

## *Flourishing in the Spiritual Discipline of Gratitude*

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The dictionary defines Gratitude as “*the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.*” When you come down to it, gratitude is really all about attitude. It’s easy to be grateful for blessings and/or things when everyone is on the same “playing field”, when we are comparing apples to apples. True gratitude, however, may be put to the test when someone receives thanks for something that you feel should have been directed your way. Gratitude may be put to the test when someone receives a promotion that you were denied. When we feel wronged in some way or slighted, it may not be so easy to feel grateful. Gratitude can quickly dissipate when we begin to feel resentful for the praise and tangible things others are receiving that we are not.



It's times like these that call us to take the “balcony view”. The balcony view allows us to take a step back from daily routines and even the mundane and see the bigger picture of our lives and circumstances. When we take the balcony, panoramic view of our lives and remove ourselves from the “weeds”, we are more apt to conclude that we have lots to be grateful for and life is not so bad after all!

When we consider the aspect of gratitude, it is very closely linked to the word validation. The longing of every individual is to feel validated. We may not admit that readily, but it is true. We all need encouragement and validation. A very important question to ask ourselves is, “Where am I looking to receive validation”? “Who am I wanting to receive validation from”? When we can take the balcony view and see our lives from a distance and understand fully that our true worth is in Jesus, we will find it easier to temper our longing for recognition with our God-given worth.

Gratitude will become easier when we are able to find that balance. I would not want to indicate here that this is an easy process because it is not! It takes time, prayerful reflection, and moments of introspection, to move us from a place of self-pity to a place of gratitude where we truly understand the worth that God attaches to our lives.

In case you have forgotten how God feels about you, let me remind you of what Jesus said in Matthew 10:29-31. Jesus is preparing to send out the twelve disciples and they were sent with several instructions and words of advice. In verse 29, Jesus asks, ***“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.”*** He continues, ***“And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”*** If you’ve ever longed for validation, here it is! I don’t know about you, but these verses make me feel truly grateful!



True gratitude is supernatural work. I think if we are all honest, we would say that when we compare our lives with someone who has less than we do, in monetary and opportunity resources, we find it easy to say, “God is so good to me” and I have a sense of gratitude for all that God has provided. However, when we compare our lives with someone who just seems to have everything handed to them on a silver platter, without having to expend much energy, it can lead us to question why. Why is it that I must work so hard for what I get while others just have it handed to them? That’s when gratitude requires supernatural work. To stay positive and not wallow in self-pity requires us to look beyond the tangible, temporary things of life and have an eternal view. When we can view life from an eternal perspective, it’s then we understand our true worth in Christ and can flourish as a result. After all, if God notices when a sparrow falls to the ground and he declares



that we are worth more than many sparrows, what more will it take to give us a grateful heart?  
So...

*Give thanks with a grateful heart,  
Give thanks to the Holy One;  
Give thanks, because he's given  
Jesus Christ, his Son.  
And now let the weak say 'I am strong',  
Let the poor say, 'I am rich',  
Because of what the Lord has done for us;  
Give thanks!*

