



## November Membership Resource

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In partnership with:





## About This Resource

The theme of this resource is “gratitude,” and we chose it for several reasons.

The first is that most of us who will use this resource are warriors for justice, and we are the kinds of people who probably need this spiritual discipline the most. Working for justice requires us to see the gap between how the world *is* and how the world *should be*, so that we can help make the *should be* a reality. To see poverty while envisioning a world where everyone has enough, to see environmental degradation while dreaming of thriving ecosystems and clean air, to see the effects of racism while believing in the possibility of true equity and freedom: this yearning for something better is what drives us to keep striving for change.

However, it is easy to get so caught up in striving for something better that we become blind to the goodness and beauty that already surrounds us. Without the practice of gratitude, we grow bitter, despairing, and even judgmental, taking our friends and loved ones for granted, forgetting that the Kingdom of God is indeed already at hand. But when we practice gratitude, we find ourselves living more compassionately, opening our hearts to loving and being loved, embracing the kind of wholeness that compels us to give our best selves to our work for justice and change.

The second reason we chose this theme is a simple one: we all know that the “thanks” in “Thanksgiving” is easy to overlook. Regardless of how kind 2019 has been to you, this resource guides you in taking a quiet pause to experience gratitude in the midst of the cooking, tough family relationships, work, and Black Friday shopping. You can use this resource individually as a personal spiritual exercise, perhaps doing one activity a day. Or you can invite others to join you. Maybe consider using parts of it in your Sunday school class or reconvening your JustFaith group. If you have middle schoolers or high schoolers in your life, ask them to join you. If you enjoy this resource, we recommend our Engaging Spirituality module, which is especially great for us warriors for justice who sometimes feel that we’re too busy to pray!

On a personal note: As I (Kristin) write this introduction, I find myself feeling especially grateful for you, my JustFaith community. Though I’ve only met a handful of you, I am sustained by the knowledge that I am working in solidarity with hundreds of people across the country to build a more just and peaceful world. As I work on cultivating gratitude myself, I find myself ever more grateful for your compassion, courage, and persistence. Thank you, dear friends, and may your November be filled with light, love, and joy.



Finally, if you'd like to dive deeper into these themes, consider checking out our JustFaith program. JustFaith is a small group program that invites participants to live more simply and compassionately, and to make a difference by responding to the needs of the world. It's comprised of three phases that will help you explore today's issues through the lens of your faith, engage in dialogue around those issues, and formulate a personal/group response. Registration is open and you can learn more at: <http://ow.ly/f36F50v0X8G>.

## Resource Links

"An Experiment in Gratitude" (7:13). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHv6vTKD6lg>

David Steindl Rast: "Want to be Happy? Be grateful." (14:19)

[https://www.ted.com/talks/david\\_steindl\\_rast\\_want\\_to\\_be\\_happy\\_be\\_grateful?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/david_steindl_rast_want_to_be_happy_be_grateful?language=en)

"Gratitude Meditation": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCq5MkNem6k>



## Gratitude

### Things you need:

- Computer and Projector
- Handouts for all participants
- Pens/pencils
- Blank paper

### Opening Meditation (30 minutes)

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Begin by reading Luke 17:11-19 (NIV):

**11** Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. **12** As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance **13** and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

**14** When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.

**15** One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. **16** He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

**17** Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? **18** Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” **19** Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

Reflect on the following questions. If you’re by yourself, we recommend journaling.

- Has there ever been a time that you were so grateful that, like the Samaritan, you felt compelled to throw yourself at someone’s feet and thank them?
- In Jesus’s time, Samaritans were the heretics, the enemy, and the outcasts. Yet, much to the listeners’ chagrin, it is the Samaritan who shows what it means to follow Jesus. Who are the “Samaritans” in your life, and what have you learned from them?



- Take 5 minutes or so to list ways in which you have experienced healing during this past year. Then, if you are with the group, take some time to recount these stories of healing aloud (if you feel comfortable),

Conclude this reflection with this prayer of gratitude. Maybe consider honoring the Samaritan's example by kneeling.

"We thank you, Lord Jesus (repeat)  
That you heal us of our brokenness!" (repeat)

"We thank you, Lord Jesus (repeat)  
That you heal us of our brokenness!" (repeat)

"We thank you, Lord Jesus (repeat)  
That you heal us of our brokenness!" (repeat)

Amen.

## Gratitude Activity and Video (1 hour)

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Introduce the next activity with the following words:

**Scripture demonstrates that gratitude has been a practice of spiritual healing for centuries. Psychology and science have only recently caught up! Neuroscientists and psychologists almost unanimously agree that practicing gratitude has the power to combat depression and anxiety. When negative thoughts and emotions strike, try turning to gratitude!**

**We will now watch a video called "An Experiment in Gratitude," which explores the link among gratitude, psychology, and happiness.**

Play the video "An Experiment in Gratitude" (7:13).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHv6vTKD6lg>

When you are finished with the video:

- Write a thank you letter to someone who has had a significant impact on your life.
- Pass out pens and paper. If possible, either now or for "homework," call the person you wrote about and read him/her the letter.



## TED Talk – David Steindl-Rast: “Want to Be Happy? Be Grateful.” (40 minutes)

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David Steindl-Rast is a Benedictine monk and interfaith scholar who studies the relationship between spirituality and science. Watch his TED talk on the spirituality of gratefulness: [https://www.ted.com/talks/david\\_steindl\\_rast\\_want\\_to\\_be\\_happy\\_be\\_grateful?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/david_steindl_rast_want_to_be_happy_be_grateful?language=en)

After the video, ask participants (or journal):

- What resonated with you from this video?
- How can you engage in the spiritual practice of gratefulness in your daily life?

## Gratitude Guided Meditation (15 minutes)

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Find a comfortable spot in a quiet place, and try this guided meditation on gratitude: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCq5MkNem6k>

## Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

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Transition into a time of prayer with the following words: **Let us take a moment to re-center ourselves in the presence of the Holy One, by reading together Jan Richardson’s prayer “The Day We Say Grateful.”** (If you are with a group, take turns reading).

### **This Day We Say Grateful**

#### *A Sending Blessing*

It is a strange thing  
to be so bound  
and so released  
all in the same moment,



to feel the heart  
open wide  
and wider still  
even as it turns  
to take its leave.

On this day,  
let us say  
this is simply the way  
love moves  
in its ceaseless spiraling,  
turning us toward  
one another,  
then sending us  
into what waits for us  
with arms open wide to us  
in welcome  
and in hope.

On this day,  
in this place  
where you have  
poured yourself out,  
where you have been  
emptied  
and filled  
and emptied again,  
may you be aware  
more than ever  
of what your heart  
has opened to  
here,  
what it has tended  
and welcomed  
here,  
where it has broken  
in love and in grief,  
where it has given  
and received blessing  
in the unfathomable mystery  
that moves us,  
undoes us,



and remakes us  
finally  
for joy.

This day  
may you know  
this joy  
in full measure.

This day  
may you know  
this blessing  
that gathers you in  
and sends you forth  
but will not  
forget you.

O hear us  
as this day  
we say  
grace;  
this day  
we say  
grateful;  
this day  
we say  
blessing;  
this day  
we release you  
in God's keeping  
and hold you  
in gladness  
and love.

—Jan Richardson

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