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## **Living a Thankful Life by Rev. Christine Green**

In a world that is changing and shifting so dramatically, how do we begin to express gratitude? Hurricane Katrina, the war in Iraq, the devastating earthquake in Pakistan seem overwhelming. If we take into account personal challenges...health care, rising cost of gasoline, job security... it can be enough to stay under the comforter for a week.

How can we find something to be grateful for when we are faced with the events and challenges of the world around us? A better question may be, Why do we have to be grateful?

Did you know the brain does not know the difference between what is imagined and what is real? When we focus on the challenges facing us, we begin to worry. When we worry we begin to spin a tale of 'What ifs.' The mind fantasizes about what might happen. The brain doesn't know that we're just imagining it, so it triggers emotions. Emotions cause stress in the body and result in fear. Fear causes us to look around and see more things that are not working. And the cycle continues.

Universal Law states: Whatever we are grateful for increases. We can stop the madness by shifting our focus. Take the attention off the problem and put it on something we are grateful for.

Some years ago, I found myself in a frustrating job with no where to go. I heard about an opening with a company that was exactly what I was looking for. I eagerly applied for the new job and was asked back on three interviews. I was sure it was mine. Instead I received the devastating call, "Sorry, we gave the job to someone with more experience." I was stunned. I was already mentally moving out of my cubicle...now I was stuck there. After a period of feeling sorry for myself, I knew it was up to me to see things differently. I started feeling grateful that I had a job. It was small place to start. Then I noticed how

supportive my supervisor was, the fact that she let me have flexible time for doctor appointments. A new computer was delivered from a request I had made two months earlier. My attitude changed and it felt like things around me changed. I was given a project to work on that I really wanted. Just about that time that I was thinking I could actually like this job, my supervisor approached me about an opening in another department that would be a promotion. Long story short...I applied and the promotion was mine. I changed my focus from grieving about what I didn't have, to giving thanks for what I did have.

Plato said, "A grateful mind is a great mind which eventually attracts to itself great things." That attitude of gratitude actually attracts more good things in our lives. Here are three steps that may be helpful in gratitude building when you are in the midst of strife.

First, take a deep breath and release the energy you are holding. Breathing is essential for life and is so often taken for granted. The breath is an important link between our body, our mind, and our spirit. Next, step back and observe your situation. Find one thing you can appreciate, regardless how insignificant it may seem. Lastly, call, write, or email at least one person and tell them why you are grateful for them. The practice of gratitude begins to lift us out of the emotion of the situation. As our emotions change, so does our experience.

We are so blessed as women to be living in a country where we have freedom and opportunity to express ourselves and follow our dreams. I invite you to engage that freedom and make living a thankful life part of your expression. Enjoy the results!

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