

Erica Mathis

What does thanksgiving mean to me?

I was knocked down by the devil,
thrown all the way down to the lowest level.
He picked me up and mended the broken pieces of what was left me;
Breaking Lucifer's grip, freeing me and letting me live a little at ease.

Being grateful, happy, joyful, appreciating all the great things
Loving everything he's done for me.
He never said it would be easy.
He just said that that he'd always be there.
-Through the thick, the thin and every terrible sin.
Let's be thankful for the angels he sends.
Be thankful for the broken hearts he mends.
Be thankful for what he's done for you in the past, the present and
future life.
Be thankful for the never-ending love he gives you in this life.
Be thankful for the bullets you've missed or the crashes you've dished.
Yes there is a God, but thank him before you will be missed.
He gave you many choices and one life to live here.
It is important to thank him every day for no one knows when their
time is near.

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Meara Waxman

Nissim B'chol Yom

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of
the universe, Who has given my mind
understanding to distinguish between day and night.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of
the universe, Who has made me to be free.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of
the universe, Who clothes the naked.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of
the universe, Who spreads out the earth over the waters.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of
the universe, Who provides for all my needs.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of
the universe, Who makes firm each person's steps.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of
the universe, Who gives strength to the weary.

Ari Rabinovich

In Judaism we have many prayers about being thankful but the one that sticks out to me is the Nisim B'chol Yom. This prayer comes from the Miskan T'filah, a Jewish prayer book. It is the main prayer book that we use during our services.

The Nisim B'chol Yom is a prayer that I say when I wake up to thank god for everything he does for us. When we say it we thank god for even the smallest of miracles:

- for letting us wake up,
- for making sure our body is working properly,
- for protecting the world and making it a better place for us to live in.

For me, this prayer is a way I thank god for keeping my family and friends safe from all the problems in the world.

The Nisim B'chol Yom offers thanks for the small, ordinary aspects of life and describes them as acts of God reminding us that even the very ordinary aspects of life which we too often overlook are miracles. In this way it describes being thankful perfectly.

Jessica Fielder

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Chris Garcia

All too often, people pray for guidance or a solution to their problem, but forget to be thankful. Thankful for the life we are given, thankful for the experiences we have, thankful for the people we know.

Every morning in the school parking lot before I go to school, I say two prayers. The first prayer is focused on all the things in life that I am thankful for, such as the love and support I've been given by my friends and family in everything that I do. This prayer is one that I say in my own words, this way I can really express my feelings without all the formality.

The second prayer is the Our Father. This prayer is one that I have been taught to pray since I was little and is a central prayer of Catholicism. It is said in every mass, and it is said many times when one prays the Rosary.

In the prayer, one line is about forgiveness. This is, I believe, a good way to show thankfulness. If we forgive others, we show them that we are thankful for whatever experience they have put us through because we know it makes us stronger. Thankfulness helps us recognize that even the most difficult of experiences is a gift from which we can grow.

Cameron Harbold

As Unitarian Universalists we affirm and promote 7 Principles and the sources of faith from which they are drawn. They represent the backbone of the religious community in which we participate.

The seventh Principle is - Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence of Which We Are a Part. In other words, "We care for the Earth."

Lance Visco

As a Unitarian Universalist, I practice the seventh principle by recognizing that each person on earth has a purpose. Each person makes the world a better place.

So I am grateful for the diversity of people, particularly the diversity our faith traditions. People of other faiths have influenced me in many ways and opened me up to so many new ideas. The diversity of beliefs and values has helped me decide what I believe.

The diversity of faith traditions can bring people together. Over the summer, I took part in Moral Monday rallies in Raleigh and in Charlotte. There were so many different religious groups all around me, but we all stood together to protect our values, to protect those who are vulnerable and to enact our belief in loving our neighbors. This powerful experience of people coming together across faith traditions to make a difference is why I am thankful for the faith of others.

Adam Alama

A Reading from the Quran: Surah Ibrahim 14:34

And He gave you of all that you asked for, and if you count the Blessings of Allah, never will you be able to count them.

Jackson Wright

I am thankful for my faith because it has impacted me throughout my life. It has influenced my way of thought and has provided a system and foundation of morals for me to live by. I am also thankful for the faith of others.

Through Mecklenburg Ministries, I have gained access to the knowledge and teachings of other faith traditions. My experience has allowed me to create relationships with people of other faith traditions. During "In Our Own Backyard" Interfaith Youth Service Camp, our youth council created community by visiting one another's houses of faith. We reflected on our traditions together. We listened to one other's experiences and struggles we began to see how we could support one other. We discovered that we have common experiences and this understanding strengthened us.

From these experiences, I learned that people of different faiths need to rely on one other. Such reliance helps us develop our humanity, our morals, our traditions and beliefs and it reassures us "all religions are like rivers flowing into the same ocean that is God."

Mona Amin

Streetcars honk as they come to a stop behind a city bus. A group of tired high school students race to the doors. Today's journey marks my last day at In Our Own Backyards Interfaith Camp.

At this camp, I have found that there's a whole other side to religion to which I was never really exposed. Within just these few days I was able to travel to churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples. I have learned the metaphorical meaning behind the sweet tasting Kaballah at Temple Bethel and understood the history of the flaming chalice at the Unitarian Universalist Church. I distinctly remember clapping during the invigorating sermon delivered by Reverend Walker and following consecrated customs with a piece of cloth wrapped around my head during Salat.

Yet, this camp was more than just interfaith; it was intercommunity. A poverty simulation on the first day allowed us to learn the hardships that some people have to face. Near nightfall, we were spontaneously locked out of our residential site. With just the clothes on our bodies and the items in our backpacks, we traveled to a local Church for shelter. This experience prepared us for our encounters with the individuals at the Urban Ministry Center, where such a simulation was a reality for many. Hearing the stories from the homeless people over lunch made me appreciate every moment of life because for many, just one catastrophic event caused their lives to spiral out of control.

So as I stand on this bus reflecting on my time at this interfaith camp; I can't help but let a smile creep across my face. I am satisfied with where I am because my experiences here have put new perspective on the small things in life that we often overlook. This camp has taught me that there is so much out there still to learn, and it can start in our own backyard.

Prayer from the Upanishads

Let us together be protected and let us together be nourished by God's blessings. Let us together join our mental forces in strength for the benefit of humanity. Let our efforts at learning be luminous and filled with joy, and endowed with the force of purpose. Let us never be poisoned with the seeds of hatred for anyone. Let there be peace and serenity in all the three universes.