

Daily Reflection on Scripture
Week of July 14
Gratitude:
The One Things that Changes Everything
Week 7: Gratitude is a Pain



Sunday July 14

Scripture: James 1:2-4 Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

Morning Prayer: God, on this first day of a new week I appreciate today's scripture. Too often I begin the week more concerned about the challenges instead of celebrating the joys that await me. I need to consider more often the gifts that come to me everyday. I need to consider the gifts of learning and growing that come through the challenges I face. I need to see how the pressures of life are helping to form me into a more mature person of faith. In that light, help me to be grateful for all this day holds, knowing that You are holding me. This is the day You have given and I want to rejoice and be glad in all of it. May it be so.

Prayer for Pittsburgh Project: We pray for the students and adults on the Pittsburgh Project, that they would have a safe journey to Pittsburgh and time on the drive to build community and memories. We pray that they would see the face of God in everyone they meet.

Morning Gratitude Text: As you prepare for your day, consider how you can be grateful for the challenges you will face. Reflect on your considerations in your journal.

Noon Gratitude Text: Consider how today is both delight and disappointment. Instead of focusing on the disappointments focus on what delights you. Write about it in your journal.

Evening Gratitude Text: Consider all you have experienced today. In your journal reflect on your experiences. If you can focus more on the positive, you will end your day well.

Monday July 15

Scripture: Romans 5:3-4 We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

Morning Prayer: God, I know that You are gracious and kind, full of love for me, and for all of Your creation. I know that You never cause suffering and trials in our lives, but that You are with us in our suffering. Suffering is part of our human experience. None of us can avoid it, but we need not be destroyed by it. I am thankful for the gift of this powerful scripture this morning reminding me that good can come from my suffering. Each time I face difficulty I grow stronger, as I endure the challenges without giving up. The endurance and strength that I gain from each challenge produces a stronger character in me. That strength of character gives me hope for a future and can be an ever present reminder of Your constant presence with me. May it be so.

Prayer for Pittsburgh: We pray for the students and adults on the Pittsburgh Project, that they would have a safe journey to Pittsburgh and time on the drive to build community and memories. We pray that they would see the face of God in everyone they meet.

Morning Gratitude Text: Today is the first day of the rest of your life. That's not just a cliché, it's a reality. Today, what are you most thankful for? Record it in your journal.

Noon Gratitude Text: The day is quickly passing by. Don't forget to take time to name your gratitudes. Write some of them down in your journal. Gratitude changes everything.

Evening Gratitude Text: Today you have been happy and you have been sad. Now it's time to consider the value of both feelings. Write about them in your journal. It'll help you rest.

Tuesday July 16

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:14a Even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed.

Morning Prayer: God, my first thought about suffering is generally not as a blessing. So I need to recalibrate my thinking. The reality is, life is going to come with challenges. How I deal with them can make a world of difference. Most importantly I need to remember that You are with me always, when life is great and when life brings challenges. As I work through the struggles help me to be in the moment, confident that You are with me, and help me to use what I have experienced in the past as lessons for dealing with what I am facing today. The lessons learned become a blessing. May it be so.

Prayer for Pittsburgh Project: We pray for the students and adults on the Pittsburgh Project, that they would serve today with enthusiasm, resiliency, and love. We pray for safety on the worksites and opportunities to use their own innate gifts and qualities to change the world.

Morning Gratitude Text: What do you value the most? Write a gratitude note in your journal. You may be challenged for your values. Consider staying with them and you will be blessed.

Noon Gratitude Text: Remember life is a mixture of ups and downs. Write down one thing you are grateful for. Carry that word with you. Watch how it can change your afternoon.

Evening Gratitude Text: As the day winds down sit for a moment and smile. A simple smile can change your thinking patterns. Notice how the smile makes you feel. Write about it.

Wednesday July 17

Scripture: Isaiah 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

Morning Prayer: God, thank you for being my strength when I need it most and even more so when I try to rely on myself. When I rely on you for the small stuff it makes handling the bigger issues much easier. Your words provide comfort when life seems difficult. Your words provide healing when life hurts. Your words provide power when I am weak. Your words provide peace when life is tumultuous. Each and every day, You are there for me. Each and every day, You love me. Thank You for your grace, mercy, and strength.

Prayer for Pittsburgh Project: : We pray for the students and adults on the Pittsburgh Project, and for the homeowners they have been getting to know this week. Tonight, the homeowners are invited to join them for a meal, worship, and message. We pray the time will be meaningful and memorable for all.

Morning Gratitude Text: When the going gets tough today, remember to pause and say words of gratitude. Record in your journal your go-to gratitudes. They will help throughout the day.

Noon Gratitude Text: As you pause for lunch today take a minute or two to write a gratitude for your food. From farm to table thank God for those who made your meal possible.

Evening Gratitude Text: Offering gratitude at night is a good way to clear the mind of any negative ruminations. Write down what you are most grateful for today. It will help you rest.

Thursday July 18

Scripture: II Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Morning Prayer: God, so many times I pray for comfort. So many times I feel Your comforting presence. However, in reading today's scripture I have to confess that my prayers for comfort have been self-centered. Today's scripture makes it clear that being comforted is not just for me. You comfort me so that I am able to comfort others in their pain and suffering. That makes so much sense. It's like pay it forward. It's cyclical. As I am comforted I, in turn, comfort others and when I comfort others I am again comforted knowing that they are comforted. Wow! That is so beautiful. So, again I ask for comfort, but today it's not just for me. Today it's for me and also for all those I meet who are struggling. May I comfort others as You comfort me. That is so powerful. May it be so.

Prayer for Pittsburgh Project: We pray for the students and adults on the Pittsburgh Project, that they would complete the week's work with a renewed spirit and satisfaction in the ways they have served and grown on the worksites. We pray that they are able to recognize how they have been transformed, as they served the way Jesus taught us.

Morning Gratitude Text: Gratitude is often expressed by paying it forward. We are comforted so we can comfort others. Write down name(s) of people you can serve with gratitude.

Noon Gratitude Text: Review how your day is going. Name the highs and lows. In your journal record how the highs are helping your through the lows. Gratitude changes everything.

Evening Gratitude Text: As you rest tonight may you find comfort in your soul. In your journal write about what brought you your greatest comfort today. A comforted soul rests best.

Friday July 19

Scripture: Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Morning Prayer: God, Kingdom Living was not a concept I grew up with, not a term that I heard when I was younger. But coming to understand that my life is all about living in God's Kingdom – that it is my life, not just a destination, helps me each day to face my challenges and recognize and celebrate the many joys that I experience. Help me to embrace with joy each day that is filled with all sorts of possibilities, some that will bring struggles. In those struggles may I develop endurance to run this race that is life, knowing that in each step You are with me. In each struggle may I grow deeper in my faith and more in love with You. May it be so.

Prayer for Pittsburgh Project: We pray for the students and adults on the Pittsburgh Project, as they journey back home and return to their everyday lives, forever changed by the past week. We pray

that the fire ignited in each of them would continue to burn as they seek out ways to be the hands and feet of Jesus in their own communities. We offer a prayer of thanks for each person and the unique way they have each served.

Morning Gratitude Text: A new day filled with possibilities and challenges awaits you. Both are what enables you to grow. Write a gratitude for the gift of this day just as it is.

Noon Gratitude Text: Take a break from the pressures. Breathe in and say, "I am grateful". Breathe out saying, "For each breath I breathe." In your journal record how that feels.

Evening Gratitude Text: Now it's time to slow down and prepare for a night of rest. In your journal record the gratitudes that helped you through your week. May you sleep well.

Saturday July 20

Scripture: John 16:33b In the world you have distress. But be encouraged! I have conquered the world.

Morning Prayer: God, my heart is filled with gratitude. The practices these past few weeks have provided me with a path, Your path, to discover peace when surrounded by threat, how to possess tranquility and courage despite those hostile to my faith and beliefs. I must admit, however, it is so easy to become fearful and discouraged, cynical even, in light of the social and political upheaval happening in the world and indeed, my own family. For all the progress we've made, there is so much more to be done. History has shown a common thread of love overcoming adversity – at times greater challenges than what we're facing today – and I know love will win again. In my life are people who've inspired me, who've given me hope. That motivates me to do what I can with what little I have in terms of time and resources to join in a movement of love. May it always be so.

Morning Gratitude Text: This is number 28 of 52 Saturdays in the year. Every Saturday is a gift. What do you appreciate most about this one? Write about your gratitude in your journal.

Noon Gratitude Text: What are you learning about yourself today? Self awareness is a real gift. In your journal reflect on what you are learning and be grateful for it all.

Evening Gratitude Text: Before going to bed take a few moments to reflect and write about your week in your journal. Consider being grateful for it all. Gratitude changes everything