

GRATITUDE QUIZ

The short quiz below might help you test where you land on a spectrum from grateful to grumbling. As honest as you can be, circle either (A) or (B) for each question.

1. Do you more often (A) remember God's blessings in your life or (B) forget them?
2. When things don't go your way, do you typically respond (A) in gratitude or (B) by grumbling?
3. Do you see thanksgiving as (A) an essential spiritual rhythm for Christians or (B) something that's great to do when you remember it but unnecessary?
4. Would you say you tell God thanks (A) daily or (B) less than daily?
5. Is thanksgiving (A) a significant part of your prayer life or (B) a small part of it?
6. Would you describe yourself as more often (A) content or (B) discontent?

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7. As you go throughout your day, do you usually (A) have eyes open to reasons for giving thanks around you or (B) not see many things to give thanks for?
8. Do you tend to rehearse (A) God's generosity and goodness or (B) what seems unfair?
9. Do you (A) often tell others reasons you're grateful or (B) rarely talk about why you're grateful?
10. When you see things others have that you don't, do you (A) rest in what God has given you or (B) struggle with jealousy?
11. If you were to list reasons for gratitude, would it be (A) a long list and easy to come up with things to give thanks for or (B) a short list and hard to think of many things?
12. Is practicing thanksgiving (A) a regular part of your life or (B) an irregular part of your life?
13. Do you (A) have a place or way of intentionally recording reasons for gratitude or (B) not have a place or way to intentionally record reasons for gratitude?
14. When circumstances are difficult, do you (A) still find things to be thankful for or (B) stop giving thanks altogether?
15. When you think about thanksgiving, do you (A) tell God thanks or (B) feel grateful but not actually tell God thanks?

Gratitude Quiz

Now tally up how many times you circled (A). The goal isn't to condemn you but to reveal how prone you are to thanksgiving, knowing all of us have room to grow.

If you circled (A) SEVEN OR FEWER TIMES, then grumbling likely feels more natural than gratitude for you. If that's you, don't be discouraged. This book provides practical help to begin taking small steps away from grumbling and toward giving thanks.

If you circled (A) MORE THAN SEVEN BUT LESS THAN FIFTEEN TIMES, then you likely practice giving thanks with some regularity, but you know your heart often strays toward ingratitude or grumbling. This book can help you grow further and deeper in gratitude.

If you circled (A) FIFTEEN TIMES, then you're either an expert who has mastered gratitude or you lack self-awareness. You might still want to read this book, if only "for a friend."

NOTES

Introduction: Confessions of a Recovering Pessimist

1. Ann Voskamp's *One Thousand Gifts* taught me to observe rather than overlook blessings. David Pao's *Thanksgiving: An Investigation of a Pauline Theme* provided a biblical, God-centered foundation.

Chapter 1: Gratitude's Blueprint

1. Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Assurances of the Heart: Faith-Building Devotions on Questions Christians Ask* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 62.
2. Tim Keller (@timkellernyc), Twitter, November 22, 2018, 5:23 a.m., <https://twitter.com/timkellernyc/status/1065566310699024384>.
3. For more on enjoying God's gifts without idolizing them, I recommend these books: Trillia Newbell, *Enjoy: Finding the Freedom to Delight Daily in God's Good Gifts* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2016); Joe Rigney, *The Things of Earth: Treasuring God by Enjoying His Gifts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014); John Piper, *God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).
4. Piper, *God Is the Gospel*, 141.
5. David Pao, *Thanksgiving: An Investigation of a Pauline Theme* (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos, 2002), 28–29.

Chapter 2: A Theology of Thanksgiving

1. We will talk about giving thanks by using these related words, including drawing from Scriptures that do the same.
2. The same is true of words like *bless*, *extol*, and *give thanks*. See Psalms 118:26, 28; 145:10.
3. While “praise” is often used in a context of singing, this is not always the case (see 1 Chron. 16:7; Pss. 28:7; 33:2). “Even if distinctions between thanksgiving and praise can be made in the Old Testament, such distinctions dissolve in the theology of Paul.” David W. Pao, *Thanksgiving: An Investigation of a Pauline Theme* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 27.
4. See also Neh. 12:40–43; 1 Chron. 29:6–13; 2 Chron. 29:31, 36; Pss. 9:14; 92:1–4; 107:22; 118:21–29; Phil. 1:3–4.
5. David Pao, *Thanksgiving: An Investigation of a Pauline Theme* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 102.

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Chapter 4: Recognize. Reflect. Receive.

1. A great help for understanding the problems busyness creates and how we might live differently is *Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013) by Kevin DeYoung.
2. Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 89.
3. Chapter 1 of Alan Noble's book *Disruptive Witness* highlights the barrier of distraction and the effects on the Christian life. Alan Noble, *Disruptive Witness: Speaking Truth in a Distracted Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018). See also Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).
4. Jon Bloom, "Lord, Deliver Me from Distraction," *Desiring God*, December 6, 2016, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lord-deliver-me-from-distraction>.
5. Tish Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 135.
6. Charles Spurgeon, *The Practice of Praise* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1995), 19.
7. Another practical book on learning to observe God's gifts is *The Practice of Praise* by Charles Spurgeon.
8. Ann Voskamp, *One Thousand Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 54.
9. Voskamp, *Gifts*, 118.
10. Ragan Sutterfield, *Wendell Berry and the Given Life* (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2017), loc. 950, Kindle. Berry's fictional story *Hannah Coulter* beautifully embodies this in one woman's story.
11. Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, 136.
12. Johnson Oatman Jr., "Count Your Blessings," 1897, accessed June 26, 2019, https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Count_Your_Blessings/.

Chapter 5: Look Around and Look Up

1. See 1 Chron. 29:10–22; Ps. 111:2–3; Dan. 2:20–23; Matt. 7:9–11; John 3:27; 1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Tim. 4:4–5.
2. Nancy Leigh DeMoss, *Choosing Gratitude: Your Journey to Joy* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 38. Italics original.
3. This doesn't mean all people experience common grace gifts at all times or in the same ways. A home to sleep in is a common grace blessing because it's not peculiar to believers, but some people live in homes whereas others might sleep in a hotel, stay with friends, live outdoors, sleep in a shelter, or be homeless.
4. See Pss. 19:1–6; 104; 111; 145:10; 147:7–20; Isa. 40:12, 28; Jer. 32:17; Rom. 1:18–22.
5. Charles Spurgeon, *The Practice of Praise* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1995), 18.
6. DeMoss, *Choosing Gratitude*, 35.
7. The Old Testament often connects thanksgiving to God with His "steadfast

love.” See Ezra 3:11–12; 1 Chron. 16:34; Ps. 100:4–5; 106:1; 107:1, 8; 118:1, 29; 136 (repeated); 145:8–10.

Chapter 6: Thankfulness Expressed

1. C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1958), 95.
2. See 1 Chron. 16:8–9; Pss. 9:1–14; 26:7; 95:1–2; 105:1; 106:1–2; 107:2, 8, 21–22; 145:4–7, 10–12, 21; Jer. 30:19; Jonah 2:9; Eph. 5:4, 20; Col. 3:15–17; Heb. 13:15.
3. Here’s a sample of verbal expressions of giving thanks in the Bible. Sing aloud (Ps. 9:1–2). Tell (26:7). Make known (105:2). Utter the mighty deeds of the Lord (106:2). Declare His praise (106:2). Proclaim aloud (26:7). Commend (145:4). Speak (145:6, 21). Pour forth His fame (145:7). Bless (145:10). Voice (Jonah 2:9). Offer up a sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15). Acknowledge His name (Heb. 13:15). Shout (Isa. 12:6). Make a joyful noise (Ps. 95:2). Pray (John 6:11).
4. Charles Spurgeon, *The Practice of Praise* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1995), 27.
5. Paul Tripp, @PaulTripp. October 19, 2016, 7:18 a.m. tweet.
6. Gary Thomas, *The Glorious Pursuit: Embracing the Virtues of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), 139.
7. Spurgeon, *The Practice of Praise*, 31.
8. See also 1 Chron. 16:8–9; Pss. 9:11; 89:1; 145:11–12; Col. 3:15–17; Eph. 5:20.
9. Mark Vroegop, “Goal,” sermon delivered at College Park Church, December 1, 2019, <https://www.yourchurch.com/sermon/goal/>.
10. See also Ps. 28:7; 30:4; 69:30; 95; 100; 105:1–2; 136; 138:1–2; 147:7; 1 Chron. 16:8–36; Ezra 3:11; Col. 3:16; Isa. 12:3–5.

Chapter 7: Enjoy the Gift and Embrace the Giver

1. Trillia Newbell, *Enjoy: Finding the Freedom to Delight Daily in God’s Good Gifts* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2016), 4.
2. John Piper, *God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God’s Love as the Gift of Himself* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 141.

Chapter 8: Remembering: Looking Back to Look Forward

1. Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 188.
2. Charles Spurgeon, *The Practice of Praise* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1995), 20.
3. Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 799.
4. Spurgeon, *The Practice of Praise*, 17, 23.
5. For a New Testament example, Paul’s thanksgiving report in Colossians 1:3–8 flows into the prayer report of 1:9–14.
6. John Piper, *Future Grace: The Purifying Power of the Promises of God* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2012), 36–37.

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7. Also note the ending of verse 35 returning to thanksgiving as a yielded trust in God. Praise leads to petition, and when we petition God in prayer we wait in a posture of praise.
8. For more on the value of remembering together, see my article, "Your Church Needs More Time for Personal Testimonies," 9Marks, August 19, 2019, <https://www.9marks.org/article/your-church-needs-more-time-for-personal-testimonies/>.

Chapter 9: Gritty Gratitude: Giving Thanks in All Circumstances

1. Melissa B. Kruger, *In All Things: A Nine-Week Devotional Bible Study on Unshakeable Joy* (New York: Multnomah, 2018), 78.
2. R. C. Sproul, *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 128.
3. To better understand lament, see Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019).
4. Charles Spurgeon, *The Practice of Praise* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1995), 76.
5. Spurgeon, *The Practice of Praise*, 35.
6. Johnson Oatman Jr., "Count Your Blessings," 1897, accessed September 3, 2019, https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Count_Your_Blessings/.

Gratitude Challenge

1. Drew Dyck, *Your Future Self Will Thank You: Secrets to Self-Control from the Bible and Brain Science (A Guide for Sinners, Quitters, and Procrastinators)* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2019), 127.