

Practicing Gratitude

READ through the Bible passage. WRITE your thoughts, reactions, observations. ANSWER THE QUESTION to begin connecting the Bible with your life experience. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.

Monday, 4/28/08 – Read Philippians 1:3-6

My Observations _____

A Question to Answer: We begin this week with the same verses that concluded last week. But today, let's notice something different. Paul doesn't just thank God for his friends in Philippi; he tells the Philippians. He writes it in his letter to them. It's good to tell God that we are thankful. It's also important to tell the people themselves! ... Remember how it felt when someone expressed gratitude to you, when someone told you "thank you." ... Today, think of someone you are grateful for. Then write them a note. Call them on the phone. Send them an email. Tell that person you are grateful for them and for what they have contributed to your life.

Tuesday, 4/29/08 – Read Colossians 1:3-8

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: What do you thank people for? Inviting you over for dinner? Giving you a gift? Doing something special for you on a special day? ... Do you ever thank people for their faith, for their love, for their hope? In today's reading Paul is telling the Colossians that he is grateful for their faith. Isn't that wonderful? ... Think today of someone whose faith has inspired you, has challenged you, has taught you. What difference has that person's faith made in your life? Write that down. ... In your prayer, thank God for that person's inspiring faith. ... Then write them a note to thank them too.

Wednesday, 4/30/08 – Read Psalm 52:9 and Psalm 35:18

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Sometimes we get shy about expressing our gratitude. Maybe it feels too personal. ... Sometimes we feel shy about expressing our gratitude to God in front of others. ... Do you ever feel that? ... Think about the two verses from the Psalms that we read today. One speaks of thanking God "in the presence of the faithful" and the other "in the great congregation." ... Do you think it would make a difference to you to express your gratitude to God in the presence of others? -- Specifically, which others? Who would you be willing to try this out with?

Thursday, 5/1/08 – Read Leviticus 7:11-13

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The Hebrews had fully developed rituals for giving thanks to God. Rituals can become rote and routine and empty. But they can also be structured activities that support and give outward expression to the feelings of our hearts. Do you have "rituals" or activities that help you express gratitude? If so, what are they? Write them down. ... If not, can you think of a ritual or activity that you'd like to try out?

Friday, 5/2/08 – Read Genesis 28:10-22

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Sometimes our experience of God and our gratitude toward God is so deep, so personal, so potent, that it's hard to put into words. We humans have always expressed these deepest feelings SYMBOLICALLY. In today's reading, Jacob takes a stone and sets it up as an altar to mark this holy place: "Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it! ... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." ... What

are your symbols -- physical objects or activities that help you express what you can't quite say in words?

Saturday, 5/3/08 – Read Deuteronomy 8:1-10

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: How do we express gratitude to God? How do we practice it? How do we live it? ... In today's reading Moses reminds the people how God cared for them through forty years of wilderness wandering after their escape from slavery in Egypt. Then he says (in verse 6): "Therefore keep the commandments of the LORD your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him." ... We express our gratitude toward God by living God's way -- and by living in reverence for God and all God's people and all God's creation. (Reverence is the essential meaning of "fear" in today's reading.) ... Write down one thing you already do routinely to live God's way. Write down one new thing you would like to do to live God's way more fully.

Sunday, 5/4/08 – Read John 14:15-24

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: In today's reading Jesus says essentially the same thing that Moses did in yesterday's reading -- with one important addition: LOVE. Jesus says that living the way he taught is an expression of love. It's not about just obeying the rules; it's about love. ... Notice the intimacy of the language in today's reading: Jesus speaks of making his home with those who love him and live his way. ... How does it feel to you when you read this passage? ... In what specific ways is your living an expression of your love for God, for Jesus?

My Faith Journal, April 27, 2008

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Main Points of Today's Message

Instinctively grateful?

Choosing gratitude.

Who do you want to be?