

THIRD READING (read before the reflection)
Matthew 6:32b–33 *Seek first the Kingdom of God*



Reflection

The Third Stage – Living gratefully

This is the stage where we realise that thankfulness is more than just a feeling, it's a way of life and this passage centres on worldly concerns like worry or temptations that most of us face. Jesus often warned His disciples about worldly concerns, and He told us we can counter them by seeking God and His righteousness. The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon defines “seek first” as ‘seeking in order to find’. When we take the time to reflect on the good in our lives, we can find reasons to be thankful, even in the midst of challenging circumstances. By practicing thankfulness, we can reframe our challenges as opportunities for growth, learn to accept life’s hardships with grace, and open ourselves up to possibilities of joy.

Group discussion

What could be our barriers to embracing living gratefully?
How do we find God’s kingdom and what difference could it make when we choose this path?

SCRIPTURE SENTENCE AND SUMMARISE

You, Lord, are all I have, and You give me all I need; my future is in Your hands. How wonderful are your gifts to me; how good they are!

Psalms 16:5-11 Good News Translation

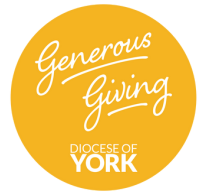
God has given each of us diverse spiritual gifts, which are expressions of His grace, that reveal His love to a watching world. As Christians we are walking, talking, living, breathing expressions of our generous God to our communities around us. As our lives become more rooted in God, may we grow and flourish to overflow with gratitude.

CLOSING PRAYER

In a time of silence, let us pray that we may draw closer to the One who has created all things. Silence is kept for a short while.

God of grace, ever creating and restoring, You breathe life into all things and embrace us with an everlasting love; help us to grow in wonder and awe, to embody a spirit of gratitude, and to dream generous dreams; that, in being thankful for what we have, we may graciously offer ourselves to accomplish what You will, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Bible Study for Gratitude



Seek first the Kingdom of God...



OPENING PRAYER

Let everything be said and done in
the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.

Let us bring our gifts to the Lord
that they may be used for His glory.
May the Spirit of God fill our hearts
as we come to meet Him in this place. Amen

Silence is kept.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33

**God of abundance, the author and giver of all good things;
grant us a gracious and humble heart, that we may give You
glory, with thanksgiving, through offering the First Fruits of
our lives and grow more into the likeness of
our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.**

Amen



Living Gratefully - Changing Culture

INTRODUCTION

During this time together, we are exploring God's generosity to us, and how we can express our gratitude by working with Him to bring His bountiful kingdom to the people around us. We may reflect on how generous living may be challenging, as we are called to step away from our natural yearning for independence and put our trust more fully in God. We are also going to explore the different types of gifts God has given us through His Holy Spirit, and how we might cultivate our discipleship to live gratefully in all areas of our lives.

Paired chat

Share a skill or talent that you are particularly good at or gifted in. If this is tricky, share something you love doing.

FIRST READING (read before the reflection)

1 Corinthians 12.1-11: *Spiritual Gifts*

Reflection

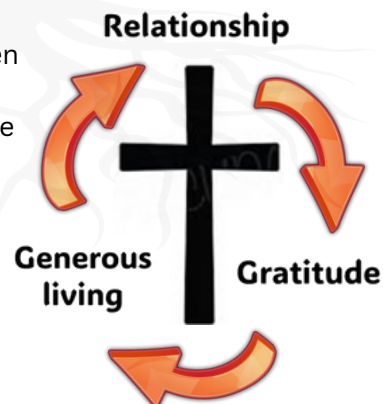
Spiritual gifts come in all shapes and sizes, and Paul makes it clear in his letters to the Corinthians (and Galatians) that these diverse gifts are given to us by God through the Holy Spirit. The word Paul uses for spiritual gifts is 'charismata', formed from the word 'charis' meaning 'grace'. Therefore, our spiritual gifts are tangible expressions of grace; God's generosity coming into visible effect in word or deed through us. As St Teresa of Avila writes, 'Christ has no body, hands or feet on earth now but ours'.

Paired chat - with an opportunity to share with the group

Share an experience when you have been the recipient of the spiritual gift of another person. How did that experience bless you?

Group discussion

How do we cultivate these gifts to be disciples who live generously?



Living generously, comes from hearts that invest in people, not principles, as an expression of our gratitude to our gracious Heavenly Father. Let's explore how we can transform our sense of overflowing gratitude.

SECOND READINGS (to be read during the reflections)

Psalm 103:1-6 (New Living Translation)

Acknowledging what we have from God

Luke 17:11-19 (NIV) *Jesus Heals Ten Men With Leprosy*



Reflection

Everyone goes through different stages of gratitude, but the important thing is to be aware of them and to work on being grateful for what we have and share our blessings from our generous God with others. It is said that there are three main stages of growing in gratitude.

Let's explore them:

The First Stage - Acknowledging what we have.

The first stage of gratitude is when we have been taking things for granted and don't really appreciate what's around us. We might not even realise how good we have it until it's gone. This is a normal part of life, but it's important to try to catch ourselves when we're in this stage and start appreciating the things we have. Let's read Psalm 103:1-6 together. [Pause for a short moment after reading to give time for a personal reflection.]

And now to the Second Stage - Expressing thanks.

The second stage of gratitude is when we start to become more aware of the good in our lives and begin to appreciate it. We might realise that we have more than we thought we had or that we're more blessed than we thought we were. This can be a great motivator to start doing something about the things we're grateful for - like showing appreciation to the people in our lives or taking steps to improve the circumstances around us. Let's read Luke 17:11-19 together.

Paired chat, leading to group discussion

How does it help us to understand that, when we are grateful recipients of God's generosity, we deepen our relationship with Him?

Has anyone of us got examples of where we have noticed our ingratitude turned to gratitude and the difference it made?