

Grading Your Gratitude // Self-Reflection

by Eric Geiger

Questions 1-3:

On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being highest and 1 being lowest, grade yourself:

- 1) I am filled with joy because God has loved me. _____
- 2) I continually depend on the Lord in prayer. _____
- 3) Anything I have is from God and not from me. _____

Add the first 3 items together. For questions 1-3, the higher the number, the higher your gratitude is.

Questions 4-6:

On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being highest and 1 being lowest, grade yourself:

- 4) I deserve the good things in my life. _____
- 5) I am often frustrated with others and cannot contain it. _____
- 6) I am a worrier. _____

Add the second 3 items together. For questions 4-6, the higher the number, the lower your gratitude is.

Thoughts on Gratitude

Though you may not use the terms, you are familiar with “direct” and “inverse” relationships. In a “direct” relationship, when X rises, Y rises as well. For example, when the number of people visiting a city rises, so does the cost of hotel rooms. When the number of Alabama football victories increases, more bandwagon fans jump on board. An “inverse relationship” means as X rises, Y falls. In economics, when supply rises, the demand falls. When interest rates go up, new home purchases typically go down. There are direct and inverse relationships around gratitude too.

Rejoice always! Pray constantly. Give thanks in everything, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:5-7)

The direct nature of gratitude looks like this (questions 1-3):

1) As rejoicing increases, gratitude increases.

In the 1 Thessalonians passage, we see a close relationship between rejoicing and gratitude. As rejoicing increases, so will gratitude. Christians are commanded to rejoice. And always! Because *always* our sins have already been forgiven and our King rules and reigns *always*. When we rejoice in Christ, our gratitude increases as we celebrate Him and the reality that He has forgiven all our sins. When rejoicing in Christ ceases, so does gratitude.

2) As prayerfulness increases, gratitude increases.

In both passages, gratitude is connected to prayer. “Pray constantly. Give thanks.” “In everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving...” When we pray and spend time with God, we are filled with gratitude for Him as He fills us with peace and joy. A prayerful person will always be a thankful person, deeply attuned to the blessings of God.

3) As humility increases, gratitude increases.

When a person “prays constantly,” the person is in constant awareness of his/her need for Christ, in constant awareness that everything he/she has is only what the Lord has given. We are only as grateful as we are humble.

The inverse nature of gratitude looks like this (questions 4-6):

4) As entitlement increases, gratitude decreases.

When we feel we are owed things because of our hard work, our morality, or our track record, our expectations of what we believe we deserve are quickly elevated. Our sense of entitlement pulls us away from the Christian message: the message that reminds us that Christ gave us forgiveness when all we deserved was death and condemnation because of our sins. And our sense of entitlement crushes gratitude.

5) As grumbling increases, gratitude decreases.

When we are entitled, we grumble and complain because we feel we are better than others. When grumbling is increasing, gratitude is simultaneously decreasing. When grumbling, instead of graciousness is known to everyone, gratitude is low.

6) As worry increases, gratitude decreases.

In the passage in Philippians, we see worry positioned as the opposite of “praying with thanksgiving.” Worry indicates we are not grateful for His plans but would rather have our own.

So what do we do when our gratitude decreases, when our gratitude grading is low? The solution is not to give ourselves a pep talk to be less of a worrier or grumbler. The solution is to look to Jesus. When we reflect on who He is and what He has done, our hearts are stirred with gratitude. And as gratitude increases, so do joy, prayers, and humility. Gratitude drives a stake in our entitlement, our worrying, and our grumbling.