

Gratitude
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Small Group Ministry
March 2013

Welcome and Explanations 5 minutes

Chalice Lighting

Opening Words

A thankful person is thankful under all circumstances. A complaining soul complains even if [she] lives in paradise. -Bahu'u'llah, founder of the Baha'i faith

Check-in / On Our Hearts 15 minutes

Covenant

Our covenant includes a description of how we want to be with each other, ground rules for our time together, and our expectations for members of our group.

Readings

To be grateful for the good things that happen in our lives is easy, but to be grateful for all of our lives – the good as well as the bad, the moments of joy as well as the moments of sorrow, the successes as well as the failures, the rewards as well as the rejections—that requires hard spiritual work.

-- Henri Nouwen

Listen

with the night falling we are saying thank you
we are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings
we are running out of the glass rooms
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky
and say thank you
we are standing by the water thanking it
smiling by the windows looking out
in our directions

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging
after funerals we are saying thank you
after the news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators
remembering wars and the police at the door
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you

in the banks we are saying thank you
in the faces of the officials and the rich
and of all who will never change
we go on saying thank you thank you

with the animals dying around us
our lost feelings we are saying thank you
with the forests falling faster than the minutes
of our lives we are saying thank you
with the words going out like cells of a brain
with the cities growing over us
we are saying thank you faster and faster
with nobody listening we are saying thank you
we are saying thank you and waving
dark though it is

-W.S. Merwin

If you never share your gratitude, son, it'll never reach its destination. Plus, if you don't offer thanks precisely when you feel it, you won't get around to doing it later. The moment will pass. So, gratitude is the ground floor, Tommy. It's life's spiritual engine; all the big virtues are motored by gratitude. Everything of worth flows from a thankful heart.
-- Tom Owen-Towle, quoting his mother

Questions for consideration:

1. What does gratitude feel like? How do you cultivate that feeling?
2. What gets in the way of experiencing gratitude?
3. The opposite of gratitude may be complaint, and many of us complain quite a lot. What habits help you manage your complaints or the complaints of others?
4. When is it easy to receive the gratitude of others? When is it hard?
5. Some people have found that gratitude is about keeping an open mind. It is about not having your mind so set on an apple, that you can't be grateful when given a luscious pear. How have you found ways to be grateful for the ways that life turned out, rather than the ways you expected it to be? Have you found ways to be grateful for difficult people or circumstances?

Sharing 60 minutes

Closing Activity / Sharing Insights

Please share an insight you gained from our time together.

Closing Words

"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'thank you,' it will be enough."
--Meister Eckhart