

Gratitude!

November 2025

Gratitude. What could be more important than that to your mental health? Since Thanksgiving is coming up, I decided to focus on gratitude as a spiritual practice, one I try to make a consistent part of my daily life.



The image above is a picture of a framed gift I received during a day-long spiritual retreat at the Mercy Conference and Retreat Center in St. Louis several years ago. Each participant got a different word on their frame. I was grateful I got gratitude! I try to keep this frame on my side table by my reading nook chair, but it sometimes gets knocked over and buried with some kind of paper or book. During this season of Thanksgiving and then Advent, I would like to commit to more regular meditation/devotion time in that chair, and keep the word **gratitude** visible!

My friend Alice faithfully wrote down three things she was grateful for every day, and was careful to not repeat any of the items! She was grateful for her grumbly neighbor who taught her patience, the garbage men who whisked her trash away, and so many other things I probably would not have thought of. At different points in my life, I have attempted a gratitude journal, but have never been consistent with it.

I have read that studies show an attitude of gratitude has definite positive effects on mental health, as well as physical health. So let's be grateful!

I have a warm dry house. I have plenty to eat. I have a reliable car. But more important than "stuff", I have family and friends who love me and are there if I need help. I am surrounded by the beauty of nature. I am healthy and able to do most of the activities I want to. I am strengthened and comforted as a child of God.



Although I miss my late husband Richard, I am grateful for all the laughter and joy and love we shared over the years. As I wrote in the Acknowledgements at the end of my book, "To my beloved husband, I miss you every day. Your love never wavered, and your confidence in me bolstered my courage to try this journey. Grief never goes away, but gratitude for the years I was blessed to be with you has gradually replaced some of the vast acreage of grief. Take heart, those whose grief is raw."

I searched the manuscript of my novel, Elsie's New Season, and found I had used the word grateful nine times and the word gratitude nine times. It is definitely a theme! Check out this sentence:

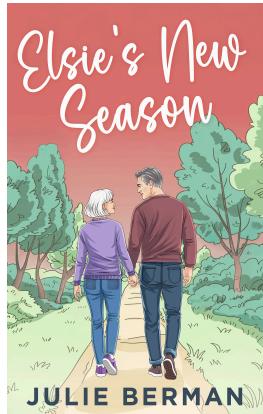
"On the one-year anniversary of Paul's death, she spent a quiet evening with her girls and Tony, looking at photos, laughing, and crying. Somehow, **gratitude** began to overshadow grief, not only **gratitude** for the time she had with Paul, but **gratitude** for the hope she was beginning to feel."

I am incredibly grateful for my readers, especially those of you who open and read my newsletters (maybe even all the way to the end)!

What are you grateful for? Try writing down a few things you are grateful for each day. Or put them in your notes app, or exchange texts with a friend. Let's focus on gratitude!

I appreciate your support:

- Recommend Elsie's New Season to a friend or give as a gift! **The holidays are coming!!** Who on your list might like my book??



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With gratitude,

Julie

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