



GRATITUDE NOTES

September 2023 Prayer Focus

RENEWED HOPE

CHURCH STORIES In 2017, researchers followed two Christian congregations with similar demographic and socio-economic characteristics for a month. The project hoped to determine the benefits of gratitude. Results indicate that gratitude practices are positively related to happiness and well-being. The only difference between the two churches was gentle reminders about appreciation. Congregants felt renewed hope and optimism when they practiced thankfulness.

PAUL'S STORY Paul's well-known verses in Philippians 1 come from a prison letter. His joy is not tied to circumstances. "I thank my God every time I remember you," the epistle says. This verse is an encouragement for us to practice gratitude. Paul is both thanking God and blessing the churches. Practicing gratitude in small steps, such as note writing, can benefit both the sender and the receiver.

GRATITUDE IN PRACTICE

This month, Second-Ponce is writing gratitude notes to staff and lay leaders. While email and text messages are excellent ways to say thank you, there is nothing like receiving an unexpected card. Beginning with a blank page, we tell our own story of joy. Thinking about how to "write your heart out" is a good approach for planning messages of gratitude.

THE WHO & THE WHY What would it look like to routinely share your blessings with friends? If possible, say specifically (name) why you're thankful. Cards can arrive at seemingly the perfect moment. Taking the time to be grateful for others is a blessing and a spiritual practice. Our culture has moved away from handwritten notes because of immediate connections. You may find handwritten cards and letters can be even more significant.

THE HOW & THE WHEN To begin the practice of note writing, start with a simple goal of writing two cards a month. If you need help getting started, you can easily find guidance about what to say in a thank you message online. Handwritten notes can open a space of welcome and belonging between friends. We offer gratitude to others because God so generously gives to us. Beginning with children's handwritten notes, thank you messages can deliver evidence of grace. Who is a blessing to you? Perhaps this is the day to tell them.

Thank God for you!