**Thankfulness in every situation**

* 1 Thessalonians 5:18
* Philippians 4:6
* Ephesians 5:20

This can be a tough one at times. Can we really, honestly be thankful ‘in all things’ as the passages above suggest? There are lots of situations in life where we are genuinely grateful for something and thankfulness comes easily, others where, if we think carefully, we can find things to be honestly thankful for, and a few situations where gratitude of any kind seems impossible. What does Paul mean when he writes these exhortations? How are we meant to respond?

What I am quite sure about is that he was not asking us to be dishonest with our thanks, or to pretend gratitude where there is none. Instead, I think he is challenging us to fall back on God in prayer, thankful that we can. Phil 4:6 is in the context of feeling anxious. Eph 5:20 comes after acknowledging that we are all tempted by ‘darkness’ and associated practices. 1 Thess 5:18 is part of a brief summary on how to live as a Christian and comes straight after an acknowledgement that people hurt each other by doing wrong. There is no suggestion that we live in an ideal world! Thankfulness is a way of surviving the pain, not of denying it.

With this in mind, choose one of the verses and use it as a centrepiece for a double spread in your journal. You may want to include the other verses too. Decorate the page accordingly, use colours and images that echo how you feel as you come to God, and write your prayers round the edge. Allow yourself to enjoy feeling thankful and reflect that in your creativity.

You may want to think about how you plan to practice gratitude as a part of daily life, ‘in all circumstances’. How will you identify the things that you are thankful for and how will you bring these to God as part of your worship? Contemporary research shows that gratitude gets easier so it is worth persevering!