

how to change the way you plan your day (and why you want to)



printable handbook for pursuing
a Jesus-centered routine



ABOUT LIFETREE

We're Lifetree, an inter-denominational organization with a mission to connect people to Jesus and each other.

Our goal is to give you new ideas and reminders for how to find Jesus in the midst of your life today, including how to hear his creative wisdom for your family, your work, and your community.

We publish articles, videos, and podcasts on parenting, marriage, and daily faith, and we create resources to grow in all of the above.

Relationships matter. Jesus matters. Our greatest hope is for all of us to focus on what matters. Every day. Starting now.

Visit us online at MyLifetree.com



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"I'M DOING IT THIS TIME. FOR REAL."

This is the week. I'm getting
BACK ON TRACK starting now.

I need A PLAN.

There's been a lot of buzz recently about routines, daily schedules, and goals. For instance, you may have noticed headlines like these:

"The 5 smartest ways to start your day"

"10-minute morning rituals for success"

"Try these goal-setting secrets from business leaders"

"Daily health routines of the fit"

The one thing ALL of these articles--plus thousands like them--have in common is that they promise to help you organize your life and accomplish your dreams. Super--right?

Here's the sneaky thing, though: they make the assumption that YOU are the best judge of what's important in life and how to plan your time.

Friend, this assumption is *wrong*.

When we take goal-setting and planning into our own hands, we end up settling for well-intended but flawed ideas about what's important. And here's what happens:

- we over-commit ourselves because we let outside pressures shape our priorities
- we over-schedule our time because we're unrealistic about how much rest we actually need
- we crowd out our passion and end up wandering alone and confused
- we overlook priceless opportunities for love and affection

In other words, we're not the best directors of our time and priorities. Given the opportunity, we'll screw it up (almost) every time.

There is, however, someone who's a far better planner than we are. Reliably his goals are better, his timing is better, and his values are better.

He's Jesus, and we really should just hand over the controls to him already--K?

Here's what happens when we hand over the controls:

- we commit ourselves to the things that bring peace and joy to our lives, and trash the distractions
- we experience rest and a sense of accomplishment because we're living within our limitations
- we're focused and motivated by what uses our gifts and brings hope to others
- we encounter moments of love and affection all day

Sounds better, right?

If this is appealing, keep reading. The following pages include reflections, prayers, worksheets and exercises that help you hand over the controls to Jesus and let him plan your days.

Ready? Get your day planner (or app) handy, open your heart to the Holy Spirit, and turn the page.



[New!] Jesus-Centered Planner 2018

Part planner, part powerful devotional, the Jesus-Centered Planner for 2018 has weekly prompts that invite Jesus to shape your day.

Get a free sample >>

JESUS-CENTERED GOALS AND PRIORITIES



JESUS-CENTERED GOALS & PRIORITIES

When planning goals and priorities, it's easy to wish that following Jesus was like meeting with a life coach--morning prayers would be like strategic planning sessions that would end with clear to-do lists, and you'd debrief at the end of the day to see how things went and make adjustments.

Alas, following Jesus is far more adventuresome and unpredictable.

Based on how he led his disciples, he enjoys surprises and unstructured guidance. ("Just go to that next town without your bags and see who takes you in.") And regarding goals, Jesus had just two: love God with your whole heart, and love others as you love yourself.

So where does that leave us? How do we take our goals and to-do lists and make sense of them? How can we tell what's important and what's not? Well, the answer isn't formulaic, but there are two things that help, and they're covered in the next few pages.

The first is to make sure that no matter what, we're tuned into the Spirit and what he's putting into our hearts. The "Clutter vs. Joy" section, next, addresses that.

The second is to keep goal-setting simple, and make sure it includes loving God and loving people. Keep reading for help with that, too.

On Setting Jesus-Centered Goals

*The **Jesus-Centered Planner for 2018** includes 4 goal-setting worksheets that you fill out once every quarter. Unlike other goal worksheets, these start with guided prayer and get to the heart of God's purpose and focus for you month by month.*

CLUTTER VS. JOY

Marie Kondo, author of *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, has become one of the most famous authors in the world for her idea that we can fill our lives with things that "spark joy," and mercilessly get rid of everything else.

Unsurprisingly, this concept about joy resonates with people because there's spiritual truth in it. When the Spirit of Jesus lives in us, he "sparks joy" in our hearts. But when we're weighed down by clutter (physical clutter, but also cluttered schedules and cluttered thoughts), the Spirit's joy gets crowded out, leaving us feeling fragmented and discouraged.

The truth is that we do a lot of things because we feel like we *should*--because they seem pressing or because other people say they're important. But Jesus has already put into our hearts the things that bring joy--we just need to give them some breathing room.

Fortunately the Spirit can help us identify which things we're doing because we feel like we "should," and which things will "spark joy" because they're rooted in him.

On the next page you'll find an exercise that will help you start to identify both. Simply think about everything on your to-do list right now. Then assign each task a column: things you feel like you should do, and things that bring genuine joy. Then work to do more of the things under "joy" and less of the things under "clutter."



*Keep the momentum going by exploring your heart even farther with **Drawn In**, a creative journal with 40 additional unique devotions that help you spark joy and creativity every day.*

>> Get Drawn In

CLUTTER

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SUPER SIMPLE GOAL-SETTING

Now that you have a better sense of what's bringing true joy into your life, it's time to start setting (or refining) goals.

There are about three gazillion methods for setting goals and priorities, so if you already have one that works for you, carry on. If not, we have a super simple goal-setting exercise to get you started.

This exercise helps you identify goals for four key areas in your life: your knowledge, your health, your spiritual life, and your relationships. These areas are loosely based on four qualities mentioned about Jesus in Luke 2:52: wisdom, stature, favor with God, and favor with others.

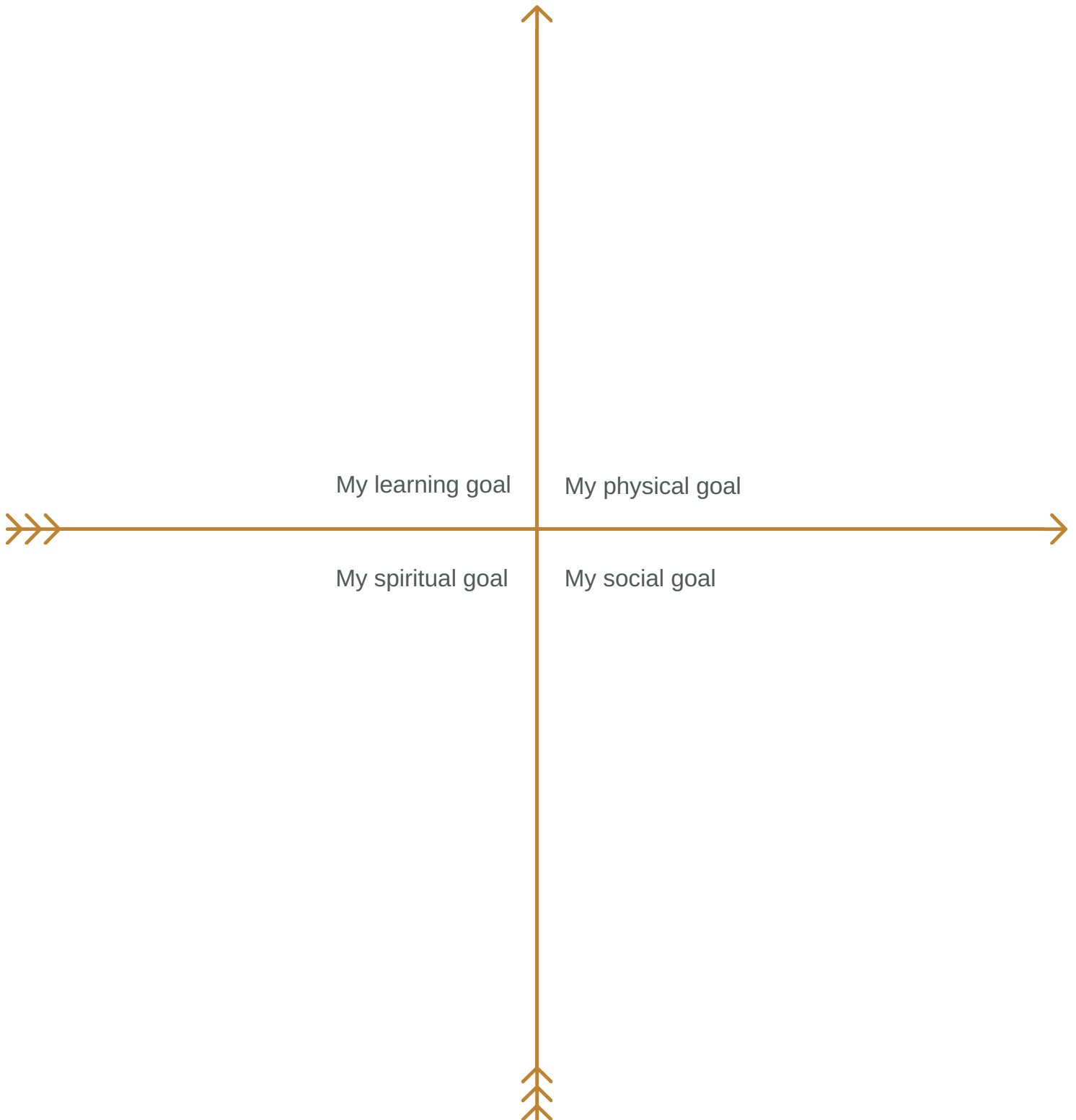
Your mission is to pray about goals for each area, remembering the things that bring you joy. In other words, don't set a goal to run three miles every day if you hate running. Find something physical that brings you joy, like walking in nature or dancing.

Two more tips for setting goals from the **Jesus-Centered Planner 2018**:

1. Use a pencil. This eliminates the pressure of getting your goals perfectly right and gives you the flexibility to tweak them (or change them completely) each week.
2. Limit yourself to three goals per quarter. Don't bite off more than you can chew. Every new goal you add divides your focus, so pray about how many goals Jesus has for you each quarter, and don't tackle more than three at a time.

goal-setting grid

Luke 2:52 (NLT): Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.



A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a red, white, and blue plaid shirt. He is holding a teal-colored mug with both hands, resting his arms on a dark, textured surface. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a contemplative mood. The text "MAKING ROOM FOR JESUS IN YOUR PLANS" is overlaid in white, sans-serif capital letters on the left side of the image.

MAKING ROOM FOR JESUS IN YOUR PLANS

MAKING ROOM FOR JESUS IN YOUR PLANS

Most of us learn early in life that planning is important. If you want to get to your appointments on time, meet deadlines, and move toward goals, you have to plan. John Maxwell (a best-selling author and business consultant) says this about planning:

"When I get ready to approach a day, I have the whole thing laid out. Hour by hour. It's a rare day that I get up in the morning wondering what I will be doing that day."

It's appealing, isn't it--this idea that we can approach each new day knowing exactly what we're going to be doing? Having a map to follow truly does help us prioritize what we value and accomplish more in our lives.

But here's the rub: there's a difference between our plans and God's plans. No matter how diligently we chart out our days, we're always going to encounter interruptions, unexpected obstacles, and surprises. Some of these are designed to build our character, and others are invitations to join Jesus on surprise missions.

This presents a challenge: how do we stay focused but also not miss God's plans because we're *too* focused on our own agenda?

The solution is to cultivate an open, flexible heart that welcomes Jesus-led edits to our day. Or, to put it another way, we want to make our plans interruptible. The following pages include three strategies to help you do just that, starting with making space for rest.

planning for rest

Resting is one of the simplest but most difficult things to schedule into your week--but worth it. God set aside a full day of rest for his week, and Jesus took time away from his ministry and friends for solitude and rest. Try it yourself, starting with these two steps:

Make a list of chores, errands and to-do's that you typically do on the weekends.

[illegible]

Assign some of your weekend to-do's to the weekdays, below, to free up "rest time."

[illegible]

MAKING THE MOST OF GAP TIMES

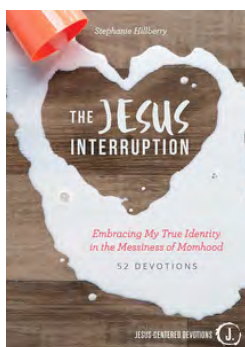
Opening ourselves up to being interrupted by Jesus is easier said than done. Many of our appointments and deadlines involve other people who rely on us to show up or deliver on time. And when these responsibilities are stacked on top of each other throughout the day, there's not a lot of wiggle room for deviation.

Loosening up your schedule to allow for more wiggle room is a great goal, and there are a lot of resources out there about cutting back on obligations and learning to say no. There is one thing, however, that even the busiest person can start doing right now: *make the most of your "gap times."*

What's a "gap time"?

Gap times are short but frequent windows of time throughout the day when you're waiting for something or transitioning from one task/place to another. For instance, waiting for your computer to boot up in the morning is a gap time. The time spent in the car commuting to work or driving errands is gap time. Waiting to pick up the kids from school is a gap time. Brushing your teeth and showering are gap times.

Because these moments are sandwiched between our plans, they provide great opportunities for us to connect to Jesus and give him a chance to speak to us. And we don't have to over-complicate it. On the next page are seven gap time prayers for you to try.



Gap times for Mom:

When you're a mom, gap times are often your best (and only) opportunities to connect to Jesus. This book of 52 devotions are perfect for fitting micro-quiet times into busy days.

>> **Get *The Jesus Interruption***

Here are seven "gap time" prayers and questions to ask Jesus.

Try one of these each day during a gap time for the next week and see how these small windows of time can transform your day. Ask:

Monday: Jesus, who can I pray for in the next 60 seconds?

Tuesday: Jesus, what are you thinking about right now that you want to share with me?

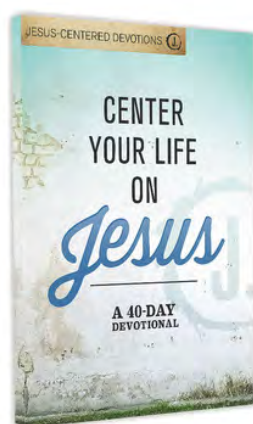
Wednesday: Jesus, what was your favorite thing from this day?

Thursday: Jesus, thank you for [fill in the blank].

Friday: Jesus, who do you want me to encourage later this afternoon?

Saturday: Jesus, what do you want me to focus on this evening?

Sunday: Jesus, how do you want me to spend my first five minutes after coming home?



Bonus "gap time" idea:

Keep this devotional about centering your life on Jesus in your bag, office, or car and read a new devotion every day during one of your gap times.

>> Get *Center Your Life on Jesus*

DIALING DOWN DISTRACTIONS



DIALING DOWN DISTRACTIONS

As we mentioned earlier, Jesus had two goals for us: to love God, and to love others. Though surprisingly simple, these goals are not always easy to pursue. In addition to our responsibilities (ex. bills to pay), there are also SO MANY distractions vying for our time. Our smartphones alone offer enough pursuits to fill a whole afternoon.

There's no way around it: if we want to love God and love others, we have to dial down the things that compete with those priorities (sorry Pinterest).

The pages that follow include a few ideas to get started. They're intentionally easy because "lock away your phone and disconnect from the Internet" are not very practical.

The first worksheet, next, helps you identify things you're doing that are on-point with Jesus' goals, and things that are distracting you. Your mission is dial down the second group.

Start each day pairing a Bible and Planner that focus on Jesus...



The **Jesus-Centered Planner 2018** includes the **Jesus-Centered Bible's** year-long Bible-reading plan that walks you through Jesus' story from Genesis to Revelation.

Learn about the **Jesus-Centered Bible** >>

ON-POINT
STUFF THAT HELPS ME LOVE
GOD & LOVE OTHERS

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OFF-POINT
STUFF THAT DISTRACTS ME
FROM GOD & OTHERS

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ONE MONTH SAMPLE

JESUS-CENTERED PLANNER



To Do

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Notes

This month, focus on Jesus by...

WEEK 1

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>
READ <i>Genesis 1</i>	READ <i>Genesis 2</i>	READ <i>John 1</i>	READ <i>Genesis 3</i>
6:00	6:00	6:00	6:00
7:00	7:00	7:00	7:00
8:00	8:00	8:00	8:00
9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00
10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00
11:00	11:00	11:00	11:00
12:00	12:00	12:00	12:00
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2:00	2:00	2:00	2:00
3:00	3:00	3:00	3:00
4:00	4:00	4:00	4:00
5:00	5:00	5:00	5:00
6:00	6:00	6:00	6:00
7:00	7:00	7:00	7:00
8:00	8:00	8:00	8:00
9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00
10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00



Turn to your monthly calendar, and plan a day of rest where you are free from responsibilities and to-do's. Block it off now so that you can prepare to take the day off.

WEEK 2

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>
READ <i>Genesis 12</i>	READ <i>Malachi 4</i>	READ <i>Mark 1</i>	READ <i>Matthew 3</i>
6:00	6:00	6:00	6:00
7:00	7:00	7:00	7:00
8:00	8:00	8:00	8:00
9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00
10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00
11:00	11:00	11:00	11:00
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8:00	8:00	8:00	8:00
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10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00



Go through your calendar marking significant dates (birthdays, anniversaries, and other milestones) for people you care about. Then count back 5 to 10 days before each date and schedule a reminder to start planning a note, gift, or celebration.

Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Ask Jesus what you and others in your life need this week. Record your answers here...
READ Matthew 4	READ Mark 2	READ Mark 3	
6:00	6:00	6:00	
7:00	7:00	7:00	
8:00	8:00	8:00	
9:00	9:00	9:00	
10:00	10:00	10:00	
11:00	11:00	11:00	
12:00	12:00	12:00	
1:00	1:00	1:00	
2:00	2:00	2:00	To Do
3:00	3:00	3:00	
4:00	4:00	4:00	
5:00	5:00	5:00	
6:00	6:00	6:00	
7:00	7:00	7:00	
8:00	8:00	8:00	
9:00	9:00	9:00	
10:00	10:00	10:00	

Things you're thankful for:

This image shows a full page of dot grid paper. The dots are arranged in a precise, repeating pattern across the entire surface, forming a grid that is useful for writing, drawing, or planning. The dots are small and evenly spaced both horizontally and vertically.

WEEK 3

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>
READ <i>Mark 4</i>	READ <i>Mark 5</i>	READ <i>Mark 6</i>	READ <i>Mark 7</i>
6:00	6:00	6:00	6:00
7:00	7:00	7:00	7:00
8:00	8:00	8:00	8:00
9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00
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Switch off your devices for an hour every day this week and use that time to ask Jesus for ideas of how to fill that time.

To Do

[illegible]

WEEK 4

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>
READ <i>Mark 11</i>	READ <i>Mark 12</i>	READ <i>Mark 13</i>	READ <i>Mark 14</i>
6:00	6:00	6:00	6:00
7:00	7:00	7:00	7:00
8:00	8:00	8:00	8:00
9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00
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10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00



Schedule 30 minutes this week to focus on news headlines. Ask Jesus to draw your attention to a specific headline or event, and then ask him to lead you in a prayer response.

WEEK 5

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>
READ 1 Timothy 1	READ 2 Timothy 1	READ 2 Timothy 2	READ Isaiah 61
6:00	6:00	6:00	6:00
7:00	7:00	7:00	7:00
8:00	8:00	8:00	8:00
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Identify three empty spaces that you can reserve for connecting with Jesus in prayer this week. Schedule them now.

Things you're thankful for:



THE END.