh, give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy endures forever.
- 3 Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords! For His mercy endures forever:
- 4 To Him who alone does great wonders, For His mercy endures forever;
- 5 To Him who by wisdom made the heavens, For His mercy endures forever;
- 6 To Him who laid out the earth above the waters, For His mercy endures forever;
- 7 To Him who made great lights, For His mercy endures forever-
- 8 The sun to rule by day, For His mercy endures forever;
- 9 The moon and stars to rule by night, For His mercy endures forever.
- 10 To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn, For His mercy endures forever;
- 11 And brought out Israel from among them, For His mercy endures forever;

Psalm 136

12 With a strong hand, and with an
outstretched arm, For His mercy endures
forever;

13 To Him who divided the Red Sea in two,
For His mercy endures forever;

14 And made Israel pass through the midst
of it, For His mercy endures forever;

15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in
the Red Sea, For His mercy endures forever;

16 To Him who led His people through the
wilderness, For His mercy endures forever;

17 To Him who struck down great kings, For
His mercy endures forever;

18 And slew famous kings, For His mercy
endures forever-

19 Sihon king of the Amorites, For His mercy
endures forever;

20 And Og king of Bashan, For His mercy
endures forever-

21 And gave their land as a heritage, For His
mercy endures forever;

Psalm 136

22 A heritage to Israel His servant, For His mercy endures forever.

23 Who remembered us in our lowly state, For His mercy endures forever;

24 And rescued us from our enemies, For His mercy endures forever;

25 Who gives food to all flesh, For His mercy endures forever.

26 Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever.



Day 11: REFLECT

This psalm hammers one truth home 26 times in 26 verses: “His mercy endures forever.” The psalmist isn’t just being repetitive for poetic effect. He’s drilling this idea into our minds repeatedly, until it sinks in.

His mercy endures forever!

The word mercy speaks of God’s loyal love, His faithfulness, steadfast kindness. It never changes. God’s mercy endures forever. And Jesus is the ultimate proof!

This psalm gives a big ole list of stuff that should stir up thankfulness in us: God’s goodness, His supreme authority as God of gods and Lord of lords, His great wonders, His creative wisdom. Every aspect of who God, when properly seen, should cause worship and thanksgiving to erupt from us.

Then he gives a creation list: the heavens, earth, sun, moon and stars. These massive, powerful forces that govern our daily rhythm all point back to our Creator.

His mercy endures forever!

Day 11: RESPOND

This Psalm speaks of 26 times that give witness to God's love & mercy, 26 reasons to give thanks.

Take a few moments and list out at least 10 things in your life that God has done. After each one, join your heart with the psalmist and say, "For His mercy endures forever."



Day 12

Fear Nothing



Day 12: READ

Psalm 118:1-6

1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

2 Let Israel now say, “His mercy endures forever.”

3 Let the house of Aaron now say, “His mercy endures forever.”

4 Let those who fear the LORD now say, “His mercy endures forever.”

5 I called on the LORD in distress; The LORD answered me and set me in a broad place.

6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear.
What can man do to me?



Day 12: REFLECT

The psalmist calls everyone to testify and declare that God is good and His mercy endures forever. This is a public proclamation for all to hear.

The writer gives us the reason he is so stirred up: He called out to God and the LORD rescued him. He wants everyone to know how good The LORD has been.

We don't have the backstory for this Psalm. All we know is that he was having some trouble. People were coming against him. He called out to God. God heard him and delivered him from those who would have caused him harm.

Let verse 6 sink into your soul: The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

When you grasp this truth, fear loses its grip. What can people do? People can oppose, criticize and reject you. But they can't touch what matters most. God is on your side and His mercy endures forever. Thank You Jesus! That's Good News!

Day 12: RESPOND

Think about your biggest fear. That thing keeping you awake at night. Then speak this truth: "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear."

Thank God that His presence makes you strong and courageous. There is nothing to fear!



Day 13

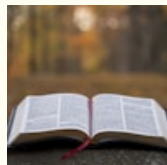
Where Are the Nine?



Day 13: READ

Luke 17:11-19

Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' So when He saw them, He said to them, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?' And He said to him, 'Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.'



Day 13: REFLECT

Ten lepers received healing. Ten experienced a miracle that changed their lives forever. Only one came back to Jesus to say "Thank You." That's a 10% return rate on gratitude. Doesn't quite sound right when you put it that way.

Jesus noticed. He asked, "Where are the nine?" Their absence bothered Him. Ingratitude bothers God. Not because He needs your thanks, but because gratitude reveals your heart, and so does ingratitude. The one who returned was a Samaritan, an outsider. Yet he was the only one who recognized what he'd received and responded with thanks. Sometimes outsiders get it while insiders miss it. Sometimes outsiders know they don't deserve anything, while insiders sometimes feel entitled.

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The one fell on his face at Jesus' feet. That is humility and worship. It's what happens when you recognize you have received something you could never earn on your own. True gratitude produces this kind of worship. Be the kind of person who returns back to Jesus to say "Thanks." And do it often.

Jesus said, "Your faith has made you well." The idea of well is to be made whole. All ten were cleansed. Only one was made whole. There's a difference between physical healing and spiritual wholeness. Gratitude helped align the one in a way with Jesus that brought wholeness. What the miracle started, giving thanks helped complete.



Day 13: RESPOND

Honest Question: Are you one of the nine who took the blessing and ran or are you the one who came back to thank Jesus? God has blessed you in so many ways. If need be, repent of ingratitude. Then, think of some of your current blessings and just let Jesus know how much you appreciate His kindness.



Day 14

**For the LORD is Great &
Greatly to Be Praised**



Day 14: READ

1 Chronicles 16:23-34

Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.

For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is also to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and gladness are in His place.

Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, give to the LORD glory and strength. Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth.

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The world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; and let them say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns.' Let the sea roar, and all its fullness; let the field rejoice, and all that is in it. Then the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth. Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.



Day 14: REFLECT

David wrote this psalm when He brought the Ark of the Covenant home to Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 6. This is a universal call to worship involving every nation, every family, and all creation itself. Your personal gratitude matters, but it connects to something much bigger than us, it's cosmic.

Notice the progression of David. He starts by proclaiming The LORD's salvation. Moves to declaring God's glory among nations. Then He gives The LORD the glory due His name as The God of gods and our Creator. Thanksgiving builds from personal experience to a global proclamation to worship the LORD of all lords.

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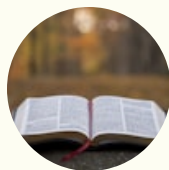


Day 14: REFLECT

The LORD is great and greatly to be praised. What if your praise was heard by others? Would they conclude that God is great? The LORD is GREATLY to be praised. Your thanksgiving should match His greatness. Well, I know that's impossible, but it is fun to try. :-)

David invites all creation to join the praise session. Heavens rejoice. Earth be glad. Sea roar. Fields rejoice. Trees of the woods celebrate. When you give thanks, you're joining the praise symphony of all creation and even those rejoice in the Heavenly realm.

Here's the foundation of all our thanks and praise: the LORD is good and His mercy endures forever. This is a theme echoed throughout generations. God's unchanging goodness and everlasting mercy give fuel to our thanksgiving. God is good and Jesus is the proof!



Day 14: RESPOND

If you are able, go outside today. Stand before God amongst all His creation. Look at the trees, the sky, the grassy fields, all evidence of God's goodness and greatness. Speak your thanksgiving out loud. Let creation hear you join its symphony to The LORD. Give God the glory due His name. The birds are singing, the trees are clapping. Lift up your voice and tell God how great He is!





Blessed be the God and Father
of our LORD Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us with
every spiritual blessing
in the heavenly places
in Christ

(Ephesians 1:3)