

# PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING

## Introduction

*"The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him."*

- Psalm 28:7 ESV

Work your way through each element of thanksgiving giving space to contemplate, pray, and share. Understand that each individual may find themselves in a unique place along the spectrum of thanksgiving--and that's ok! We may more easily be able to give thanks in some areas than others. Simply seek to sit in a posture of thanksgiving, honoring whatever comes up.

## Thanks for Difficulties

*"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."*

- 1 Thess 5:16-18 ESV

Sometimes it seems that our most constant prayer is "Lord, get me out of this!" While we certainly are invited and encouraged to petition God with our requests for deliverance, it is often during our difficult times that our hearts are turned more directly to Him. We realize our deep and enduring need for Him when we are confronted with our own limitations.

Take a few moments and consider the difficult spaces in your life right now. How is God using them to grow you, to prune you, or to help you recognize your need for Him? Is it hard to be thankful? Do you feel more resentment or disappointment than thankfulness? What would it look like for you to thank Him even in the midst of those feelings?

## Thanks for Life

*"How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light."*

- Psalm 36:7-9 ESV

Life in every facet and form comes from God. He brings forth new life, sustains the living, and gives his children eternal life through his Son. And yet, life easily gets in the way of us pausing to give him thanks. We become so busy living that we forget to thank the Giver of Life.

Consider the life around you--where do you see new life being birthed? Where do you see evidence of life being sustained? Where do you see eternal life springing up? Perhaps this year has been a year of death and endings--how do we faithfully thank God for life in the midst of these complex feelings?

## Thanks for Grace

*"[...] from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."*

- John 1:16 ESV

Grace upon grace upon grace--that's the way that God lavishes his love on us. At every turn, in every situation this is grace and more grace.

Consider the spaces that you find it difficult to have grace for yourself. How does God offer you grace there? Consider the places where the grace of God seems overwhelming in its magnitude--how can you appropriately give thanks to God there?

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## Thanks for Community

*"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."*

- Romans 12:4-5 ESV

Community is complex. Depending on your situation, you may find yourself extremely grateful for the community you have, disappointed by the community you are in, or feeling alone and desiring deep community. And yet, it is undeniable that we are affected by our community however it presents itself.

Consider the people that God has placed around you. What would it look like for you to express your thankfulness for them? Even if you wish your community looked different than it does, how can you sit with that tension and offer thanks to God?

## Thanks for Beauty

*"Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! [...] In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land."*

- Psalm 95:1, 4-5 ESV

Where are the places of beauty in your world?

Where are the thin spaces where you are overcome by the handiwork of God? Perhaps your life is filled with a lot of grey days and it's hard to see any spark of vibrancy. What does it look like to give thanks to God even there?

Wherever you find yourself, how can you honor the beauty of God's creation with a thankful heart?

## Thanks for Rest

*"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."*

- Psalm 23:1-3 ESV

Of every topic so far, this is probably the most foreign to you. The nature of Seminary work--both for the student and the faculty/staff member is all-consuming. Couple that with your church ministries and family obligations, and it can seem like there is little to no time for rest.

And yet, God, the Good Shepherd, is always seeking to create spaces of rest and restoration for us.

Consider your life with all of its obligations.

Where do you most feel the need for rest?

Where have you experienced pockets of unexpected rest? What has rest looked like for you in this season of life? What does it mean for you to give thanks to God for rest, even if you are feeling exhausted and worn out?

## Closing

*"Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!"*

- 1 Chron 16:34 ESV

Consider the journey of thankfulness that you've gone on today. Is there an invitation from the Holy Spirit for you to continue this posture of thanksgiving in your every day life? How might you order your days in such a way that you are quick to give thanks to God for all that he has done?