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Lutheran Counseling Services

Church Worker NEWSLETTER

A SEASON OF GRATITUDE: CULTIVATING THANKFULNESS IN HEART, STORY, AND RELATIONSHIP

By Jeremy Freye, M.Div., MS
Registered Marriage and Family Therapy Intern

As we step into November it's easy to talk about gratitude as a feeling or a holiday theme. But as Christians and church workers, we are invited to live thankfulness within our spiritual grounding and self-care. Gratitude grounds us in God's faithfulness, strengthens our relationships, and reshapes the stories we tell about our lives.

When the Apostle Paul wrote, "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18), he wasn't suggesting denial or naïve optimism. Rather, Paul was pointing to gratitude as a deep form of trust, a way of saying, "God, I see You here, even now."



As you move through this November, may gratitude become more than a list, it may become a way of being. A way of seeing God's hand in the ordinary, of naming grace in one another, and of resting in the truth that love is still present, still active, still enough.

HEART OF GRATITUDE

Gratitude is relational. We express thankfulness when we see and are seen by others in love. When we thank someone sincerely, we acknowledge their impact on us and affirm that we are connected. It's easy to pour out love and rarely take it in. Gratitude invites us to receive, to pause and name the blessings God and others have given. It is not selfish to accept joy, rest, or kindness. It's holy.



REFLECTION EXERCISE

- Take a few quiet minutes today.
- Picture a moment in the past week when someone showed you kindness or offered support.
- What did that gesture stir in your heart, comfort, relief, joy, surprise?
- Offer a brief prayer of thanks:
- "Lord, thank You for this person and the love You showed through them. Help me to rest in the truth that I am cared for and not alone. Amen."

As you recognize these small moments of care, you strengthen your capacity for emotional connection, with others and with God.

THE STORY OF GRATITUDE

We live our lives through stories, and those stories shape how we see God, others, and ourselves. When life feels heavy or ministry feels draining, gratitude helps us re-author the narrative. Instead of only naming what is missing, we begin to tell a fuller truth: that even in struggle, grace abounds.

REFLECTION PRACTICE

- Take out a journal and title a page: "My Gratitude Story."
- Write about one challenging experience from the past year.
- Then ask: Where did I still experience God's presence? Who showed me love? What strength or wisdom emerged from that season?

This practice doesn't erase pain; it reframes it within God's larger story of redemption. It echoes the psalmist's prayer: "I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds" (Psalm 9:1). When we speak gratitude aloud or write it down, we testify to God's ongoing work in our lives.

PRACTICING GRATITUDE IN RELATIONSHIPS AND MINISTRY

Gratitude grows stronger when it's expressed. As leaders and servants, we have a sacred opportunity to create communities of thankfulness.

Here are a few simple practices:

- **Name specific blessings.** Instead of saying, "Thanks for all you do," try, "I'm grateful for how you listened to that person struggling last week; it made a difference."
- **Build gratitude rituals.** Begin meetings, gatherings, or family meals with each person naming one thing they're thankful for that day.
- **Let others thank you.** When someone expresses appreciation, resist deflecting. Instead, say, "Thank you, that means a lot." Receiving gratitude affirms the mutual care that sustains ministry.

PRAYER FOR THE MONTH THANKSGIVING

Gracious God, You are the giver of every good gift. Open our eyes to see Your blessings in daily moments, in the laughter of a child, the patience of a colleague, the quiet of morning prayer. Teach us to give thanks not only in comfort but in challenge, trusting that You are at work in every story we live. Shape our hearts to be grateful, our hands to be generous, and our lives to reflect Your steadfast love.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



