



## November: Gratitude and Appreciation

November. My thoughts naturally go to gratitude this month. Have you ever compared the words gratitude and appreciation?

The dictionary describes gratitude as the feeling experienced as a recipient of another's kindness. It seems to rest upon the action of others, which is definitely a nice thing! Appreciation, on the other hand, indicates a recognition of value. I appreciate an art piece simply because it speaks to me. It's personal. I can appreciate the work and talent of its creator without it actually being meant for me alone. I heard a spiritual teacher recently say that we aren't grateful for difficult things that happened to us but we do appreciate what we learned from them. It is a mature person that can be in the place of looking back at a difficult time and recognize the value of the lessons learned.

My most difficult experience was with my 15-year-old daughter who was suffering from eating disorders and depression. We admitted her into the hospital, hoping to keep her alive during a very dark time of self harm and suicidal ideation that lasted more than three years. I am grateful to those who watched over her and treated her. I appreciate the expertise of one young therapist who was able to get through to her and for the healing journey that followed. I'm not grateful for that experience, it was so hard. But, I do appreciate the faith and strength that developed in my daughter, and in all of us who went through it with her.

This experience was integral to her choosing a career as a therapist. She continues helping young people in the juvenile justice system. You may imagine that the saddest, most difficult thing she sees in her work is when a young person, despite best efforts, takes their precious life by suicide. You can also imagine the joy and appreciation these social workers feel when a child in trouble responds to treatment and moves forward to live a happy and productive life.

You may be able to recall a difficult time in your own life, and, now with hindsight, appreciate the gifts that helped you through it and the lessons that were learned. In this way, we can see purpose in life and appreciate that God is in it all.

With Thanksgiving,  
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