



PRACTICING GRATITUDE

by Amanda Sorena

In early 2018, during our Tuesday Moms Bible Study, Julie Ellerbrock handed out color slips of paper wrapped with a bright gold bow and issued us all a challenge – write down your daily gratitudes and put them in a jar. On New Year's Eve, read them aloud as a family. I have always liked the *idea* of practicing gratitude daily, but had been terrible at follow through. I vowed to be different this year. I bought a jar and set it on the kitchen counter with the hopes that mere proximity would serve as an adequate reminder. I'll admit I struggled some in the beginning. I would consider scribbling being grateful for "family," or "coffee," or "beautiful days." Not bad, but not exactly introspective. I decided to push myself to dig a bit deeper past the general stuff to the real nitty-gritty, everyday moments we often forget to mark as the good stuff.

It wasn't that suddenly there were more aspects in our lives to be grateful for. The hard stuff still happened. I still yelled more than I wanted to. The laundry didn't go away. Dinners still needed to be made, bills paid, and deadlines met. If anything, I learned that when you stop treating gratitude as some sort of special thing reserved for holidays and big events, and start looking for it in your everyday, there is a perspective shift that is profound and meaningful. Everyday, no matter what, there is always something worth writing down. Trust me.

On New Year's Eve, we sat down as a family and took turns reading the colored slips of paper aloud to one another. I could see a trend as we read through all of the items. Big things still made the list, but the little, everyday things seemed more striking. Our son staying in his bed all night after weeks of sneaking into our room at 3 a.m. Dance parties in the kitchen. Dinners with friends. Singing along to the radio in the car. Kids taking tamiflu with no complaints.

St. Luke's has declared 2019 the "Year of Gratitude" and is encouraging all of us to write down a note of thanks each day. Consider this your own personal invitation to grab a jar and fill it up. I promise at the end of 2019, you'll be grateful you did.