

Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting

By Holly W. Whitcomb

Chapter 5: Gratitude

Spiritual Practice: An Old-Fashioned Prayer of Thanks

*I thank Thee, God, that I have lived
In this great world and known its many joys;
The song of the birds, the strong, sweet scent of hay
And cooling breezes in the secret dusk,
The flaming sunsets at the close of the day,
Hills, and the lonely, heather-covered moors,
Music at night, and moonlight on the sea,
The beat of waves upon the rocky shore
And, wild, white spray, flung high in ecstasy:
The faithful eyes of dogs, and treasured books.
The love of kin and fellowship of friends,
And all that makes life dear and beautiful.
I thank Thee, too, that there has come to me
A little sorrow and, sometimes, defeat,
A little heartache and the loneliness
That comes with parting, and the work, "Goodbye,"
Dawn breaking after dreary hours of pain,
When I discovered that night's gloom must yield
And morning light break through to me again.
Because of these and other blessings poured
Unmasked upon my wondering head,
Because I know that there is yet to come
An even richer and more glorious life,
And most of all, because Thine only Son
Once sacrificed life's loveliness for me
I thank Thee, God, that I have lived.*

-Elizabeth, Countess of Craven, England (1750-1828)

Reflect on this prayer of thanksgiving. Think about all that you hold precious. Write your own prayer of thanksgiving.

Questions to Ponder

1. *Gratitude turns obstacles into opportunity.*

- Christina Baldwin says, "Life is a great unending opportunity to see things differently, to keep reframing disaster and discouragement into faith." What could you reframe in your life right now? What difference could this make?
- What are you learning and how are you growing from having to wait?

2. *Gratitude moves us beyond entitlement.*

- What kinds of circumstances tend to make you feel entitled? How does this interfere with gratitude?

- The next time you are waiting – in line, on the phone, in traffic, - take a very deep breath. Let yourself breathe in gratitude for one thing. Then make one very large exhale, breathing out entitlement.

3. *Gratitude open our eyes to the blessings of small things.*

- Think of a time of waiting when you were comforted by small things. Make a list of the things you remember.
- Be on the alert in the coming week to periods of waiting. The next time you have to wait, use the opportunity to be grateful for one small thing.
- There are many ways to practice gratitude. What has already worked for you? What ideas from this chapter would you like to try?

Some practices recommended by the author to help us learn to live as a grateful person:

- List your sources of abundance (your health, your family, your training and experience, your home, etc.)
- Think over the past year. Make a list of your answered prayers.
- Ask this question every night: For what do I give thanks today?
- Practice *finding* instead of *seeking*.

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

Matthew 5:1-12