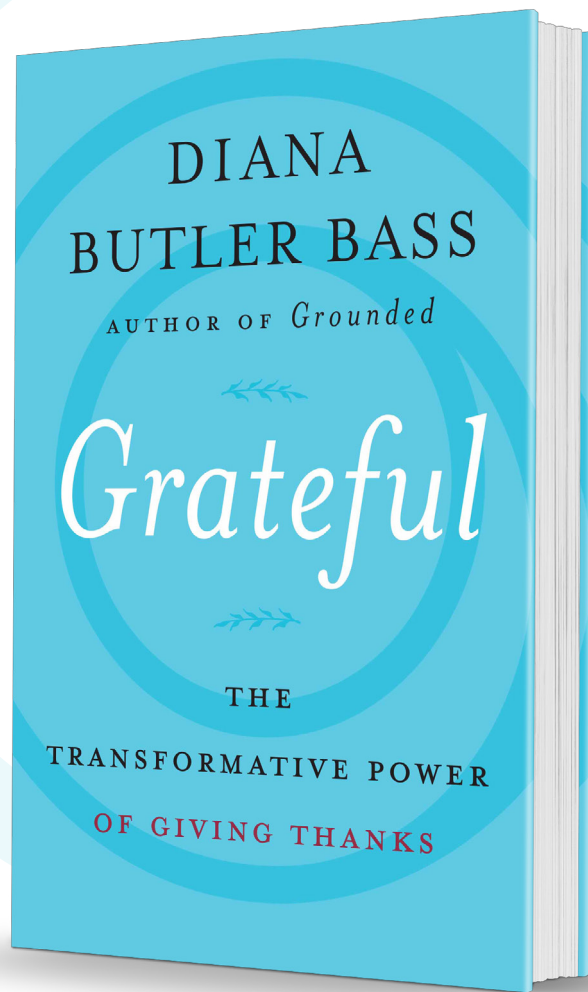


A 7-DAY GUIDE TO GRATITUDE



GROWING IN AWARENESS, PRACTICE,
AND PRAYER OF THANKS



Based on *Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks*

BY DIANA BUTLER BASS

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DEAR READER,

Writing *Grateful* changed my life in surprising ways, especially in regard to the spiritual practices that have become important to me. I discovered that **even in difficult times, gratitude can still frame our days, making us stronger and more able to face personal challenges and work on behalf of the common good.** I wanted to share some of this wisdom with you here.

Each day begins with a quote from *Grateful* and underscores a particular aspect of gratitude. Then, each quote is followed by three actions: a reflection for deeper awareness of gratitude, a practice to engage, and a prayer for the day. Awareness-Practice-Prayer. That's the path. After the seven days, you can repeat the process as often as you like and find it meaningful.

All you need is twenty to thirty minutes each day for seven days, a small notebook (or note-taking app on your cell phone), and a willing heart.

With gratitude,



DIANA

DAY 1 NOTICE THE GAP

QUOTE FROM GRATEFUL:

“We know that gratitude is good and we want to be grateful, or feel gratitude, or be seen as thankful people. We might experience gratitude in a given moment. But inwardly, we know how difficult it is to practice and sustain thanksgiving—to live a truly grateful life.”

AWARENESS:

I often feel the tension between knowing gratitude is good and finding myself unable to feel deeply thankful or practice gratefulness on a regular basis. I long to be the sort of person who lives appreciatively, but I often fall short of that desire.

Do you relate to this struggle? Or does gratitude come easily to you?

PRACTICE:

Pay attention today to these two things:

- *What made you feel grateful?*
- *Did you say “thank-you” to someone?*

Jot your responses in a small notebook or on your cell phone. In the evening, review and reflect on how paying attention to gratitude made a difference to your day.

PRAYER:

Open my eyes, God, that I may become alert to gratitude throughout the day. Help me bridge the gap between knowing about gratitude and living in thankfulness. Free me from guilt about the gap, replacing it with the joy of discovery and an eagerness for change.

DAY 2 PAY ATTENTION TO GIFTS

QUOTE FROM GRATEFUL:

“Gratitude is bound up with giving and receiving gifts. Gifts are the nature of the universe itself, those things we have received from God or the natural order or what-have-you. Grace reminds us that every good thing is a gift—that somehow the sun rising and to be alive is an indiscriminant daily offering to us. All that we have was gifted to every one of us.”

AWARENESS:

A gift is something we did not achieve, did not earn, and did not even expect. It is bestowed upon us. We feel grateful when we receive a gift, something that reminds us that a giver has noticed and cares about our needs. Although it is easy to pay attention to special occasion gifts—like birthday or holiday presents—it is harder to notice the daily gifts of our lives.

What daily gifts do you often take for granted? Are there gifts that comes from unexpected sources, or from even negative experiences?

PRACTICE:

Pay attention to gifts today:

- *What felt like a gift today in your life?*
- *From where did that gift come?*

Jot your responses in a small notebook or on your cell phone. In the evening, review and reflect on gifts and givers on this single day.

PRAYER:

Thank you for gifts of sunlight, a new day, food, water, and safety. For family and friends. Help me appreciate the simple blessings of life and not take any of these gifts for granted. May I learn to see gifts of life more widely—experiencing the gifts that come under surprising circumstances from unexpected givers.

DAY 3 CELEBRATE ABUNDANCE

QUOTE FROM GRATEFUL:

“Opening our hearts to the constant flow of receiving and responding to gifts—the reality that surrounds us all the time—makes us both more grateful and more generous.”

AWARENESS:

What a beautiful vision of the world: abundance! Gifts constantly flow around us like a river. And we can live in that flow. When I became more deeply aware of gratitude, I began to understand that every one of us is simultaneously a receiver and a giver. We cannot give without having first been gifted. And we cannot truly receive without recognizing that we are all mutually dependent on the good work and generosity of others.

Do you focus more on scarcity—what you don’t have—than the gifts that are present in your life? What would it mean for you to trust in abundance?

PRACTICE:

Give a gift today to someone who does not expect it. Nothing expensive. Something small, thoughtful, and surprising.

- *What did you feel when you gave?*
- *How did the recipient respond?*

Jot your responses in a small notebook or on your cell phone. In the evening, review and reflect on how abundance and generosity is present in your life.

PRAYER:

The poet Wendell Berry once wrote, “What we need is here.” May the wisdom of this insight be ever-present to my heart—and may it turn my attention toward abundance. Enable me to live generously in this realization, sharing gifts with no expectation of return.

DAY 4 TAKE TIME FOR WONDER

QUOTE FROM GRATEFUL:

“Gratitude is not warm feelings about what we have. Instead, gratitude is the ability to embrace the gift of who we are. That we are. In the multibillion year history of the universe, the gift is that each one of us has been born, can love, grows in awareness, and has a story. Life is the gift. And when that mystery fills our hearts, it overwhelms us, and a deep river of emotions flow forth. I am. We all are. What we feel when we contemplate this remarkable thing—that feeling is gratitude.”

AWARENESS:

Urgency, obligation, technology, and busyness all prevent us from encountering awe and wonder. Too often, we feel we have to go away from everyday life to the ocean or the mountains to recapture the mysteries of existence. But we need not go far to find wonder. We can look inside. For the greatest mystery is the one we most often take for granted: that we are alive.

Where do you experience wonder?

PRACTICE:

Take ten minutes today for silence. Plan a time when this is possible (morning, lunch break, in the early evening), sit somewhere you will not be disturbed, and set a timer. Reflect on the words, “I am. We all are.”

- *What happened in the silence?*
- *Did a sense of gratitude emerge in this exercise?*

Jot your responses in a small notebook or on your cell phone. In the evening, review and reflect on the relationship between life and thanks.

PRAYER:

God, whose name in the Hebrew scripture is revealed to be “I AM,” we tremble that each one of us is created in this divine image. We can say with you, “I am.” We stand on this holy ground, consumed with wonder, knowing that life is the greatest gift of all. Thank you.

DAY 5 THANKS IN ACTION

QUOTE FROM GRATEFUL:

“Gratitude is more than emotion. It is also a disposition that can be chosen and cultivated, an outlook toward life that manifests itself in actions. Gratitude involves not just what we feel but what we do. ‘Thanks’ is both a noun and a verb.”

AWARENESS:

I am very good at feeling thankful. But I forget to tell people how much I appreciate their work, something they have done for me, or a gift they have given me. Too often, I neglect the connection between emotions and actions. We cannot, however, read one another’s minds. Living gratefully means doing things that embody thanksgiving.

When we link our feelings to actions, we bring our truest selves into relationship and community with others. And that can be frightening, for we do not always know how our words or works will be received. Acting on gratitude can be risky.

What are you afraid of losing or confronting if you take action?

PRACTICE:

Write a thank-you note to someone who has been kind to you, gave you a gift, or helped you in a meaningful way. This may be to a friend, a mentor, a teacher, a colleague, a spouse, or a grandparent—or to someone more distant, a person you do not know but who has been important to you. The note might be a text, an email, a short letter, a post on social media, or an old-fashioned card.

- *How did you feel as you wrote?*
- *How do you think the person receiving your note might feel when receiving your words?*

Jot your responses in a small notebook or on your cell phone. In the evening, review and reflect on the power “thanks” as a verb.

PRAYER:

Let me never be content with merely feeling grateful. Instead, fill me with courage to act on thanks.

DAY 6 TRANSFORMATION

QUOTE FROM GRATEFUL:

“If we practice gratefulness, it becomes a natural and normal way of engaging the world. With gratitude, our hearts open toward one another. Being thankful can make us different.”

AWARENESS:

Gratitude is something we feel and something we do. If we attend to the emotion of thanks and intentionally act gratefully, however, we actually become thankful people. Social scientists have discovered that positive emotions of gratitude drive out negative emotions like fear and anxiety; that practicing gratitude creates new connections of community. Thankfulness creates personal well-being and fosters the common good. Being a grateful person means being resilient in crisis and strengthens us to resist injustice.

Have you ever considered that thanksgiving creates the possibility of common good? That gratitude opens us toward personal and social transformation?

PRACTICE:

Watch or read the news today thoughtfully and pay attention to your emotional responses. Does the news increase negative emotions? Make you angry in debilitating ways? Do not deny these feelings, but instead balance them by bringing gratefulness into the picture by reflecting on these questions:

- *What, in this story, gives reason to be thankful?*
- *Where might gratitude be located in this (tragedy, policy, political decision, report, debate)?*
- *How might a shared practice of gratitude unite instead of divide us?*
- *Did my perspective change as I considered gratitude in relation to the day's events?*

Jot your responses in a small notebook or on your cell phone. Consider sharing this exercise with your family and friends.

PRAYER:

I want to change. I want the world to change. Fear and division exhausts me. Exhausts us. Make me an instrument of gratitude that I might discover a way of mercy and love that leads to peace. For the sake of healing my own heart and healing the world.

DAY 7 GRATITUDE HABIT

QUOTE FROM GRATEFUL:

“The practice of gratitude comes down to attentiveness and awareness. All around us, every day, there are gifts. No matter our challenges or feelings. There are gifts. Mostly unnoticed, unappreciated, and often disregarded. But if we cultivate our awareness of those gifts, thankfulness becomes habitual. As a habit, gratitude becomes a steady companion, a daily—perhaps even hourly—disposition of appreciation.”

AWARENESS:

Habits are simply regular acts that we do without much thought. Habits are triggered by cues. We automatically do things as a result of a sound (a phone buzzing or a particular song playing), a smell (coffee brewing in the morning), or sight (seeing a certain item, scene, or person). Two cues help me with a gratitude habit: keeping a small prayer book by my bed and visiting a website (gratefulness.org) each day. Even if I do not open the prayer book, seeing it reminds me to be thankful. Sitting at my desk as I begin work cues me to go to the website and read their daily posts. These two cues—seeing the book bedside and sitting at my desk—have helped me toward a habit of noticing gifts and practicing gratitude.

Do you find yourself actively feeling gratitude throughout the day?

PRACTICE:

Identify your gratitude cue, ideally something in your world that you see, smell, hear, or touch first thing in the morning. The cue could be a token—like a small rock or a picture—by your bedside. Or, set a morning gratitude reminder on your phone. The cue could also be something you already do—like walking the dog or driving past a park on your commute. When cued, remember what you are thankful for. A cue and this modest routine can help integrate a habit of gratitude into your life.

- *What are you grateful for right now?*

Jot your cue in a small notebook or on your cell phone. Review the cue, frequently, and make sure that whenever you see it, you remember gratitude. Keep going with the cue and let “thank-you” grow into a natural habit.

PRAYER:

Thank you for these days to consider gratitude, for new insights, and for hope. May I not only feel grateful or occasionally act gratefully, but may I become a truly grateful person.