



unceasingly
grateful

A 7 Day Devotional for the Uninitiated

CLARISSA EPPS

Unceasingly Grateful: A 7 Day Devotional for the Uninitiated.

Copyright @ 2022 by Clarissa Epps.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted by any means—electronic, mechanical, photographic (photocopy), recording, or otherwise—without written permission from the author.

Grateful

[*'grātʃəl*]

adjective warmly or deeply appreciative of kindness or benefits received; thankful ([dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)).

Biblical thanks means acknowledging the giver, not just the gift. It is God-focused, rather than self-focused. Biblical thankfulness means acknowledging the kindness of the giver. It turns the focus to the one who gives. Thankfulness in the bible means showing appreciation for the goodness, effort, and thoughtfulness of the giver (gentlechristianparenting.com/gratitude).

INTRODUCTION

Why I had to write this book

I've been known to over thank. When I was a kid, one of my cousins was like, "Ok ok I got it! You're thankful! You don't have to keep saying thank you!" Ha! I just wanted to be sure that people knew that I appreciated their kindness. I feel like people don't say thank you or show their appreciation enough. Nowadays, I have scaled back and keep some of the thanksgiving to myself and just smile on the inside at the thought of people's thoughtfulness after saying thank you only once.

Who better to thank than the Lord? My heart is so full of gratitude to God for salvation, for life, for health, for loving family members, for wonderful friends, and so many other blessings! I mean, that's just good manners. I'm even

thankful for some of the difficult things the Lord has allowed in my life because those situations allowed me to learn more about God's character...and about my own.

Regarding my own character, life's challenges tend to show me the good, the bad, and the doggone ugly. You'll have to continue reading the book!

So, this book is written to Christians. If you aren't a Christian, then I sincerely pray to God that He will work in your heart so that you talk to Him about becoming a Christian and begin to follow Jesus! Check out [this page](#) for more on that. There are so many stories about gratitude in the Bible and many lessons that we can learn from those. That's one aspect of the Word that I really appreciate: we get to see how God worked through the lives of regular, ordinary people.

The first person who comes to mind for me is the one leper who came back to thank Jesus in Luke 17:11-19. I wonder if the reason why the Book of Luke is the only Gospel that records this is because Luke was a physician

and also appreciated when people were grateful? Or maybe it was the fact that Luke thought it was unusual that a foreigner returned to thank Jesus when the relationship between Jews and Samaritans was so tense? Whatever the reason, I can see myself in this story. Let's read the story together from the New Living Translation.

11 As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. 12 As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, 13 crying out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

14 He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy. 15 One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, "Praise God!" 16 He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" 19 And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go.

Your faith has healed you."

When you look at how lepers were supposed to be treated and separated from the general society in Jesus' day, it had to have been a very isolating feeling. I can imagine how this man must have felt as he walked away and noticed that he was healed! Ooo! Just thinking about it makes me say, "Thank You, Lord!" I can see myself in this man's shoes, realizing that this incredible miracle had just taken place and being filled to the brim with a sense of indebtedness.

As we spend the next 7 days on thanksgiving, I invite you to think about the ways that God has blessed you and keeps blessing you, even when things are not going well. Jot down your thoughts, notes, and prayers along the way. Reflect on His goodness, and I hope that it causes you to be thankful again and again.

*Author's note: All Scriptures referenced are from the New Living Translation of the Holy Bible.

Day 1

PSALM 55:17 MORNING, NOON, AND NIGHT I
CRY OUT IN MY DISTRESS, AND THE LORD
HEARS MY VOICE.

Welcome to Clarismaville where we appreciate gratitude. Since we're here in Clarismaville, let me start by being completely honest: I love to vent. Let me get it out of my mind and then move on. I include my complaints in the form of jokes so that even though the listeners understand what annoyed me, they can't help but laugh at the form that the story takes. I mix in a little thanksgiving, sure, but that doesn't change the fact that I was still, ya know, venting. It feels "good to get things off my chest", "clear the air," "let go and let God..." And that also leaves the listeners like a garbage can holding onto my junk. Yikes.

Now I complain from time to time, but that's different from venting (I'm working on that, too!). Didn't complaining lead the Jewish people to freedom from the Egyptians (God heard their cries!)?! Didn't complaining get the people in Jerusalem their kids and their stuff back (Nehemiah held an entire public meeting to demand justice!)?!

Or maybe this is what you're thinking about – remember that time in the Book of Numbers (Numbers 11:1-4) when the people complained, God got upset, and took some people out? So, there's that. Chile, I'm not talking about that kind of complaining. I don't want to be that type of person. Let's continue...

God is too wonderful, too faithful, too loving, too all-of-the-good-stuff for me to be sitting up here complaining. So, how are we supposed to deal with the things in our life? When I notice myself starting to vent or complain, or I'm in the middle of complaining to someone else, I'm often hit with this: "You ain't even talked to the Lord yet!" So, then I

pour out my heart to Him to share how I'm feeling and give those feelings and complaints to Him to help me get over it...because who else can actually solve the problem?! And people don't want to hear you complaining all the time. Sheesh.

Why did I include such honesty in this book on Day 1? Well, I don't want you to think I'm some expert. I've been working on developing an attitude of gratitude for years. Yes, I often over-thank because I'm so thankful, AND because I want to be sure that people know that I really appreciate what they've done for me and who they are. Interestingly, I cannot over-thank the Lord. Sure, I'll never be able to repay Him for all He's done. And I'll never run out of words to thank Him for being who He is. It's important not to complain...and if you're like me, identify that you like to complain, and take that to the Lord.

Going deeper...

Question: What types of things do you usually complain about? Are there people who come to mind when you think of complainers? Pray for them.

Verses to consider: Job 33:12-17, Psalm 55:16-18, Philippians 2:14-15, James 5:9

Prayer: *Lord, help me to pour out my complaints to You and trust You to bring solutions. Give me a thankful heart so that my default is to focus on You.*

Day 2

PSALM 52:9 I WILL PRAISE YOU FOREVER, O GOD, FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE. I WILL TRUST IN YOUR GOOD NAME IN THE PRESENCE OF YOUR FAITHFUL PEOPLE.

So what does the Bible say about gratitude? A lot. Baby, that's why we have this 7 days together, mmmkay?

First things first: we'll never be able to repay the Lord for all that He has done for us. So, don't even try. What we can do is live a life that pleases Him; we can live a lifestyle of worship and thanksgiving for all that He has done...a life in which we bring glory to Him in whatever we do and in whatever He has called us to do.

Before we go any further, let's look at what it means to be ungrateful. Merriam-Webster defines ingratitude as "forgetfulness of or poor return for kindness received". An editor at definitions.net defines ingratitude in this way:

“Ingratitude is thinking nothing of what has been done or given to you by someone else. That is to say, not feeling bound to show gratitude. In other words, ingratitude is a discreditable lack of gratitude. It is synonymous with ungratefulness.”

Listenennn...these two definitions took me out the game, Coach! It's interesting that despite all this, Jesus still tells us that God is kind to ungrateful and evil people (Luke 6:35). What?! I don't want to be unappreciative though! I hope you don't either (otherwise, keep reading for real for real, ok???).

What I mean when I describe being ungrateful in this devotional is that a person does not thank God for who God is and what He has done in their lives. On a very basic level, we can start by saying “thank you!” to the Lord!

Going deeper...

Question: What are some blessings that you have taken for granted?

Verses to consider: Psalm 100:4-5, 2 Corinthians 4:15-16, 2 Corinthians 9:15, 2 Timothy 3:1-5

Prayer: *Thank You, Lord! You have done so many wonderful things in my life and in the lives of others. You have kept me from dangers seen and unseen. Everything in my life has not been perfect, and even in this, I say thank You for who You are in my life!*

Day 3

PSALM 34:1 I WILL PRAISE THE LORD AT ALL
TIMES. I WILL CONSTANTLY SPEAK HIS
PRAISES.

I've found that a spirit of gratitude can cause praise to bubble up on the inside. David was on 100 when he wrote the words of the psalm for today! If you look at what was happening in David's life when he wrote this one, you'll know that by God's mercy, he escaped Abimelech and was not treated as a spy because he pretended to be insane. I know that I have escaped some intense situations only by God's mercy! Like that time the alternator in my car stopped working as I was driving 70+ miles per hour in the mountains and didn't get into an accident! HIS MERCY!

Baby when you just...ok let me use myself as an example...when I begin to THINK....stop right there...just

the very fact that one can think is a good reason to be thankful! There are people who cannot think for themselves or something has happened to their minds and they don't have their faculties about them. Let's continue....when I just begin to think of reasons and even things that I am thankful for, then praise starts to simmer and then boil to the point of overflowing!

Let me testify on this page with 10 reasons I have to be thankful:

- 1) Salvation through Jesus!
 - 2) I can have a relationship with God! I can talk to Him, pour out my heart, and rely on Him!
 - 3) I'm alive and healthy! I got up and brushed my own teeth, got myself ready, and nobody had to help me!
 - 4) I have so much love in my life from my friends and family!
 - 5) I have a dependable car and that joint is paid off!
 - 6) I have a good-paying job, and it is a blessing to me and to my community!
 - 7) I have a safe place to live!
-

8) I have outlets for expressing my creativity.

9) I can access fresh fruits and vegetables.

10) The Lord helps me to find humor in too many things!

Hahaha! On that note, I'm grateful for laughter!

So, continuing the theme of thanksgiving, I want you to take the action step on the next page, and then share your list with a friend! I dare you not to feel more grateful after this activity!

Going deeper...

Action step: Make a list (number it from 1 to 20) of reasons, people, and things you are thankful for.

Verses to consider: Psalm 104:15-28, Colossians 1:12-14, Colossians 2:6-7, James 1:17

Prayer: *Lord, You continue to do mighty things in my life! Thank You for all that You're doing and all that You've done. Please open my eyes to see Your hand at work in my life every day!*

Day 4

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7 DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING; INSTEAD, PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING. TELL GOD WHAT YOU NEED, AND THANK HIM FOR ALL HE HAS DONE. THEN YOU WILL EXPERIENCE GOD'S PEACE, WHICH EXCEEDS ANYTHING WE CAN UNDERSTAND. HIS PEACE WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS AS YOU LIVE IN CHRIST JESUS.

This has to be one of my favorite Scriptures. It's one that I find myself quoting often when life just feels overwhelming. It's interesting to me that in Paul's letter to the church in Philippi, that he notes these words before he says that whether he has to go hungry or he has a full stomach that he can do everything through Christ who gives him strength.

"Don't worry about anything"...whew. My default is to think about the things that bother me over and over and

over as if that will make them go away or I'll suddenly figure out a plan that will make those worries disappear. Not. "Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done." And THEN you'll experience His peace! Wow. "So, God, You want me to tell You about all this mess going on and thank You for everything???" It sounds a little crazy, right? Uh, most definitely.

However, I've noticed that when I actually do this...when I pour out my heart to God and start thanking Him for everything He's done for me...and what He's going to do... then I truly do feel His peace wash over me! For me, it's like after I vent to Him, the reminder of how He's brought me out before...how He cares for me and will continue to do so...how He loves me...when I remember those things and give Him thanks...then I feel at peace because I remember, "Oh yeah! As long as He's still on the throne, I'll be alright!"

Going deeper...

Question: What worries do you need to pour out to God?
What is it that you need to thank God for in-the-meantime,
even while things aren't going as you hoped?

Verses to consider: John 14:27, 1 Corinthians 15:57,
Colossians 4:2-6, 1 Peter 5:7

Prayer: *Lord, I give all of my worries and concerns to You.
Thank You so much for all You've done for me. Help me to
experience Your peace and let it fill my heart and mind.*

Day 5

COLOSSIANS 3:16-17 LET THE MESSAGE ABOUT CHRIST, IN ALL ITS RICHNESS, FILL YOUR LIVES. TEACH AND COUNSEL EACH OTHER WITH ALL THE WISDOM HE GIVES. SING PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS TO GOD WITH THANKFUL HEARTS. AND WHATEVER YOU DO OR SAY, DO IT AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS THROUGH HIM TO GOD THE FATHER.

There's so much to say about these two verses. There's so much deliciousness in these! Our topic is thanksgiving so let me just focus on that. A thankful heart. Whew. I have definitely sung with an unthankful heart, an unforgiving heart, an impure heart, a heart of stone...you get my drift. I guess that's why in the verses before this Paul urges the church in Colosse to put on the new nature and get rid of the sin in their lives. When we let the Good News "fill our lives" then we can sing "songs to God with thankful hearts".

As I reflect on these two verses, I think of our question from Day 1 about what you're thankful for. What was on your list? It's easy to be thankful when you put off sin and let the "message of Christ" fill you up. There have been times in my life, a lot of times, when I've allowed other things and other people to fill my life instead of the message of Christ and letting the Lord fill my life.

I think about how God literally rescued me from having to spend eternity apart from Him. Oh mercy! I think about how He sent His Son to literally be tortured and die for me. I think about the benefits and authority I have because of what Jesus did for me! Reflecting on this brings tears to my eyes as I sing the lyrics of Revelation Song:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty

Who was and is and is to come

With all creation I sing praise to the King of kings

You are my everything and I will adore You, I will adore You.

Going deeper...

Question: In what ways does “the message about Christ” make you thankful?

Verses to consider: Psalm 5:11-12, Psalm 118:29, Acts 16:25, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Prayer: *Lord, I'm sorry for allowing other things and other people to fill my life. Help me to put off the sin nature and allow Your message of love, reconciliation, abundance, hope, and life fill me up. Help me to remember that I'm one of Your representatives and to give thanks.*

Day 6

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18 ALWAYS BE JOYFUL. NEVER STOP PRAYING. BE THANKFUL IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, FOR THIS IS GOD'S WILL FOR YOU WHO BELONG TO CHRIST JESUS.

Mannnn, I read these verses and immediately felt like I was transported to 2017. One night, I spent about 5 hours in the emergency room laughing and joking with the members of my church's evangelism team that I probably had simply pulled a muscle. "We're the evangelism team! Go and pray for the people in the other rooms! Share the Gospel while we wait!" I told them as we sat in the ER. And they did. I was very upbeat and joyful until I got the news...my pulled muscle was actually my body alerting me that I had two very large ovarian cysts and one of those had ruptured inside of itself. "What does this mean?" I asked the ER doctor. He didn't know. Would it mean that I would have to

have surgery? Would it mean that I would never be able to have children? Did it mean that I had some sort of disease? No answers. I was told to follow up with my gynecologist, and they wished me the best.

The verses from Day 4 came flooding to mind. I needed peace! Then the verses from today started to ring true. How could I be joyful in this situation? It was easy to be joyful when I believed that nothing was wrong. Now that trouble was here...what now? "Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances..." I did a lot of praying that next day. "Lord, this didn't catch You by surprise. I need some help for real on this one. This is scary," I prayed. Over the next several days and months, He taught me how to live these verses out while I waited for answers. The way that I handled the situation allowed me to point people to the Lord because it made people wonder how I could be so joyful. Well, to be honest, I was thankful to still be alive...I was thankful for supportive friends, family, and colleagues. I was thankful that this was an opportunity for God to show

off and provide healing. Even though I'm still walking through this situation, there's always something to be thankful for. Stay focused on Him!

Going deeper...

Question: When was a time that you experienced something difficult and didn't find anything joyful or thankful about it? In what ways did God continue to meet you in this tough period?

Verses to consider: Psalm 37:1-7, Psalm 55:22, Romans 5:3-5, Romans 8:24-25

Prayer: *Lord, I don't understand everything that You allow to hit my life. I know that I want to trust You and bring honor to You at all times. Help me to be joyful, thankful, and to keep praying.*

Day 7

1 CHRONICLES 16:8-12 GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD AND PROCLAIM HIS GREATNESS. LET THE WHOLE WORLD KNOW WHAT HE HAS DONE. SING TO HIM; YES, SING HIS PRAISES. TELL EVERYONE ABOUT HIS WONDERFUL DEEDS. EXULT IN HIS HOLY NAME; REJOICE, YOU WHO WORSHIP THE LORD. SEARCH FOR THE LORD AND FOR HIS STRENGTH; CONTINUALLY SEEK HIM. REMEMBER THE WONDERS HE HAS PERFORMED, HIS MIRACLES, AND THE RULINGS HE HAS GIVEN, YOU CHILDREN OF HIS SERVANT ISRAEL, YOU DESCENDANTS OF JACOB, HIS CHOSEN ONES.

Listen, this passage is right after they had gotten the ark of God back and put it in the tabernacle. The way I read these verses, it was as if a praise break erupted! Lexico.com defines the word “exult” this way: “[to] feel or show triumphant elation or jubilation”. I feel like we all need to show loud, triumphant, wild thanksgiving in this way every

now and then. I don't know what was on your list on Day 3 of what you're thankful for, but when I made my list... baybeee, there were some things on there that had me wanting to act out the words of verses 8-9 of the verse for today, ok? When I think about how my car blew out a tire on the interstate on a snowy night and God kept me from an accident...about how He let me travel across the world by myself to a place where I only half spoke the language and nothing bad happened to me...when I think about how He even saved me from myself time and time again...listen: "LET THE WHOLE WORLD KNOW WHAT HE HAS DONE!"

Sometimes people keep their gratitude to themselves and let it warm their own hearts. I urge you to tell other people! Call a friend and share about the Lord's goodness! Testify at church or in your small group Bible study! Write a long Facebook post or Instagram post. Record a video and share it with others! And by all means, tell your friends who are not Christians about the awesome things that God is doing in your life! Give Him the credit that is due His Name!

Going deeper...

Question: What are some things in your life for which you need to give God outrageous, public praise? Who can you tell about His goodness today?

Verses to consider: Psalm 9:1-2, Psalm 35:18,
Hebrews 12:28-29, Hebrews 13:15-16

Prayer: *Lord, help me to not cease to give You radical thanks for the little things and for the miracles. Keep my eyes open to opportunities to tell of Your mighty works to others in my life.*

Before you put this book away...

Thank you for reading this book. I hope that it encouraged you to develop an attitude of gratitude. I urge you to study the lives of people in Scripture who gave God thanks –

- David in the Psalms and other books of the Old Testament;
- Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10;
- Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20;
- Elizabeth in Luke 1:24-25;
- Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in Luke 1:46-55;
- Anna in Luke 2:36-38...and many, many others!

What else?

♥ Each morning that you wake up, thank God for at least 1 thing and before you go to sleep thank God for at least 3 things.

♥ Practice by telling people in your life thank you. Over-thank! Send a card! Send a follow up text! Send a “thank you gift!” Give more money to your church or to a ministry that is bringing God glory!

♥ Share this e-book with a friend or on your social media.

-Clarissa

About the Author

Clarissa Epps (also known as Clarisma Jones) is a combination of your favorite auntie and your church bestie. She is full of laughter and quick-witted commentary. *Unceasingly Grateful: A 7 Day Devotional for the Uninitiated* is her first e-book.

She is degreed and unbothered.

She loves Jesus and delinquents.

...Speaking Spanish and eating Indian cuisine...

...Long walks and fried chicken...

...Loud banter and silence...

...Books but not always reading...

...Travel and pajama days...

...Her family and strangers.

Stay in touch

Facebook: @ClarismaJonesLive

Instagram: @ClarismaJones

YouTube: TheSillygirlC

Web home: www.clarismajones.com

