

Gratitude Letter

All too often our expressions of thanks can be fleeting and superficial. This exercise encourages us to express gratitude in a thoughtful, deliberate way by writing—and, ideally, delivering—a letter of gratitude to a person you have never properly thanked. Expressing our gratitude can improve health, happiness, and strengthen relationships.

Try to pick someone who you could meet within a week of completing the letter. It could be someone that you have not thought about in some time like a former co-worker, teacher or mentor, or it could be someone who you see every day such as your spouse.

Now, write a letter to this person, guided by the following steps.

- Begin with prayer, and ask God to guide you and to give you the grace that is needed to compose this gratitude letter.
- Write as though you were addressing this person directly (“Dear _____”).
- Don’t worry about perfect grammar or spelling.
- Describe in specific terms what this person did, why you are grateful to this person, and how this person’s behavior affected your life. Try to be as concrete as possible.
- Describe what you are doing in your life now and how you often remember this person’s efforts.
- Try to keep your letter to roughly one page (around three hundred words).

Next, you should try, if at all possible, to deliver your letter in person, following these steps:

1. Plan a visit with the recipient. If physical distance or pandemic restrictions keeps you from making a visit, you may choose to arrange a phone or video chat. Let them know you’d like to see them and that you have something special to share, but don’t reveal the exact purpose of the meeting.
2. When you meet, let the person know that you are grateful to them and would like to read a letter expressing your gratitude; ask that they refrain from interrupting until you’re done.
3. Take your time reading the letter. While you read, pay attention to their reaction as well as your own.
4. After you have read the letter, be receptive to the recipient’s reaction and discuss your feelings together.
5. Remember to give the letter to the person when you leave.
6. After your visit considering journaling your visit. How did it make you feel? What was the reaction of the other person?

After writing this gratitude letter consider writing another letter to someone else or make this a monthly practice in your marriage.