

Fr Daoud Lamei - 8 Exercises in Gratitude

<https://soundcloud.com/frdaoudlamei/01-let-us-give-thanks-to-the-lord?in=frdaoudlamei/sets/let-us-give-thanks-to-the-lord>

- Thanksgiving is the easiest and most important virtue to talk about
- We'll discuss 8 Exercises to insert Thanksgiving throughout the whole day - if we become accustomed to them, we will find our life become more thankful
- Exercise 1: As soon as you open your eyes in the morning, give thanks to God
 - Some people have a bad habit of first thing in the morning, the instant their eyes open, they're on their phone
 - For others, as soon as they open their eyes they're off to make coffee
 - Let "I thank you, Lord" be the first words out of your mouth every morning
 - Some people will put a sign on their bed or on their mirror - as soon as they wake up, give thanks to the Lord.
 - "make it known that one must rise before the sun to give You thanks, and must pray to You at the dawning of the light" (Wisdom 16:28 NRSV)
 - This is the monastic rite, too - they wake up in the darkness so as to pray and praise before the animals and plants and sun and the rest of the world wake up
 - Grow in this exercise:
 - Some people say "I'll do the whole Prayer of Thanksgiving as soon as I wake up"
 - Others say "I will thank God 20 times as soon as I wake up"
 - What to thank God for?
 - Life
 - Those who you love
 - Your senses are still working (hearing might be 50/50 but it still works!)
 - New day is a new opportunity to do good, to repent, etc.
 - Rest
- Exercise 2: Every time you eat or drink, give thanks to God
 - Every spoonful and every sip
 - We're looking for the things that can remind us to give thanks
 - What to thank God for?
 - The presence of food in a world that has hunger and thirst... people are dying of hunger and thirst, but you are one of the ones who has it
 - The fact that you are alive and even able to eat
 - The food, itself
 - Maybe it will remind you about spiritual food and drink (Bible and Prayer) - ate a hamburger, read a chapter! Drank a soda, pray a psalm!

- Exercise 3: Every time you see someone
 - Some people you see and you love them... and some people when you see them you...
 - See your children, your friends, your wife, your manager, your co-worker
 - Those who cause you trouble are playing a role in your salvation
 - At the very least, they will teach you prayer!
 - I thank you Lord because Georges annoyed me this morning - at least it got me to talk to You
 - What to thank God for?
 - Those who you are happy to see
 - Those who are bothering you or clashing you or conflicting with you
 - Those who give you the opportunity to serve them
- Exercise 4: Every time you move - "el 7araka baraka"
 - At some point you were trying to move and your neck hurt, or your back hurt, or your knee... and when you get older it will be more often
 - There was a servant who had lots of pain and discomfort, but he was serving and visiting the sick. He went to a very sick person one day and saw that he was very happy! So he said "I don't understand... why are you so happy?" And the guy replied "This is the first time in several years that I can move my neck!" He said that phrase made me turn 180 degrees.
 - What to thank God for?
 - That you are able to move
 - That you are able to go out
 - That you are able to leave the house
 - That you move without pain!
 - Remember how hard it was during the Quarantine Period of COVID
- Exercise 5: Every message and phone call
 - I'm not encouraging you to use the phone a lot, but imagine if with every text, WhatsApp message, Facetime, phone call, etc. you thanked God! How many times a day would it be?
 - Teach those around you and that you are communicating with about God - some words like "Thank God", "God willing", "God bless", etc. are our language. And they can be the easiest way to witness to the Lord in the world.
 - What to thank God for?
 - Good news
 - Bad news ("I thank you Lord, that it may be made good") - "Say thank God and wait a few weeks"
- Exercise 6: For Pain
 - This one is harder... but it has its own blessings
 - One lady had cancer and Abouna went to visit her before her departure and she said she wanted to confess. And she started crying "I made a mistake" - what was her mistake? "One time, I said 'that's enough Lord'" and Abouna asks her "well what do you usually say?" - She said "I thank you, Lord... but this one time I made a mistake and told the Lord that's enough"
 - It may not be that the Thanksgiving will bring you physical healing, but it will soften and prepare your heart
- Exercise 7: For the Spiritual Work

- The Church teaches us a Life of Thanksgiving - starts and ends with a Thanksgiving Prayer
 - What to thank God for?
 - Went to a convention - thank God
 - Entered into the Liturgy - thank God
 - Heard a sermon or a lecture - thank God
 - Served at the church - thank God
 - Called someone to console or mourn with them - thank God
 - Every time you pray, every time you read the Bible
 - Exercise 8: For your mind and what's on it - Thank God instead of dwelling on thoughts
 - Our minds are disorganized, they are a collection of ideas and thoughts and sensory data... what did I see? What did I hear? What did I feel? What do I remember? What did I think? And all of it comes together in an unorganized way, and this is what we see when we dream at night... a combination of everything from that day or week. And sometimes we just think and think and think and dwell on a problem or dwell on something... but instead, let's transform it into Thanksgiving. Sometimes we even make up stories and believe them - "Oh he's talking about me behind my back" or "Oh he did this to spite me or because he hates me." Instead, let me thank God and in this way I can turn it into a prayer about the problem.
 - What to thank God for?
 - Any problem on my mind, I thank You O Lord for holding it in Your hand
 - Any past problem or thing in the past, I thank You, O Lord, for taking care of it
 - Any person I am thinking about, I thank You, O Lord for putting him/her into my life"
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