

## Living in Gratitude: A Journey That will Change Your Life

**Angeles Arrien**

Sounds True (November 2011)

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Inviting readers along on a year's journey of gratitude, Dr. Angeles Arrien, a teacher, cultural anthropologist, and author (*The Four-Fold Way*; *The Second Half of Life*) draws on a world of inspiration and perennial wisdom in this, her seventh book. *Living in Gratitude* is the inside look at the practice of appreciation as spiritual powerhouse, enlivened by quotes, poems, reflections, questions, and exercises reflecting major faith traditions and indigenous spiritual paths.

Readers using this one-stop compendium discover that it shines light on the many facets of gratefulness; they can engage month by month and build strength along a proactive, year-long journey. Gratitude comes alive in many layers, with practical wisdom reflecting perspectives from across the globe.

Starting in January with Begin Anew, twelve chapters and an epilogue enumerate a universe of approaches that invite gratitude and appreciation with a new theme each month: Attend to the Heart, Compassionate Service, Mercy and Atonement, Grace, Equanimity, Nature, Peace, Guidance and Wisdom, Letting Go, Grateful Seeing, and The Mystic Heart.

Each chapter opens with words of wisdom that set the tone, whether a Native American blessing, a poem, or a prayer, all focused on the month's theme. The author's discussion and practices are supplemented with well-placed snippets of research that affirm the benefits. After one gratitude-building exercise, the author observes, "Robert Emmons's research supports the Dalai Lama's practice of extending compassion to ourselves and others ... Says Emmons, 'gratitude appears to build friendships.'"

At its heart, the book creates a practical path, with reflections appropriate to each month's theme, practices, and questions that review and help integrate all the material. Arrien concludes by saying, "Our practice has shown us that gratitude provides strength and solace during dark, challenging times and enhances our lives during light, uplifting times."

Some may wonder how to add one more practice to an already-full life, but the author's gentle guidance encourages readers to integrate gratefulness into every day. One small quibble in an otherwise outstanding contribution: The title, when spoken aloud, can be misheard as "Living in gratitude," the opposite of its actual meaning.

Making good on the subtitle's promise, "A Journey That Will Change Your Life," *Living in Gratitude* will become a lifelong companion, revisited through every season of the year and along the journey of life.

BOBBYE MIDDENDORF (Winter 2012)

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