

# Heartstrings of Gratitude Sherilyn Long, M.H.

Leading up to the Christmas of 2015, my pastor asked a question that changed the course of my year, “This year for Christmas, what are you going to give to Jesus?” I spent a lot of time ruminating over this question. It could not be something small. No, it had to be big, and it had to be something ongoing.

This is when I came up with the idea of giving a grateful heart—not just one day, but every day for an entire year. Therefore, my husband and I started a new tradition on Christmas day that year. I would punch out paper hearts, one for each of us for every day of the year, and number the hearts. Then, every evening, my husband would bring to me the hearts for the day with a red pen so we could record our thanksgiving. In the morning, we placed our hearts in a wooden box.

At the end of the year, in December 2016, I worked on stringing the hearts together and reflecting on each one. This “heartstring” has graced the center of our home as part of our Christmas décor. As I was putting this together, I noticed that there were a lot of things to be grateful for during 2016. Things that were often overlooked all of the sudden became profound such as, “Thank you Lord for strawberries,” “Thank you Lord for public sanitation,” and “Thank you Lord for being able to breathe.”

During that year, 2016, I plowed through my herbal studies, a thesis on garlic and finished my Master’s Degree in Herbology with the School of Natural Healing. My gratitude progressed from, “Thank you Lord for helping me study,” “Thank you Jesus for garlic,” to “Thank you Lord for my herbal education.” After this, I transitioned out of my job to be a keeper of the home. During that year, I also spent time doing volunteer work with the drug and alcohol rehab program



connected with our church. It took a step of faith, but then the provision followed with a, “Thank you Lord for providing my husband with an extra large commission check.” A miracle during that year was reflected in #72, “Thank you Lord for saving the life of my pastor and for his safety,” after he was miraculously saved from multiple gunshot wounds and is experiencing a rapid recovery. I learned from this that God is the one who holds our lives in his hands. When it is your time to go, you can ease the process, but you will still go. However, if it is not your time to go, then even the medical establishment will be stunned. This is a principle that Dr. Christopher taught including the principle that the Creator designed our bodies to heal and repair itself. There is nothing wrong. As herbalists, we do not heal, but instead we assist the body in its own ability to heal and repair through cleansing and nourishing. This concept was reflected in #158 – “Thank you Lord for being my healer and allergies have nothing on you!” I have felt empowered to take care of my family, and I see this reflected in my husband’s grateful heart, thanking God for “Lower Bowel Formula,” “good bowel movements,” “Complete Tissue and

Bone Formula,” and “healing my stink eye (sty).” I know that without my herbal education none of this would be possible.

Now that it is 2018, my husband and I are into our third year of a gratitude practice. This year, we now spend 15 minutes together each morning drinking herbal tea, reading and stringing some of the hearts from the previous year. It’s a great time with each other, remembering and reflecting on God’s blessings and provision (and shocking how it’s so easy to forget!). In the evenings, we each write out our gratitude for that day. While reflecting on our years of gratitude, I have felt an overwhelming love for my husband. Just this one new habit of individually focusing on gratitude has fueled our marriage, far more than candy hearts or Valentine wishes. With an internal shift of focus, we all have the ability to powerfully impact those around us, which in turn affects our own health and happiness too.

You have the ability to change your life, your health, your relationships, and your circumstances just by slowly changing your perspective. A happy and healthy life and healthy relationships begin with a grateful heart! This is a very important principle for health! You can change your diet and take all the supplements in the world, but if you are not grateful, you will continue to struggle. Practicing a daily habit of gratitude will bless your life, and it will also bless those around you.

Know that you will have to get creative! Nothing is exempt from gratitude, even the trials in life and pesky symptoms, which as Dr. Christopher taught are just signs that the body is working on trying to heal itself. When God created you, He knew what He was doing. Sometimes it feels difficult to be patient or grateful. This is why some call it the “sacrifice of praise”—I have to sacrifice my own sour attitude and choose to be grateful instead!

So, whether it is a Christmas tradition, a New Year’s resolution, a Valentines kick to fuel love in your heart, or a basic health goal, may I recommend you add a daily dose of gratitude to your list? I know, like me, as you begin to habitually thank God for the blessings in your life, you will be amazed at the results!

**Sherilyn Long** is a Master Herbalist and graduate of the School of Natural Healing. She is a woman with a grateful heart who has received far more grace and blessings than she deserves. She lives with her husband in North Idaho.