

# VOICES

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CP VOICES | TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2021 | [CORONAVIRUS →](#)

## Cultivating a spirit of thankfulness

By [Patti Garibay](#)<sup>(1)</sup>, Op-ed Contributor

“Where are the other nine?” (Luke 17:17)



Unsplash/Simon Maage

In our culture of instant gratification and entitlement, the concept of thankfulness and gratitude is slipping more and more out of our grasp. The more we get, the more we want. The less we stop to be thankful for what we have received. Our children are growing up with the world at

their fingertips through the power of the internet and social media, blissfully unaware of how fortunate they are. This problem will continue to expand—unless we take a moment to acknowledge the importance of a spirit of thankfulness on multiple levels.

Studies have shown that being thankful improves our physical and emotional health. Holding on to feelings of thankfulness boosts our immune system and increases blood supply to our hearts. Daily guided exercises or the habit of keeping a weekly gratitude journal can increase our alertness, enthusiasm, and energy, as well as improve our sleep. People who describe themselves as feeling grateful tend to suffer less stress and depression than the rest of the population.

For all its benefits, gratitude doesn't come naturally to us. As Jesus passed through a village one day, he was spotted by ten lepers who desperately longed to be healed (Luke 17:11-19). They kept themselves at a distance as required by law but cried out to him, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" Instead of instantly healing the men, Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priest. As the ten lepers walked off to obey, their skin disease disappeared.

One of the men turned around, shouting praises to God as he came back to Jesus. He threw himself at his benefactor's feet. Jesus expressed amazement that only one man had thought to thank him. "Were not all ten cleansed?" he asked. "Where are the other nine?" He also pointed out that the only man who did respond was a Samaritan, a race despised by the Jewish people.

For Christians, cultivating a spirit of thankfulness is more than a good idea; it's a direct command from God. In the Old Testament, God laid down specific guidelines for the Israelites to bring offerings of thanks. In the New Testament, believers are instructed to be thankful in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18). When we're struggling with trials and difficulties, this sounds like a strange command, especially since we live in a culture that encourages us to act on the basis of how we feel. But God knows that when we focus on our blessings, it's easier to keep our problems and concerns in the right perspective.

King David never lost his keen awareness of all that God had done for the nation of Israel and for him personally. Even though he experienced disappointment, pain, and heartache, David often poured out his feelings of thankfulness to his Creator and Lord. That gratitude became the foundation of his worship of God.

Cultivating a spirit of thankfulness honors God and strengthens our faith. It also strengthens our relationships with other people. We can't be in a healthy relationship with God or with anyone without a spirit of thankfulness. No matter what problems we're struggling with, we don't want to be like the nine former lepers who forgot to say "thank you" to their Healer.

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For more than two decades, Patti Garibay has been at the forefront of countering the culture by leading girls and women to creating lives of integrity. She is the Founder and Executive Director of [American Heritage Girls](#) (AHG), a national Christ-centered leadership and character-development program. She helps thousands of girls discover their true identity and purpose in Christ through AHG's transformative programming. Patti is the author of [Why Curse the Darkness When You Can Light A Candle?](#), which is a story of trust and obedience to inspire those who desire to make Kingdom impact yet struggle with the fear of inadequacy

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