



INTRODUCTION

For the month of November, we offer you a daily meditation on gratitude. Use this to help create a positive, resilient framework of hope and healing for yourself, your relationships, your community, your nation and world. Gratitude changes perspectives and even makes the impossible become more possible!

We are grateful for each of you, and the unique ways in which you contribute to our community. You have probably leaned heavily on special gifts, experiences and strengths to flourish through these days and times, so we offer you a blessing from the church.

We have prepared these daily reflections for you. We invite you to turn to these sacred texts and poems, and brief commentaries by different people, to lift up one thing for which to be grateful. When you make gratitude an every-day habit, it soon becomes a spiritual practice and mindfulness discipline. Giving thanks, for one simple thing, helps create greater bodily, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing.

Begin or end each day with the advice of the poet that follows. — *REV Gail*

START HERE — *Steve Garnaas Holmes*

Those mornings when you wake up burdened,
already thinking Oh why bother,
start here:

thank God for one thing.

One person whom you love will do,
though even a remarkable coincidence is acceptable.

You don't even need to go into peaches,
the color blue, or migratory birds,
or a child's laugh you heard the other day,
let alone the angelic speech of nerve synapses
or the inscrutable ballet of spiral galaxies,
or God's outlandish love for you.

Just one thing to give thanks for.

Then resolve to live the day
in adequate gratitude for that one thing,
and begin.



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1

Today is the first day of the month. We could get wrapped up in the calendar, the upcoming holidays, the need to make plans for the weeks ahead balanced with so many uncertainties that making planning tough. We could focus on tomorrow, instead of taking the opportunity to be present to now. To focus on today.

Also, in addition to being the first day of the month, it's Sunday. For some people, this marks the beginning or end of a busy week. While Sunday is a recreational day for some people, out of necessity it's a work day for others. Yet within our faith tradition, we are encouraged to set aside this day — or some other day which we claim as a sabbath — for respite and renewal.

So let's begin the whole month, and this spiritual exercise, by simply being grateful for this measure of life and consciousness. Give thanks for today — for this 24 hours — for one more day — for this gift of time. — *REV Gail*

This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

— *Psalm 118: 23-24*

Whoever says "I have lived" receives a windfall every morning he gets up. — *Virgil, Aeneid*

"Death is certain; the time of death is uncertain." That reflection awakens in us the precious gift of the present moment—to seize this chance to be alive right now on Planet Earth. — *Joanna Mac*

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2

Gratitude requires paying attention. Today, give thanks for the gift of senses and perceptions. Simply acknowledge the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and touch — as well as their connection to an active mind — that provide awareness.

Appreciate the capacity to take notice.

Also consider — for self or others — any changes in these physical senses or cognition. Extend a blessing for lives that include altered perceptions and functionality. Give thanks for minds and senses that function wholly or holistically, and also for how humans are able to adapt to altered ways of engaging, experiencing, and understanding the world. — *Rev Gail*

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. — *Psalm 139:14*

Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference. — *Thomas Merton*



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3

Let us take a moment to appreciate breath itself. In mindfulness practices, following the breath in, then out again, becomes the path to calm and centeredness.

In our faith tradition, breath is often a metaphor for the Spirit's energy of creativity and holiness. In Hebrew it is known as *ruach*, which may also mean wind. In Greek, it is also called *pneuma*. Breath carries energy and intention. It manifests as voice and language. It gives form and meaning.

Also, breath passes — by necessity and design — physiological barriers and boundaries that guard us. It connects the wider world with the inner aspects of ourselves. Breath touches what is vulnerable, hidden — mysterious and holy — within us.

On a more practical level, during the pandemic, we often breathe with masks and other layers of protection. Thus we cherish breathing as a safe and healthy activity. We are reminded not to take our airways, our lungs, and the healthy environment around us, for granted. At a fundamental level, breath is literally an essential ingredient to life itself.

So let us inhale. Hold our breath (if able to do so). Then slowly exhale. And give thanks for our breath. — *Rev Gail*

The Spirit of God has made me;
the breath of the Almighty gives me life.
— *Job 33:4*

To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything He has given us - and He has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of His love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense graces from Him. — *Thomas Merton*

The great open secret of gratitude is that it is not dependent on external circumstance. It's like a setting or channel that we can switch to at any moment, no matter what's going on around us. It helps us connect to our basic right to be here, like the breath does. It's a stance of the soul. In systems theory, each part contains the whole. Gratitude is the kernel that can flower into everything we need to know. — *Joanna Macy*

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Let us pay attention to light. To what it reveals. To how it is both particle and wave, something measurable with science, yet also fleeting, untouchable, ineffable.

Some kinds of light — such as daylight — feed our brains, emotions, and bodies. Trigger wellbeing. Enough light sustains growth and life, converts into energy for much of the green and flourishing world. On the other hand, too much light may be blinding and harmful.

Seasonally, the light changes as the earth moves closer or further from the sun. On a clear night, we look up into the sky and witness light that has crossed countless miles and fathomless centuries to reach us. And by day, we witness the radiance of our own solar system's star. Constellations have been transformed into stories by cultures all over the world, as we see ourselves in the patterns we observe, connecting humanity to the vast universe.

Along the way, humans have harnessed and contained light. Learned how to generate it, so that we aren't limited to periods of darkness and inactivity in the same way.

On a different level, carrying light within us refers to wisdom and understanding. To spiritual awakening. To the dignity, sacredness and value of our souls, hearts, and minds.

Let us notice the light. Give thanks for the kiss of the sun, the dance of the stars. Reach for the light. Welcome the light. — *Rev Gail*

While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light. — *John 12:36*

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us. — *Albert Schweitzer*

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Let us give thanks for windows and doors. For physical thresholds that mark our arrivals and departures, our comings and goings. Sometimes they're more than a knob and a hinge: they're portals of transition. They demarcate the places we begin or end, they designate both routine movements and life-altering journeys.

At such portals, we leave something behind. Imagine something new. Say farewell. Anticipate hello.

Doorways and windows are gateways and portals. They launch us. Send us off. And welcome us.

They transport us from one environment to another, one state of being to another: inside to outside, human-made to natural, domestic to foreign, private to

public, personal to professional, learning to living, living to work, work to play.

At doorways and windows, people move, look, and listen. They permit entry and protect against access. Sometimes they're simple openings, alternately they involve barriers with locks for security and privacy.

Through doors and windows, we experience many states. Opening. Closing. Revealing. Hiding. Accessing. Retreating. Locking. Liberating.

Give thanks for what a door might offer or a window give. Let us appreciate these points of transition. —
— *Rev Gail*

Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;

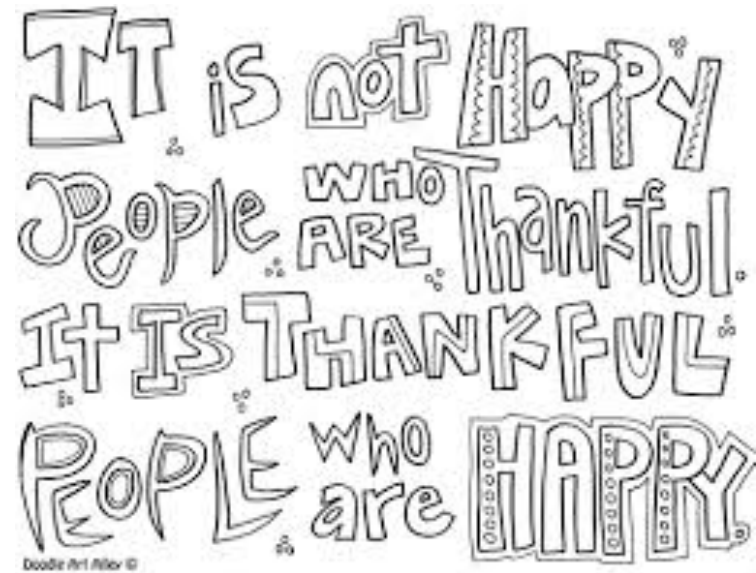
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy. — *Psalm 56*

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. — *Psalm 100*

However, gratitude is not just an expression of good manners; it's a doorway to higher consciousness.

— *Chopra Center*

Praying (*excerpt*) — *Mary Oliver*
... just pay attention, then patch
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway
into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6

As we enter the weekend, let us appreciate roads and trails. Such connectors offer another aspect of journeys. They involve 'places between' that encompass the routes we travel.

On such pathways, transformation occurs. Our oldest recorded stories and most sacred texts narrate human migrations that celebrate adventures and experiences. On the trail, we cause growth and change. In our faith tradition, Christ's ministry is called the Way.

Let us give thanks for the roads and paths that we travel today. And the Way we walk together. — *Rev Gail*

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth. — *Luke 3:5*

Every day is a journey, and the journey itself is home. —
Matsuo Basho

The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk
on the green earth, dwelling deeply in the present moment
and feeling truly alive. — *Thich Nhat Hanh*

In life, one has a choice to take one of two paths: to wait for
some special day--or to celebrate each special day. —
Rasheed Ogunlaru

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Today, give thanks for trees. Trees, rooted in the earth, rise
up to reach for the heavens. They embrace the movement
of the wind, become bridges between the land and sky,
earth and heaven.

Trees of different species signal the changing
seasons. Many of them blaze with color, and grow bare as
the world changes. Others remain verdant throughout the
year.

In Biblical texts, trees are listed by species as the
building element of ships and temples. They appear in
domesticated gardens and orchards, grow wild and
unkempt in natural settings. They appear as symbols of
strength and abundance, and are used as instruments of
death and execution. At their best, they become bearers of
blessing, renewal and resurrection.

Give thanks for trees. — *Rev Gail*

Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy
before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.

— *1 Chronicles 16:33-34*

But I am like a green olive tree
in the house of God.

I trust in the steadfast love of God
forever and ever.

I will thank you forever,
because of what you have done.

In the presence of the faithful

I will proclaim[a] your name, for it is good.

— *Psalms 52:8-9*

When eating fruit, remember the one who planted the tree.
— *Vietnamese Proverb*



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Give thanks for mountains. We are often called to ‘high places.’

In some cultures, we discuss ‘thin places’ that are close to heaven. In the Celtic tradition, heaven is only six feet away in memorable geographic locations such as certain islands or mountains, which hold sacred significance in multiple faith traditions.

Walk out your door. Hike or drive toward a peak. Go uphill. Grow short of breath or pause and catch a second wind. Continue. Get closer to the heavens. Stand on the peak. Look out across the vista.

The natural world offers its own cathedrals. In our region, mountains become one of those places that are holy to people in many cultures. Give thanks for the presence of such heights — physical and spiritual— in our landscape.

— *Rev Gail*

You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O Lord, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established.

— *Exodus 15:17*

Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth;
break forth, O mountains, into singing!
For the Lord has comforted his people,
and will have compassion on his suffering ones.

— *Isaiah 49:13*

The world has enough beautiful mountains and meadows, spectacular skies and serene lakes. It has enough lush forests, flowered fields, and sandy beaches. It has plenty of stars and the promise of a new sunrise and sunset every day. What the world needs more of is people to appreciate and enjoy it.

— *Michael Josephson*

How to climb a mountain. — *Carina Devera*

1. Don't forget to pack your courage.
2. Do not presume a mountain can be climbed all at once; one step at a time is all you will be granted.
3. Faced with such permanence, take comfort in all that is fleeting, and dare not disturb the rocks.



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Pay attention to your feet. Stand. Walk. Ground yourself.

Know you are connected to the place where you set foot. Land there. Pace yourself. Remain still. Or move. Know that your presence, motionless or on the go, offers a form of prayer.

Recognize lives — self or others — wherein standing or walking becomes a challenge: impossible, compromised, or precarious. Consider lives transformed by changes in mobility and independence. Celebrate how people adapt to challenges regarding the ability to walk, to walk with support or aid, or to adapt to new forms of mobility. — *Rev Gail*

I waited patiently for the Lord;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.

He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.

— *Psalm 40*

Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. 16 He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. — *Luke 17*

Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet.
— *Thich Nhat Hanh*

We use our feet so often and so constantly that it is easy to take them for granted when everything is working well. Maybe your feet don't look perfect, and maybe they even impart pain at times. Nevertheless, our feet are exquisitely

designed to support and propel us through all the various movements of life. — *Samuel Goltman*

And when I gazed down at my bare feet—stopped to really look at them—I could feel a new sense of gratitude for them and wondered where they might take me next. — *Bruce Black*

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Look at your hands. Open your palm. Examine your fingers and thumb. Consider what they accomplish for you.

If your hands have been harmed or slowed down by changes in wellbeing, appreciate what they once did, and give thanks for their current functionality. Appreciate how we switch gears, continue our passions, or choose new ones as our bodies alter functionality. Sometimes other hands do what our own cannot do.

Hands offer touch and connection. Translate the world for us. Write and communicate. Gesture and speak. Manipulate and mediate the outer world and the human experience.

Sometimes they tear down or build up. Release or hold. Crush or caress. Wreck or write.

Hands make. Shape. Create. Express.

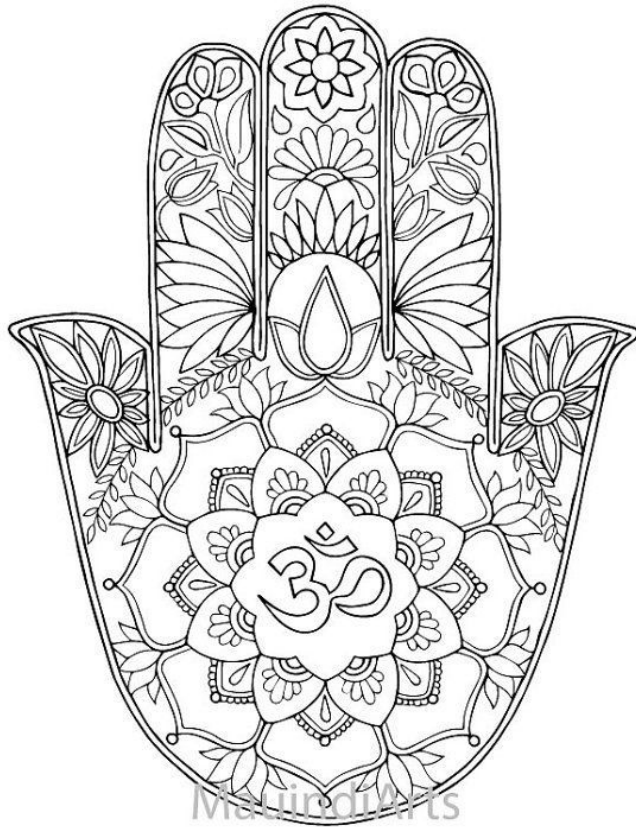
Today, give thanks for hands. — *Rev Gail*

His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands.
— *Genesis 39:3*

In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being. — *Job 12:10*

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one. — *John 10:27-30*

I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that, I still possess. — *Corrie ten Boom*



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Reflect on voice. Appreciate the freedom and ability to speak. To express yourself. Or to opt for silence.

Listen for the differences in people's accents and dialects. Take meaning from tones of voice. Appreciate quiet and stillness. Cherish speech and conversation.

The spoken Word is another metaphor for the life of Christ and the presence of the Spirit during creation. In our origin story in the Bible, the spoken Word blows like a wind, sweeping across unformed chaos, to catalyze the formation of the world and its beings.

Spirit also blows through our lives and communities, making us restless. Active. Expressive. Creative. Communicative. Connected.

Give thanks for voices and words. — *Rev Gail*

I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my supplications.
Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
— *Psalms 116*

... there shall once more be heard the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord: "Give thanks to the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!" — *Jeremiah 33*

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. — *John F. Kennedy*

'Gratitude' comes from the same word as freedom (gratis = free). Gratitude is the freeing expression of a free heart toward one who freely gave. — *Ravi Zacharias*

In the end, though, maybe we must all give up trying to pay back the people in this world who sustain our lives. In the end, maybe it's wiser to surrender before the miraculous scope of human generosity and to just keep saying thank you, forever and sincerely, for as long as we have voices. — *Elizabeth Gilbert*

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12

Notice names. Perhaps your surname, family name, or a nickname you have been given or earned. The names of people and pets around you.

Consider the names of places where you spend your time or routes you often travel. We map our lives by place names, by addresses, by locations that have labels attached to them. Our mountains and rivers, oceans and beaches, lakes and towns all have names.

We name buildings, vessels and vehicles. We name businesses, clubs, teams, institutions, and groups with which we have connection and belonging. Some are merely familiar, while others hold memories and emotions attached to them, and stir a response at their utterance. Names often contain stories within them, if we're curious.

Give thanks for the names that shape the landscape of your life and give context to your identity. — *REV GAIL*

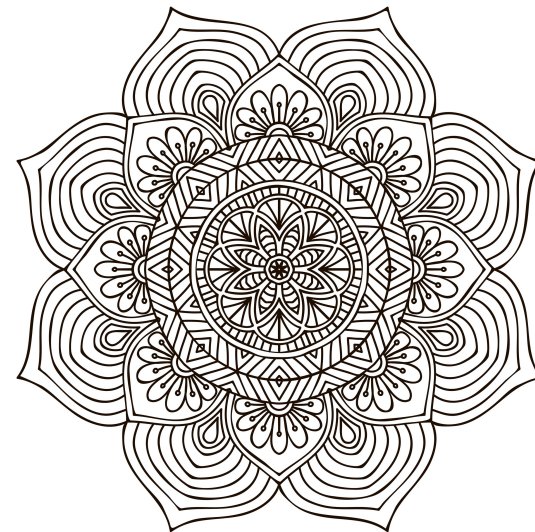
O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
Sing to him, sing praises to him,

tell of all his wonderful works.
— *1 Chronicles 16:8-9*

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. — *Colossians 3:16-17*

The great struggle of the Christian life is to take God's name for us, to believe we are beloved and to believe that is enough. — *Rachel Held Evans*

I am Worthy



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13

Pay attention to the sky today. Be grateful for what it offers. Be aware of its constancy, yet how it changes every moment.

Is the vaulted sky clear or cloudy? Are storms rolling over the highest mountain peaks? How does the precipitation from overhead touch the earth, if there's weather to report: as fog, or rain, or snow? How does the light touch your face today? Do you cast a shadow? What color are the heavens: blue or grey or something else? Is sound connected to the sky today, as rumbling thunder, lightning claps, pelting rain or shushing snow?

Do birds wing through the sky? Migrating? Going about their business? Do planes or helicopters make a trail of sound across the valley? Do leaves still cling to branches, and spiral down beneath the wind?

Give thanks for the sky. — *REV GAIL*

Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre!

I will awake the dawn.

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples;

I will sing praises to you among the nations.

For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens;
your faithfulness extends to the clouds.

— *Psalms 56*

When you sit down to eat, pray. When you eat bread, do so thanking God for being so generous to you. If you drink wine (or coffee), be mindful of God who has given it to you for your pleasure and as a relief in sickness. When you dress, thank God for His kindness in providing you with clothes. When you look at the sky and the beauty of the stars, throw yourself at God's feet and adore Him who

ordered things this way. When the sun goes down and when it rises, when you are asleep or awake, give thanks to God, who created and arranged all things for your benefit, to have you know, love and praise their Creator. — *Basil the Great*

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Give thanks for food. For sustenance.

Consider how each element of a meal arrives on your plate. Trace its possible origin: sea or forest, field or garden, farm or stream. Imagine how it was caught, grown, hunted, raised or harvested. Track how nearby or far away its beginnings, then the means by which it was packaged and transported, whether a few miles, state-widths and ocean-lengths. What person selected it for your plate? How was it then prepared for eating?

Consider the earth that offered up its nourishment to feed you, and the many hands that brought it to your table. Take note of those who have fewer choices about their meals, and worry about what they'll eat at the next meal, or how they'll feed their family. Appreciate the way your body is sustained by the food you notice today. The jobs that are maintained by your choices, the environmental justice implied in your selections.

Of course, in our faith, Love itself becomes food. Offers spiritual nourishment. In many cultures, the preparation of food, the offering of hospitality, and the consumption of a meal are all sacred rituals.

Give thanks for food. — *REV GAIL*

... who gives food to all flesh,
for his steadfast love endures forever.
O give thanks to the God of heaven,
for his steadfast love endures forever.
— *Psalm 136: 25-26*

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre.
He covers the heavens with clouds,
prepares rain for the earth,
makes grass grow on the hills.
He gives to the animals their food,
and to the young ravens when they cry.
— *Psalm 147: 7-11*

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.
— *2 Corinthians 9:10-12*

When you arise in the morning give thanks for the food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself. — *Tecumseh*

Wear gratitude like a cloak and it will feed every corner of your life. — *Rumi*



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15

Give thanks for fire and heat. As the days grow colder, let us appreciate the chance to warm our bones. Be present to the Holy Spirit as flame. Or savor the simple, elemental fuel of the world, creating a hearth, a bonfire, or a conflagration.

Fire can burn. Create ashes. Destroy. Or it can transform, as when something is changed by the crucible of extreme heat. Sometimes, out of flames, arises rebirth, such as the legend of the Phoenix.

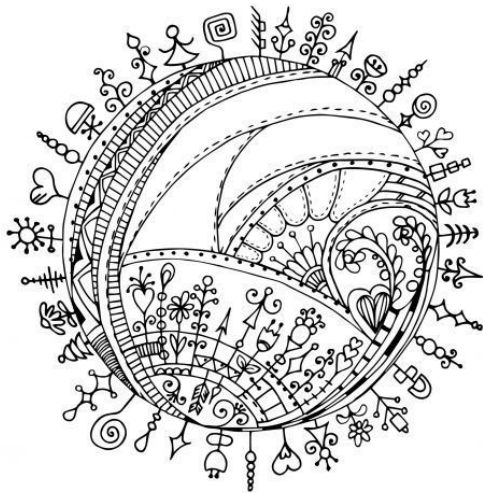
Huddle close. Warm up. Let the flames ease you. Comfort you. Dance within you. — *REV GAIL*

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire. — *Hebrews 12:28-29*

If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire. — *1 Corinthians 3:14-16*

In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit. — *Albert Schweitzer*

It is literally true, as the thankless say, that they have nothing to be thankful for. He who sits by the fire, thankless for the fire, is just as if he had no fire. Nothing is possessed save in appreciation, of which thankfulness is the indispensable ingredient. — *W.J. Cameron*



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16

Consider the earth. Give thanks for the ground beneath your feet. The glacier-driven cliffs and outcroppings, twisted into waterfalls and ledges, that shape our landscape. Imagine the rich soil that yields summer and autumn harvests. The fierce and ancient mountains, upthrust and worn low, that frame our valley.

Stone. Soil. Rock. Dirt. May we appreciate the holy ground on which we stand, reside, play, work and learn. May we pause to recognize that she is more than mere rock, but an interconnected part of creation. She holds us up. Gives us a home. Groans, and continues to live.
— *Rev Gail*

... you are the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas.

By your strength you established the mountains;
you are girded with might.

You silence the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.

— *Psalm 65*

Fill the earth with your songs of gratitude.
— *Charles Spurgeon*

There are three requisites to the proper enjoyment of earthly blessings: a thankful reflection, on the goodness of the giver; a deep sense of our own unworthiness; and a recollection of the uncertainty of our long possessing them. The first will make us grateful; the second, humble; and the third, moderate. — *Hannah More*

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Pause and focus on water. Give thanks for this element that sustains life. In fresh form, untainted by toxins, it becomes a potable promise of surviving and thriving.

Jesus' first miracle transformed water into wine. He called himself the Living Water for the woman at the well, who offered him refreshment, though she was from a despised ethnicity that he would traditionally have shunned.

In times of drought, such as we have experienced this season, wells run dry. Water collects detritus. Riverbeds become barren. Thirst parches throats, simply due to the idea of running out. Of not having enough.

Give thanks for the abundance of water when it's available. And for its precious presence, when it is scarce.

— *Rev Gail*

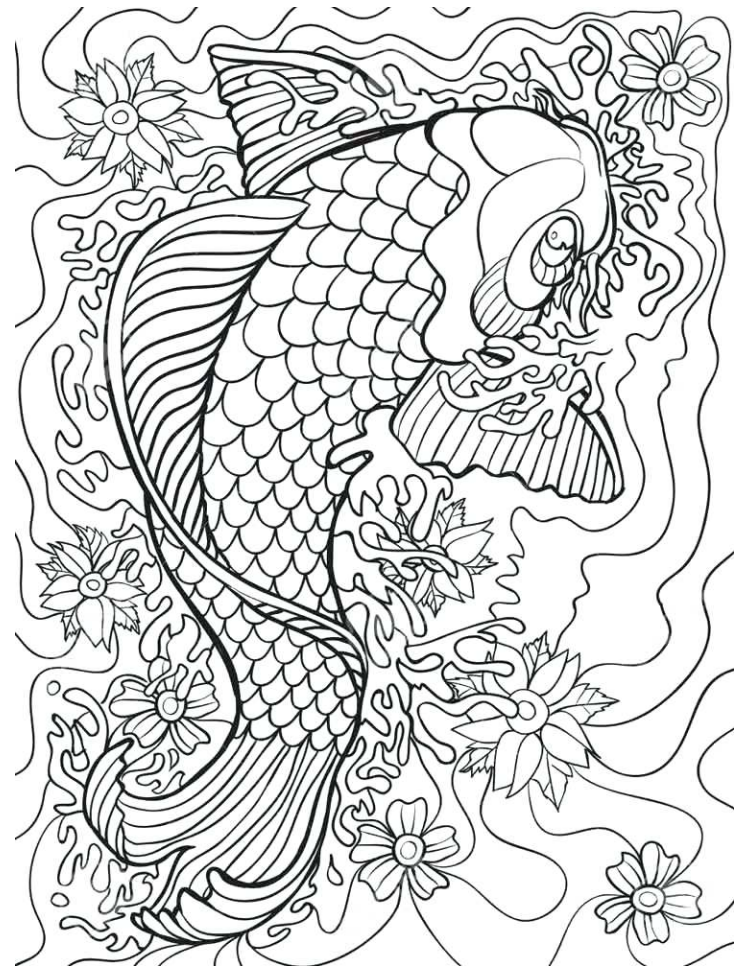
You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it;
 the river of God is full of water;
 you provide the people with grain,
 for so you have prepared it.

You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges,
 softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

You crown the year with your bounty;
 your wagon tracks overflow with richness.
 The pastures of the wilderness overflow,
 the hills gird themselves with joy,
 the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
 the valleys deck themselves with grain,
 they shout and sing together for joy.

— *Psalm 65*

The Dead Sea in the Middle East receives fresh water, but it has no outlet, so it doesn't pass the water out. It receives beautiful water from the rivers, and the water goes dank. I mean, it just goes bad. And that's why it is the Dead Sea. It receives and does not give. In the end generosity is the best way of becoming more, more, and more joyful. — *Desmond Tutu*



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

People are essential to our wellbeing. Isolation from human interactions contributes to people's poor health: mental and physical.

At the same time, while we notice some people, we often overlook others, who are integral to our daily living. Now's the chance to look twice. Recognize someone who regularly shows up in your life, in ways that you don't usually realize. Cashiers, custodians, cooks, drivers, delivery people: these are just some of the people who work 'frontline' roles, and due to the pandemic, and have received recognition as essential workers.

Meanwhile, let us give thanks for relationships that renew and comfort us. Those folks who are beloved family and essential friends. Others who enrich our lives as teachers, coaches, mentors, coworkers, colleagues, companions, care givers, and more. Today you're invited to actually focus on at least one these connections and their meaning for you.

While we're giving thanks for people, we can even acknowledge difficult personalities that challenge us. Perhaps there's a person in your life who troubles you; this person might also become — through gratitude — a teacher of sorts, offering up life lessons that they didn't intend to share, but that you have found a way to claim as your own.

Today, let us give thanks for people of all kinds. —

Rev Gail

And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all

things come from you, and of your own have we given you.
— *1 Chronicles 29:13-14*

... and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. — *Ezra 3:11*

Then we your people, the flock of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise. — *Psalms 79:13*

We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives. — *John F. Kennedy*

In the end, though, maybe we must all give up trying to pay back the people in this world who sustain our lives. In the end, maybe it's wiser to surrender before the miraculous scope of human generosity and to just keep saying thank you, forever and sincerely, for as long as we have voices. — *Elizabeth Gilbert*

You know, when Nelson Mandela went to jail he was young and, you could almost say, bloodthirsty. He was head of the armed wing of the African National Congress, his party. He spent twenty-seven years in jail, and many would say, Twenty-seven years, oh, what a waste. And I think people are surprised when I say no, the twenty-seven years were necessary. They were necessary to remove the dross. The suffering in prison helped him to become more magnanimous, willing to listen to the other side. To discover that the people he regarded as his enemy, they too were human beings who had fears and expectations. And

they had been molded by their society. And so without the twenty-seven years I don't think we would have seen the Nelson Mandela with the compassion, the magnanimity, the capacity to put himself in the shoes of the other. — *Dalai Lama*

Generosity does not require material abundance. When I think back on the many people who have been so generous toward me, I never think of money or “things.” Instead, I think of the way they gave me their presence, their confidence, their affirmation, support, and blessing — all gifts of “self” that any of us can give. And where does generosity come from? Perhaps from another life-giving virtue, the one called gratitude. — *Parker Palmer*



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

Let us give thanks for other living creatures that aren't human. For animals and birds, insects and reptiles. Let us recognize our connection to the whole living world, and the intricate relationships human societies have with ecosystems and habitats. What happens to other living creatures also affects us.

Some animals are domesticated. Pets, for instance, provide comfort and companionship. Domesticated animals, of all kinds, often exist as part of the network that sustains people: work animals, agricultural animals, and others, too.

Wildlife becomes a different presence for us. Some people interact directly with nature through their passions and professions. Some of us only encounter them vicariously. Yet all of us, whether we feel the immediacy of the connection or not, are deeply affected by other living beings in our world.

Imagine, for instance, how bees pollinate trees and flowers. Imagine the taste of honey at the end of the summer. In so many ways, the aspects of the world from which we derive pleasure are made possible because of the lives and journeys of other living creatures.

Let us give thanks for the other beings that share the world with us: creatures with whom we have kinship and for whom we are accountable. Our relationship to the larger world — including its other inhabitants — is a holy and sacred trust. May we be grateful. — *Rev Gail*

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every

kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

— *Genesis 1:24-26*

If having a soul means being able to feel love and loyalty and gratitude, then animals are better off than a lot of humans. — *James Herriot*

Every day, think as you wake up: Today I am fortunate to have woken up. I am alive. I have a precious human life. I am not going to waste it. I am going to use all my energies to develop myself, to expand my heart out to others, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. I am going to have kind thoughts towards others, I am not going to get angry, or think badly about others. I am going to benefit others as much as I can. — *Dalai Lama*

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Give thanks for what falls. We crush underfoot the acorns that land in our paths, or kick them aside as fodder for wild creatures. We press bruised apples, shaken from their limbs, into cider. We pause in wonder at the rushing torrents that cascade as waterfalls, dropping dramatically, tumultuously, to the river below. Our own bodies sometimes tumble.

Yes, some things that fall are discarded, no longer useful, damaged by the impact upon landing. Some are hurt and broken in the descent, in need of healing and repair. Other things are made glorious by the journey that begins at the top and plummets downward.

Our eyes fall as we grow weary. Night falls as the day ends. Sometimes, falling simply signifies release and reprieve.

Let us give thanks for what falls. — *REV Gail*

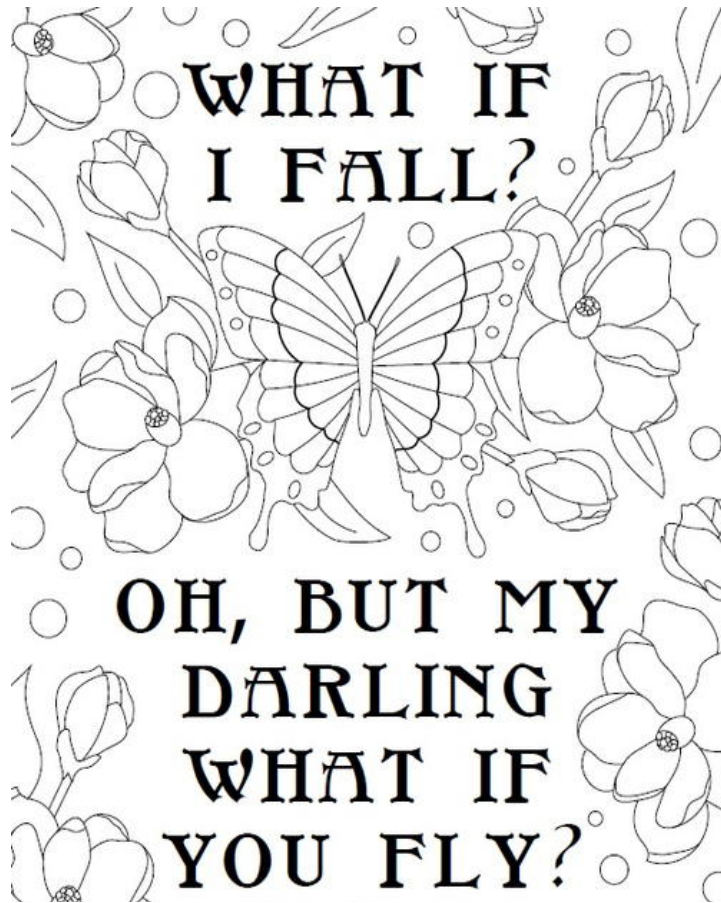
It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. — *Romans 14:4b*

My vows to you I must perform, O God;
I will render thank offerings to you. For you have
delivered my soul from death,
and my feet from falling,
so that I may walk before God
in the light of life.
— *Psalms 56: 12-13*

And falling's just another way to fly. — *Emilie Autumn*

It is sometimes a mistake to climb; it is always a mistake never even to make the attempt. If you do not climb, you will not fall. This is true. But is it that bad to fail, that hard to fall? — *Neil Gaiman*

Stumbling is not falling. — *Malcolm X*



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21

Appreciate what rises. What goes up. What climbs.

The sun breaks over the horizon as it starts the day. People, in their efforts to achieve things, often rise. Sometimes the ascent is its own journey, sometimes it's the path that leads to a goal or destination.

Sap rises. Birds and plans take off, balloons go aloft: they all rise. New life pushes up through the earth, toward the hope and necessity of sunlight, and rises.

Emotions rise. Expectations rise. Energy rises. Sometimes rising comes as too much of something: overwhelming or out-of-control.

Implicit in rising is the idea that things will soar. That you are making progress. Summiting. Reaching for a climax. Overcoming some obstacle or challenge.

Within the idea of the rising is also its corollary. What rises will also descend. Will settle down. Find a lower point or landing place again. Root itself in calm.

For now, let us give thanks for what rises, and all the promises and possibilities in that movement.

— *REV Gail*

Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you. — *Genesis 13:18*

You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. — *Deuteronomy 11:18-19*

Rise up, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand; do not forget the oppressed. — *Psalms 10:12*

We rise by lifting others. — *Robert Ingersoll*

You've seen my descent. Now watch my rising! — *Rumi*

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22

Give thanks for what is old. Appreciate what has matured and seasoned. Take notice of lives and perspectives made venerable through insight and experience.

Focus on an object, an artifact, whose purpose has become obscure or obsolete, but which is beautiful for its own sake, as a work of engineering and art.

Appreciate an antique for its vintage status, for its rarity, for its implicit value. Get to know the history of what is old. Tell that story. Learn from it.

After all, what is old has endured. Shown persistent and resilience. Staying power. Has existed or lived for long periods of time.

On the other hand, be willing to part with what is old, and must be completed or set aside. Sometimes a belonging, an object or instrument, a place or institution, no longer has function or relevance, and becomes an emotional, psychological, or physical burden. In the letting go, give thanks for what this item, location or relationship formerly contributed to your life. Acknowledge its significance, and honor it, and then lay it to rest. Say goodbye.

Aging has its own grace. It comes with changes, but also forms of liberation. The cares and concerns of youth, driven by the desire to create and generate, to accomplish and achieve, have transformed. With age comes curiosity. As we become 'old' we also embrace our capacity to adapt and learn.

The second half of human life requires a sense of purpose and passion, just like the first half. People continue to make meaning, but may do so in different ways.

Give thanks for what is old. — *REV GAIL*

You shall rise before the aged, and defer to the old; and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord. — *Leviticus 19:32*
 9 I will look with favor upon you and make you fruitful and multiply you; and I will maintain my covenant with you.
 10 You shall eat old grain long stored, and you shall have to clear out the old to make way for the new. 11 I will place my dwelling in your midst ... — *Leviticus 26:9-11*

He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age ... — *Ruth 4:15a*

Thus says the Lord:

I am going to restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob,
 and have compassion on his dwellings;
 the city shall be rebuilt upon its mound,
 and the citadel set on its rightful site.
 Out of them shall come thanksgiving,
 and the sound of merry-makers.
 I will make them many, and they shall not be few;
 I will make them honored,
 and they shall not be disdained.
 Their children shall be as of old,
 their congregation shall be established before me...
 — *Jeremiah 30:18-20*

Seek not to follow in the footsteps of men of old; seek what they sought. — *Matsuo Basho*

I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new. — *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23

Give thanks for what is new: relationship, belonging, place, or experience. Be grateful and attentive to whatever comes to mind, that is new in your life right now.

Appreciate its presence. Imagine its freshness. Savor its capacity to be put to use or to be discovered. What must you learn about this new and previously-unknown thing or person or place which you are noticing?

New can imply young. Immature. Just getting started. Something just created or conceived. Or new can signify that it is unfamiliar to you, has just arrived in your life, regardless of its condition, purpose, or its age. With something new comes the possibility of discovery. Of surprise. Of wonder. Of rejuvenation.

Give thanks for something new in your day or your life. — *REV Gail*

“For there is hope for a tree,
if it is cut down, that it will sprout again,
and that its shoots will not cease.
Though its root grows old in the earth,
and its stump dies in the ground,
yet at the scent of water it will bud
and put forth branches like a young plant.

— *Job 14:7-9*

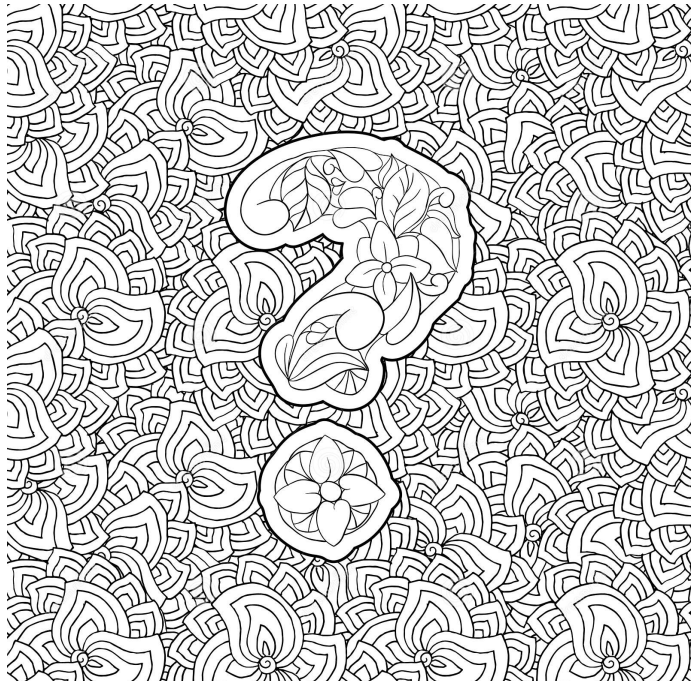
Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He

will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them. — *Revelation 21: 1-3*

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! — *2 Corinthians 5:17*

As each day comes to us refreshed and anew, so does my gratitude renew itself daily. The breaking of the sun over the horizon is my grateful heart dawning upon a blessed world. — *Terri Guillemets*

Jesus calls us to gratitude. He calls us to recognize that gladness and sadness are never separate, that joy and sorrow really belong together, and that mourning and dancing are part of the same movement. That is why Jesus calls us to be grateful for every moment that we have lived and to claim our unique journey as God’s way to mold our hearts to greater conformity with God’s own. The cross is the main symbol of our faith, and it invites us to find hope where we see pain and to reaffirm the resurrection where we see death. The call to be grateful is a call to trust that every moment of our life can be claimed as the way of the cross that leads us to new life. — *Henri Nouwen*

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24**

Appreciate questions. Sometimes it is essential to dwell in the uncertainty of asking, the discomfort of not knowing. Sometimes we get a choice, as when we are students, and opt to learn. Other times, we are thrust into such situations, and must cope. Either way, this becomes a necessary skill: to be present to what we have not yet learned or thought, and to discover that there is much we do not yet understand.

To ask, or to be asked, is to become vulnerable. When you inquire, you enter into a reciprocal relationship, expressing your own need for information or education, admitting you need support or assistance to attain the answer you seek. You acknowledge that, one way or

another, you are seeking. You also turn to someone else for guidance toward an answer.

Sometimes, simply by asking, you also discover that you know what is needed. That by articulating the question, you find insight within yourself.

At the same time, to ask a question, or to be asked, is to become strong. When you embrace the state of uncertainty and not-knowing, you become more comfortable with growing and learning. To ask a question is to become more connected, to open yourself to the resources of a network of relationships. To be asked a question is to be honored or perceived as someone who serves as a guide or mentor.

Appreciate that in the asking, or being asked, you do not have to know the answer. Sometimes it is best to acknowledge that you, too, will have to make inquiries in order to provide a solution or information. Or that if you are the one asking the question, be prepared with patience and humility, to wait for answers, or to receive only partial responses and incomplete understanding.

Give thanks for questions. — *REV GAIL*

To you, O God of my ancestors,
I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom and power,
and have now revealed to me what we asked of you,
for you have revealed to us what the king ordered.
— *Daniel 2:23-24*

There are going to be frustrations in life. The question is not: How do I escape? It is: How can I use this as something positive? — *Dalai Lama*

GRATITUDE (excerpt) — *Mary Oliver*

What did you notice?
 What did you hear?
 When did you admire?
 What astonished you?
 What would you like to see again?
 What was most tender?
 What was most wonderful?
 What did you think was happening?

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Give thanks for fear and anger. What do these emotions reveal to you?

Often our spiritual teachers, our advisors and guides and mentors, suggest that we speak to our difficult emotions such as anger and fear. This may be a time for journaling as an alternate form of conversation with one's self. Or start a dialogue by imagining these parts of yourself — the self caught up in fear or the self in the grips of anger — sitting in a chair opposite to you.

Begin a conversation. Learn, from yourself, about yourself. Interview yourself. Be willing to be surprised.

We can ask questions of these states of being: fear and anger. Where do these feelings begin? What do they need from us? How do we feed and fuel them? If we speak with tenderness to fear and anger, and appreciate its presence as part of ourselves, what would we say to it? What would it say to us?

We can be victims of these emotions. Or we can accept them as guides. We ought not to allow ourselves to be motivated by them, but to be instructed by them. They are present as part of the human experience, and they tell us that we must pay attention when we notice them.

Give thanks for fear and anger, and what we learn about ourselves, and how we may grow, because of them.

— *REV Gail*

O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol,
 restored me to life

from among those gone down to the Pit.

Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones,
 and give thanks to his holy name.

For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may linger for the night,
 but joy comes with the morning.

— *Psalm 30:3-5*

You will say in that day: I will give thanks to you, O Lord, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, and you comforted me. — *Isaiah 12:1*

Love takes off the masks we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. — *James Baldwin*

I cannot pretend I am without fear. But my predominant feeling is one of gratitude. I have loved and been loved; I have been given much and I have given something in return; I have read and traveled and thought and written. I have had an intercourse with the world, the special intercourse of writers and readers. Above all, I have been a sentient being, a thinking animal, on this beautiful planet, and that in itself has been an enormous privilege and adventure. — *Oliver Sacks*

True happiness is to enjoy the present, without anxious dependence upon the future, not to amuse ourselves with either hopes or fears but to rest satisfied with what we have, which is sufficient, for he that is so wants nothing. The greatest blessings of mankind are within us and within our reach. A wise man is content with his lot, whatever it may be, without wishing for what he has not. — *Seneca*

The Psalms are, in a sense, God’s way of holding space for us. They invite us to rejoice, wrestle, cry, complain, offer thanks, and shout obscenities before our Maker without self-consciousness and without fear. — *Rachel Held Evans*

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26

Notice what is still and calm, without motion or activity. Give thanks for this aspect of your world.

A lake or pond, for instance, reflects like a mirror when still. It gives back the world to itself. It echoes and returns what is offered to it.

A boulder or stone ledge has no voice. Such rock scapes show traces of age and reveal the record of geological events via their exposed layers. Yet they remain mute, silent, and seemingly permanent. They are tangible, solid, and ever-present: a source of serenity and assurance.

What is still in your life? Calm? A place or way that is rooted, or centered, simply by its existence?

Give thanks for stillness, for calm. Appreciate the opportunity to pause all the motion and remain in one place. — *Rev Gail*

Be still, and know that I am God. — *Psalms 46:10*

He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. — *Mark 4:39*

The ship of my life may or may not be sailing on calm and amiable seas. The challenging days of my existence may or may not be bright and promising. Stormy or sunny days, glorious or lonely nights, I maintain an attitude of gratitude. If I insist on being pessimistic, there is always tomorrow. Today I am blessed. — *Maya Angelou*

Resentment indicates we are still trying to fill the emptiness with something we think we deserve. Gratitude is the sign that God has filled the hole; indeed, that God has become the Whole in Whom we live, move, and have our being. — *Steve Harper*



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27

Give thanks for laughter.

What makes you smile today? What tickles your sense of humor?

Laughter alleviates stress. Laughter expresses joy. Humor helps humans cope with the most challenging of circumstances. Laughter floods the body with good chemistry; it promotes healing and resilience.

Give thanks for what amuses, delights, or surprises you. Cherish a smile someone else shares with you, that invites you to smile back. Or the laugh that springs up from deep inside you when something strikes you in a whimsical way.

Take time to read the funny anecdote, look at the silly photo, or watch the slapstick video shared with you by friends. Give time and space to encourage laughter. Appreciate that people share such gifts with you.

As we've studied as a faith community, humor is holy. Laughter is a gift: a capacity that is part of how humans are designed. When you laugh, you send joy reverberating up to heaven. — *REV GAIL*

Now Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." — *Genesis 21:6*

He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouts of joy. — *Job 8:21*

For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away
stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

— *Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8*

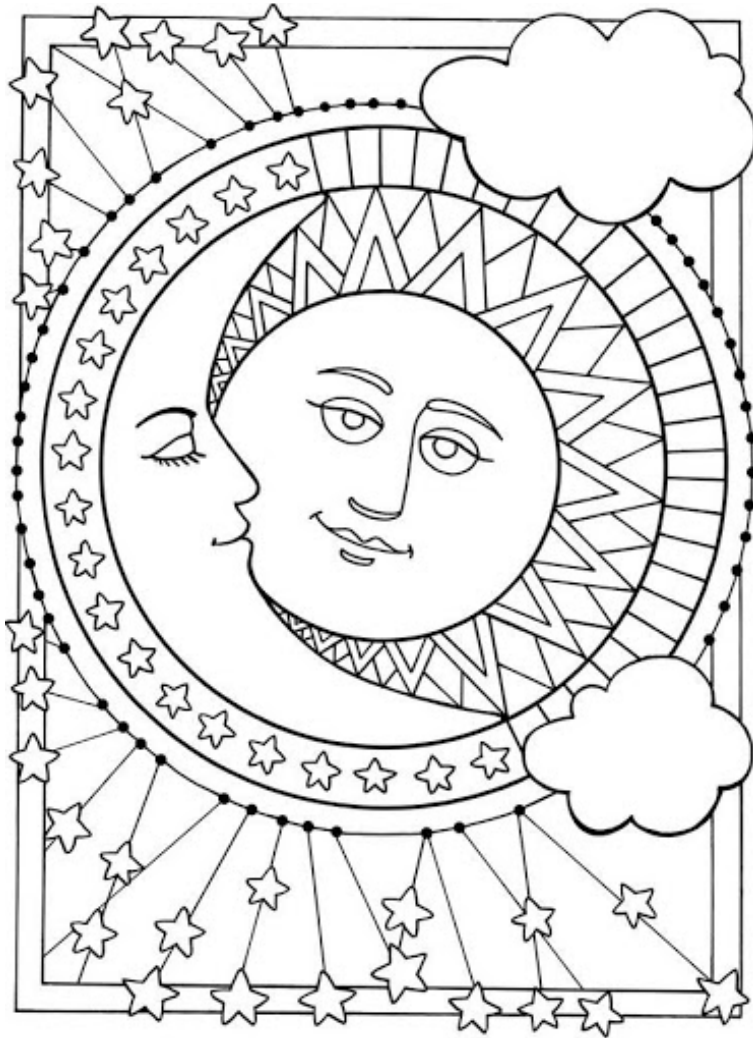
For me, every hour is grace. And I feel gratitude in my heart each time I can meet someone and look at his or her smile.

— *Elie Wiesel*

We need laughter in our lives. Laughter is carbonated holiness.— *Anne Lamott*

Humor is a prelude to faith and laughter is the beginning of prayer. — *Reinhold Niebuhr*





SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28

Pay attention to darkness. What are the gifts that darkness brings to you?

Shade provides respite from glaring light or extreme heat. Night permits sleep and rejuvenation. Shadows reveal depth.

Darkness is, in some ways, the absence of light and color. In other ways, it is the blending of many hues to create a deeper, richer palette. Darkness may be identified as the fecundity of the womb and the slow nurturing of the dormant earth in winter. Darkness is the home of starlight, the natural element through which all light moves.

What form of darkness feels significant today? The cozy dark of a beloved corner where you can tuck up and retreat? The vaulting depths of a night sky? The eternal emptiness of the unlit ocean? The secret darkness of a hiding place where a treasure might await you?

In our faith tradition, darkness is that fertile state of being, across with the Spirit moved, originating the creative dynamics that resulted in genesis. Life sprang out of darkness.

Give thanks for darkness. . — *REV Gail*

He reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and light dwells with him.

— *Daniel 2:22*

Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness.
It took me years to understand that this too, was a gift.

— *Mary Oliver*

You must have shadow and light source both.
Listen, and lay your head under the tree of awe.

— *Rumi*

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29

Today give thanks for promises and covenants. What contracts and agreements define your life? What vows and oaths have you taken? What promises have you made and kept? Which have you broken?

With whom did you make such agreements, such as a marriage vow, or the choice to adopt someone? Did you make a commitment to an institution, such as serving in the military, or in another role that similarly includes an oath of service?

What symbols in your life represent these promises? Rings? Medals? Certificates? Badges? Flags or banners? Uniforms?

Who, then, has made promises and commitments to you? What oaths and pledges have been maintained or broken by others?

Give thanks for promises and covenants.

— *Rev Gail*

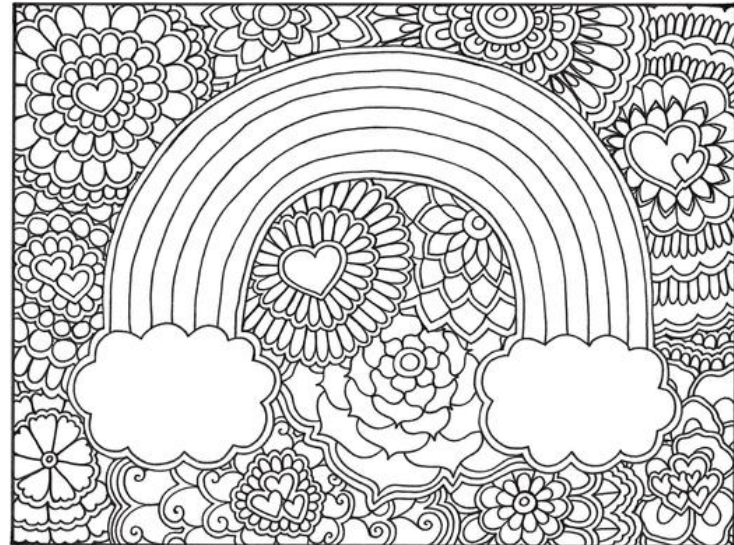
While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. — *Matthew 26:26-28*

Sometimes people don't understand the promises they're making when they make them. But you keep the promise anyway. That's what love is. Love is keeping the promise anyway. — *John Green*

I feel keeping a promise to yourself is a direct reflection of the love you have for yourself. I used to make promises to

myself and find them easy to break. Today, I love myself enough to not only make a promise to myself, but I love myself enough to keep that promise. — *Steve Maraboli*

Some things you don't have to promise. You just do.
— *Rick Yancey*



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

As the month draws to a close, appreciate endings. Completions. What has come full circle, and is now finished? What does it offer to you?

Our lives, our calendars, our cultures are filled with origin stories and also tales about how the world will end, or what comes next, when life ends. Our faith also gives us a guide as to what comes next. For instance, death is not the final state of being: life beyond death is promised to us. And yet, one form of ending is mortal death.

Yet we have many other milestones that represent conclusion. Graduations. Retirements. Anniversaries. We create rituals around the completion of certain experiences, such as childhood, education, and work. They celebrate the past, examine history, and then name the end of this stage of life. They clear the path for what comes next.

Endings may look like punctuation marks. Periods. Question marks. Colons that promise there's more to come.

We have traditions for saying goodbye. For letting go. For releasing. For mourning. For acknowledging many kinds of endings.

Today, give thanks for endings. — *Rev Gail*

I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. — *John 17:4*

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. — *Philippians 1:6*

But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace. — *Acts 20:24*

And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something—now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. — *2 Corinthians 8:10-12*

We should say in all joyfulness and cheerfulness as we retire to our beds, "I have lived; I have completed now the course that fortune long ago allotted me." — *Virgil*

It is easier to live through someone else than to complete yourself. The freedom to lead and plan your own life is frightening if you have never faced it before.

— *Betty Friedan*

Rushing into action, you fail.
Trying to grasp things, you lose them.

Forcing a project to completion,
you ruin what was almost ripe.
Therefore the Master takes action
by letting things take their course.

He remains as calm at the end
as at the beginning.

He has nothing,
thus has nothing to lose.

What he desires is non-desire;
what he learns is to unlearn.

He simply reminds people
of who they have always been.

He cares about nothing but the Tao.
Thus he can care for all things.

— *Lao Tzu*