



SOWING SEEDS OF GRATITUDE

A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL OF THANKS FROM
LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Cover: In Tanzania, your kindness has brought smiles and hope to many. Zena Mwazyeze's new quilt will keep her and her family warm during the cool evenings and Erika Michael's school kit means she's more likely to attend her classes and succeed with her education.

**I DO NOT CEASE TO GIVE THANKS
FOR YOU AS I REMEMBER YOU IN
MY PRAYERS.**

(EPHESIANS 1:16)

Dear neighbor,

Asante sana. Gracias. شكرا لك. Дякую тобі. Thank you.

Our neighbors around the world say thank you in many different ways. But what we have seen in common throughout all the communities we are blessed to serve is the immense gratitude for all God provides.

Included in this devotional, Sowing Seeds of Gratitude, are reflections from your neighbors around the world who share a glimpse of their daily blessings - supplies for a children to learn and grow in school, nutritious food for their family, community connections and financial stability, a safe place to call home, and more.

We created Sowing Seeds of Gratitude as a special gift to express our appreciation for neighbors like you. Each week of this 30-day devotional features a story of gratitude along with scripture, questions and prayers for daily reflection.

We hope you know how grateful we are for you. Thank you for the love you show your neighbors around the world. Thank you for your commitment to living out your faith through generosity. May this devotional be a resource for you in the holy practice of gratitude.

With a grateful heart,



**AMBASSADOR
DANIEL SPECKHARD**
President and CEO



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

WEEK 1: LETTING LOVE PERSIST IN TANZANIA: EDITRUDA'S GRATITUDE

WITH GRATITUDE IN YOUR HEARTS SING PSALMS, HYMNS, AND SPIRITUAL SONGS TO GOD.

(COLOSSIANS 3:16)

Leading a school with 316 students and only six teachers, Principle Editruda faces many hardships - shortages of necessary supplies for the classroom, no access to running water at school, low attendance rates for students, and more. Despite the challenges, she and her community have chosen to clothe themselves in love each day.

At a distribution of handmade quilts and school supply kits earlier this year, Principle Editruda expressed her gratitude for the generosity of her neighbors across the globe. She has seen the quilts and supplies serve as an incentive for students to attend class and for community members to be more involved in the school. All our varied gifts come from God and just as Principle Editruda has been called to lead and teach, so have other members of her community been called to farm.

Thanks to the support of Lutheran World Relief, the school community is able to use their land as a source of income by growing pyrethrum. Tanzania is the world's second largest producer of pyrethrum, a flower which contains a chemical compound used in the manufacturing of agricultural products.

Through the sale of their pyrethrum harvest, the school received 20 bags of cement to renovate and refresh their classrooms. The school's goal is for each classroom to eventually grow one acre of pyrethrum to provide for more of their students' needs.

One of the most powerful moments of the quilt and kit distribution at Principle Editruda's school was when students and parents joined together in song. It was a time of joy and heartfelt gratitude. They concluded their gathering by singing in harmony, Upendo udumu. Amani idumu. Let love persist. Let peace persist.

In spite of the many challenges they face, parents, students, teachers and farmers have come together as one, letting love persist and thankfulness win the day.



COLOSSIANS 3:14-16

14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. **15** And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. **16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

DAY 1

What does it look like for you to clothe yourself in love?

Infinite Love,

You have woven us all together as the beautiful tapestry of creation. Remind us of our interconnectedness and of the unique value of each thread that makes our world whole.

Amen.

DAY 2

Reflect on a moment where you experienced perfect harmony. Maybe it was in a worship service, working on a project with your community, or having a meaningful conversation with a friend. What did that moment feel like?

Gracious God,

You are a peace which passes all understanding. Help us to find moments of peace and harmony in this week to come.

Amen.

DAY 3

What does it mean to you to be one body of Christ in the world?

Holy Gatherer,

You bring us together as one in the community of love. Inspire us to welcome others uplifting the unique and beautiful gifts each of us brings to the world.

Amen.

DAY 4

By journeying through this devotional, you are letting the word of Christ dwell in you. What are some words or phrases that stand out to you in this week’s reflection which you could carry with you beyond this reflection time?

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O Word of Life,

You came to dwell among us that we would be renewed and restored in our relationship to you and to one another. Open our hearts to the knowledge of your word that we might live with grace and gratitude.

Amen.

DAY 5

Think about a time when you have been challenged by a member of your community to grow or be the best version of yourself. What did you learn from that experience?

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Mighty and loving God,

Open our hearts to the knowledge of your goodness. Humble us in moments of pridefulness and encourage us always to enter into relationships with curiosity, openness and grace.

Amen.

DAY 6

Music is an incredible way to share our love and gratitude for the many blessings in our lives. What is a song that brings you joy and inspires you to act with gratitude?

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Joyful Creator,

Through you, all things are made new. Help us to be agents of your transformational love, singing your praises for all to hear in the world.

Amen.

DAY 7

When was a time you came together with others letting love persist in your community in the face of difficulty?

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God of Loving Community,

At the dawn of Creation, you created all things in divine order and interconnected relationship. Help us to draw together as one creation in difficult times.

Amen.

WEEK 2: SCATTERING SEEDS OF HOPE IN GUATEMALA: GUISELA'S STORY

YOU WILL BE ENRICHED IN
EVERY WAY FOR YOUR GREAT
GENEROSITY, WHICH WILL
PRODUCE THANKSGIVING TO
GOD THROUGH US.

(2 CORINTHIANS: 11)

Scripture is full of assurances that God will provide. This passage from Paul's letter to the Corinthians is no exception. Paul assures the people of Corinth that their needs will be met and that they will experience prosperity through their generosity to others.

Guisela wanted desperately to provide a prosperous life for her two young daughters, but was facing incredible obstacles as she sought to feed her family as a single mother in Guatemala's Western Highlands.

With the sixth highest level of chronic malnutrition in the world, and the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean, hunger is a true crisis in Guatemala. Nearly half of children under five are stunted – during their most critical growing years – with indigenous and rural populations disproportionately affected. Without other options, many of Guisela's neighbors have left their communities in search of a better life in distant lands.

Thankfully, God scattered seeds of hope in Guisela's community, and before she had to make such an impossible choice she was connected

with Lutheran World Relief. Through a collaboration with our local partner FundaSistemas, Guisela has grown as a leader in her community learning how to farm vegetables, oyster mushrooms, and raise hens. Now she not only provides a varied and nutritious diet for her daughters, but she is teaching other women to do the same.



Guisela has been enriched through the generosity of her neighbors across the globe. Now she is seeing those seeds of hope take root as the organizer and president of a women's group in her community. She shares, "Once you plant in your family garden, people see that you have vegetables in your house and they come and ask about it ... So if we continue working in this group, at the end of the day we could grow more and distribute to the different communities. And to all the people in the village."

Your kindness has supported Guisela in helping her daughters grow healthy and strong. Through her connection to LWR, Guisela shows her daughters each day a stable future that is possible for them. Guisela's gratitude and generosity has overflowed from care for her family into service to her community. May we be inspired to do the same.

2 CORINTHIANS: 9-12

9 As it is written, “He scatters abroad; he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. **11** You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us, **12** for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

DAY 8

Have you ever faced a time when you weren't sure if you would be able to support your family in the way that you would like? What was that experience like for you?

God our Provider,

Be present with all facing hardships whose livelihoods are insecure. Guide all in seasons of prosperity to share generously with others in the world.

Amen.

DAY 9

Has there been a time when you have relied on the wider community for support? What did it feel like to experience their care and support?

Bread of Life,

Through the gift of community, you ensure that all have the opportunity to be fed and supported. Move our hearts to care for anyone in need of support at this time.

Amen.

DAY 10

As children of God, we envision a future where all people, in every corner of the world can live full, dignified lives. What can you do to help that future come to fruition?

God of Love,

We love because you first loved us. Remind us of the holiness of all people created in your image to be joyful and flourishing. Help us build a better future.

Amen.

DAY 11

Have you experienced a moment when God provided for a need in your life? Reflect on that moment and share about it with someone in your community.

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Great Accompanier,

You are a present help in times of trouble. Move us to gratitude for the ways in which you continue to show up in our lives, providing for our greatest needs.

Amen.

DAY 12

Leaders like Guisela change lives as they transform communities. Who is a leader that has changed your life for the better?

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Loving God,

We give thanks for the gift of leaders in our communities who support us and inspire us. Embolden us to be leaders in sharing your enduring love with the world.

Amen.

DAY 13

Guisela is working to build a better future for her daughters. What is the legacy you hope to leave for generations to come?

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Mothering God,

You gave us life and breath, creating us in your image. Inspire us to care for future generations, that they may know your abundance and love in the world.

Amen.

DAY 14

Inspired by Guisela’s leadership, how will you transform your gratitude for life’s blessings into generous action?

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Blessed Creator,

We praise you for the opportunity to learn and grow and share with our neighbors in the world. Inspire us to take notice of the many blessings you provide.

Amen.

**WEEK 3: LEADING IN LEBANON:
NADA'S DREAM FOR HER DAUGHTER**

**GOD IS ABLE TO PROVIDE
YOU WITH EVERY BLESSING IN
ABUNDANCE, SO THAT BY ALWAYS
HAVING ENOUGH OF EVERYTHING,
YOU MAY SHARE ABUNDANTLY IN
EVERY GOOD WORK.**

(2 CORINTHIANS: 6-8)

Like many others in her community, Nada only attended school through age twelve. Living in Lebanon, a country with one of the highest gender gaps in the world, Nada's father and brothers did not see the value in girl's education. Without her family's support, she discontinued her studies.



Nada is not alone in that experience. Only one out of every four women in Lebanon have employment, compared to three out of every four men, and women face significant barriers in accessing the marketplace. It is incredibly difficult for women in business to succeed there.

However, now that she is raising a daughter of her own, Nada wants to face these challenges head-on and change what is possible for her child. She sees the opportunities she lost by not completing her education and she is determined to make sure her daughter is able to finish her schooling. To help make this happen, Nada is pursuing her dream to be an entrepreneur, with help from LWR.

Through your generosity, LWR provides women entrepreneurs with the network, investment and training they need to succeed. Like other women in the program, Nada was issued a laptop to complete online business courses. These courses have helped her navigate complicated bureaucracies to obtain her business license to sell tasty pickles and other condiments.

Her family members (including her male relatives) look to her to help them when they have to figure out how to interact with government systems. The same brother who once mocked her when she was little for attending school now praises her for the attributes which make her a promising entrepreneur - she is not shy, she asks questions, and she is patient and persistent.

Rather than hold onto old resentment, Nada has cheerfully stepped into her leadership role in the family. She hopes to expand her business, improving her product distribution strategy and collaborating with other women producing similar products. One day, she dreams of creating a self-reliant business that could abundantly support her family and pave the way for a beautiful future for her daughter.

Let us wish her every blessing in abundance so that she might continue to cheerfully lead her family and her community.

2 CORINTHIANS: 6-8

6 The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. **7** Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. **8** And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

DAY 15 There is more than enough for all people to flourish in our world. Has there been a time in your life when you have been focused on fear and scarcity rather than joy and abundance?

*Gracious God,
You bless us abundantly that in all things that we might abound in good works. Remind us always of your love and inspire us to live a life of gracious gratitude.
Amen.*

DAY 16 It is through brave trailblazers and the examples they set that the world can truly change for the better. When did someone else inspire you to imagine a new future for yourself?

*Generous God,
As you shower us with blessings, may we be a blessing in the lives of others. Inspire us to uplift our neighbors, particularly our youngest ones to imagine a better tomorrow.
Amen.*

DAY 17 It can be easy to feel compelled to act out of resentment or obligation. How will you work to live with generosity in the knowledge of our interconnectedness instead?

*God of Community,
You created us in your image, delighting in the goodness of your creation. Let us be bearers of your love for all members of the beauty of creation.
Amen.*

DAY 18

Generosity is a gift to both the recipient and the giver. What does it mean to you to be a cheerful giver?

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Beloved God,

You lavish our lives with generosity of goodness each day. Transform our hearts that we might learn to live with compassion for all giving freely as you give.

Amen.

DAY 19

Nada is embracing a leadership role in her family. How can you grow as a leader in your family or community?

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Good Shepherd,

Make all the leaders of our world steadfast in their goodness and strengthened in their care for the world. Grant wisdom and discernment to all who shepherd others.

Amen.

DAY 20

Through her work as an entrepreneur and her advocacy for her daughter's education, Nada hopes her daughter will live a good life. Have you ever advocated for someone else and their future?

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Divine Advocate,

You are present with all who are silenced and overlooked. Grant us courage to do what is right and to make no peace with oppression or discrimination.

Amen.

DAY 21

When was there a time that you experienced the abundance of God's creation? How did you express your gratitude and share that abundance with others?

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God of Abundance,

Through you there is always enough. Thank you for the ways you invite us to live generously and with thanksgiving for your many blessings.

Amen.

WEEK 4: SAVING LIVES IN UKRAINE: ADA'S BRAVE JOURNEY

DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT
ANYTHING, BUT IN EVERYTHING BY
PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION WITH
THANKSGIVING LET YOUR REQUESTS
BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD.

(1 PHILIPPIANS 4:6)

Since the war in Ukraine began in late February, millions of people have fled violence and danger, with millions more remaining in dire need within their country. In the face of fighting and fear, Adrianna (Ada) and her husband have bravely chosen to let gentleness be known through their actions instead.

Ada and her husband saw the needs of their neighbors in Ukraine and volunteered as medical supply transporters. The supplies they transport to hospitals in Kyiv and Chernihiv in Ukraine will save roughly 15,000 lives across both hospitals.

Each perilous journey begins in Krzeszowice, Poland. They pack the donated supplies strategically in their vans so they can fit as much as possible, keeping the vehicle stable and not too low to the ground because of the many destroyed roads.

They plan their border crossing procedure, ensuring they have all the proper documentation and even have plans for possible ambushes. It is incredibly dangerous work, but Ada and her team can't imagine not stepping up to help. Ada shares that in spite of the risk she feels a sense



of peace and calm when she is doing the work, because she knows she is doing what she is called to do.

“They have no help. And we are doing what we can...I see their smiles...I see these people that are telling me it's help that they are longing for. ‘We didn't ask for it, and you came with it.’ So, it is a lot, we are saving lives.”

Because of generous supporters like you, Lutheran World Relief has been able to respond immediately to those fleeing violence and in need in Ukraine, providing shelter, food, medical equipment and supplies, emergency cash support and quilts and kits. Ada shared her immense gratitude for this support saying, “I'm just a messenger. You're really helping... I'm seeing God in different people, in other people that are in need.”

There is still so much need and suffering, both in Ukraine and in places far from the frontlines feeling the impact of the conflict due to global food and fuel shortages. On the hardest days, when they wonder if they can keep doing this dangerous work, your love and the impact it can have inspires Ada and her team to carry on - to make one more perilous journey.

May gentle heroes like Ada inspire us to let our gentleness and gratitude be known to everyone as we work together for a world of peace.

1 PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

DAY 22

Moments of hope and joy help us to persevere in difficult times. When was there a time you were filled with joy? Reflect on that moment.

*God of Goodness,
You rejoice with us in moments of joy. Be present with us in times of difficulty. Inspire us to abound with love, hopefulness, hospitality and deep appreciation for the gift of one another.
Amen.*

DAY 23

There is a peace that comes from being around the kind gentleness Ada possesses. What gentle heroes have you met and what have they taught you?

*Welcoming God,
We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves. Help us to be the best neighbors we can be. Make us agents of hope and wholeness in the world.
Amen.*

DAY 24

In a world plagued by war, uncertainty and so much brokenness, anxiety is understandable. What practices have you found helpful in decreasing your anxiety?

*O God of Peace,
When we cry out, you deliver us from all our fears. We praise you today and all days for your saving presence and for the everlasting refuge you provide.
Amen.*

DAY 25

Ada shares that she is inspired by the smiles of those she is able to help, motivating her to keep volunteering. What inspires you to continue during trying times?

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*Ever-present Help in Times of Trouble,
You know and feel the suffering of the world. Enfold in your love all who are facing unimaginable challenges.
Amen.*

DAY 26

Ada and her husband find peace in the knowledge that others are counting on them in the midst of their dangerous work. Will you take a moment to write a prayer of peace and protection on their behalf?

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*God of Peace,
You never forget your children who will find refuge always under the cover of your wings. Surround all those in need with your loving protection.
Amen.*

DAY 27

Ada shares she feels called to do the dangerous work of transporting medical supplies. Have you ever felt called to a particular vocation?

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*Creator God,
You formed us to live with purpose and love for one another. Guide us as we seek to follow the path you have set before us in the world.
Amen.*

DAY 28

How do you provide for the needs of others who are struggling in your community?

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*Gracious God,
There is more than enough to go around in this world. Open our hearts to take bold and generous action as we care for all in need in our communities.
Amen.*

**Become a
Faithful Neighbor**

Your monthly gift of \$29 or more ensures your
love is there for families when they need it most.
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