

How to Mature: Express Gratitude. (September 17, 2026)

**“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God
in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thess. 5:18)**

Another significant aspect of growing in our relationship with the Lord Jesus and being further transformed into His image concerns what we regularly think about. Paul told the church at Philippi to continually think (meditate) on things that were true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). Obviously, what we think about will have a huge impact on our lives. So how can we discipline our thoughts to be more godly?

Here are a few ideas...

1. Write down three new things you are thankful for each day. Gratitude must be expressed, not just thought or felt, to be effective. Neuroscience has proposed that this one practice will literally rewire your brain with more positive circuitry.
2. Take 2 minutes at the end of a day to describe a positive, meaningful experience from the previous 24 hours. Sharing positive experiences with people we care about magnifies the benefit of that experience.
3. Write a brief email (2-5 minutes long) to someone who has recently contributed positively to your life. This will increase your appreciation of the help and care that others provide you, but it will also increase the chances that those people will continue to help you.
4. Eliminate complaining about things you cannot control or influence. To increase the benefit of this practice, make a deal with your five closest friends that whenever a friend hears you complain, they will immediately ask you, “So what are you doing to fix it?” If your reply is, “Nothing,” then stop talking about it. We are all aware that consistently sharing and hearing negativity makes gratitude nearly impossible.

Relationship experts tell us that anything less than a 5-to-1 ratio in affirmations-to-corrections leaves people feeling depleted and criticized. If we want to build up those around us, we will have to share 5 positive and encouraging things for every 1 negative and critical thing we share with them.

I believe a similar ratio applies to us as individuals. Anything less than a 5-to-1 ratio of gritudes-to-complaints will probably leave us more negative than positive. So, if we truly want to walk in the perfect will of God, we will do the hard work of being “transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Rom. 12:2)