



Request for Proposals

Gratitude to God: Psychological, Philosophical and Theological Investigations

Project Duration: Two Years

Start date between September 1, 2020 and November 1, 2020

End date between August 31, 2022 and October 31, 2022



GRATITUDE TO GOD: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Biola University, with the help of a very generous grant from The John Templeton Foundation, and under the direction of Peter Hill and Robert Emmons, welcomes proposals from various disciplines to investigate questions that concern *Gratitude to God**.

SCOPE

We anticipate proposals for empirical and non-empirical projects that address one or more of the questions listed below. Proposals may be for projects that utilize the methodologies of the behavioral sciences, philosophy, theology, or religious studies. Empirical projects may be multi-method, qualitative, theoretical, cross-cultural, employ behavioral measures, or incorporate developmental approaches (though none of these are required). For the empirical projects, experimental methodologies are encouraged. There will be 4 separate award competitions: (1) Empirical large grants, (2) Empirical early career grants, (3) Non-empirical large grants, and (4) Non-empirical early career grants.

*For the sake of this proposal and the anticipated projects that we hope it generates, we are using the term “God” to encompass the supreme God of monotheistic traditions, as well as other supernatural or superhuman beings with agency and powers (gods, spirits, ghosts, saints), whether personal or impersonal (Smith, 2017) with capacities to “make things happen or prevent them from happening, especially obtaining goods and avoiding bads” (Smith, 2017, p. 22). The phrase “personal or impersonal” implies that the superhuman powers may or may not be believed to possess consciousness, intentions, feelings, desires and other properties of the mind. We use the term “cosmic gratitude” in the RFP to depict the state that is felt by people who are inclined to feel gratitude for things not plausibly attributable to human agency nor to a personal supernatural or superhuman agent (Roberts, 2014).

RFP QUESTIONS

The present funding competition targets four specific domains for inquiry concerning Gratitude to God (GTG).

1. Basic distinctions

What is the basic structure of gratitude to God and how can we advance our understanding of the differences between gratitude to God and gratitude to others?

- a) In what ways does gratitude to God differ from interhuman gratitude?
- b) How do grateful emotions directed toward God differ from those directed toward other supernatural agents and those directed toward people? In what ways do attributes and views of God change the nature of GTG compared to gratitude toward people?
- c) Are issues pertaining to reciprocation, indebtedness, obligation and responsibility cast in different light when the giver is God as opposed to humans?
- d) In what ways do various manifestations of Gods (e.g. Trinitarian, polytheistic) affect or complicate the meaning of GTG? GTG may express itself quite differently depending upon diverse conceptions of God.
- e) Gratitude is both a connective virtue and a communicative relation. How are we to understand GTG in light of this? If GTG is a virtue, is it an infused (innate) or acquired (something that one can develop) virtue (Aquinas)? Is it more basic or foundational than other virtues? How does it relate to other virtues?
- f) In what way is ingratitude to God similar to, or different from ingratitude to humans?
- g) GTG involves both a *to* dimension (to God) and a *for* dimension. What can the cognitive science of religion teach us about both the “to” and “for” experiences of GTG?
- h) How does attribution of agency and locus of control (internal, external, collaborative) interplay with GTG? Do human mental tools which support the inference that benefits cannot plausibly be attributed to human agency yield attributions of intentional benevolence to a divine or transcendent agent?

- i) In what ways do normative and empirical understandings of GTG diverge? In other words, is there a difference between how, why, and when people ought to be grateful to God and how, why, and when people are actually grateful to God?
- j) What kind of concept is GTG? Is it a state that varies over time or a stable virtue-trait? Is it an action, an emotion, a habit, or something else?

2. Expressions of gratitude to God

Why and how do people express gratitude to God or fail to?

- a) How do people express gratitude to God: in prayer, by helping others, or by public communication?
- b) Who is more inclined to respond with gratitude to God's goodness, and who has an instrumental approach to GTG (e.g., thinking God rewards those who are grateful and punishes those who are ungrateful)? What predicts whether people believe that God continues to provide or withholds benefits to the ungrateful?
- c) Do people think God rewards those who are grateful to Him? Do people think that it is possible to be grateful enough to God? Do people believe that God punishes those who are ungrateful? Do people believe that God continues to provide benefits to the ungrateful?
- d) Why are public expressions of GTG often met with resistance or seem to offend non-theists? What are the benefits or burdens of public expressions of gratitude to God? How much are people sensitive to genuine vs. forced public expressions of GTG?
- e) Does gratitude to God and to humans for a given outcome operate in a disjunctive or conjunctive manner? Do religious and spiritual people experience gratitude "density" that sees a divine giver behind human givers?
- f) Is there a difference between instrumental gratitude, humble gratitude, or gratitude expressed because of tradition or a moral imperative?

3. Targets of cosmic gratitude

How is cosmic gratitude an alternative to GTG?

- a) Does cosmic gratitude or gratitude to other supernatural agents (e.g., saints, ancestor spirits) differ from GTG in structure, function, or expression?
- b) Might a transcendent or transpersonal agent include a non-religious supernatural agent or even an impersonal, non-agent force or powerful entity (karma, fate, the Universe)?
- c) Can non-theists (including atheists) feel existential gratitude and, if so, to whom and for what?
- d) Can there be gratitude for existence that is not directed toward any source and, if so, what are its psychological implications and effects?
- e) Are there cosmic emotions other than gratitude and, if so, how do they differ from GTG in structure or function?

4. Functions of GTG

What functions does GTG serve?

- a) What is the testimonial or communicative function of public expressions of GTG?
- b) Does GTG resolve doubt concerning God's existence and, if so, does this enable new knowledge and new ways of experiencing God?
- c) What are the human-divine relational consequences of GTG? How does GTG impact human relationships and the relationship with God? What shared rituals strengthen GTG and/or bind people together? What divine-human relational practices predict (and are predicted by) GTG (i.e., worship, prayer, devotional practices, artistic expressions)?
- d) What other spiritual functions of GTG might there be? Do experiences of gratitude enhance commitment and feelings of closeness to God?
- e) Do cosmic and transpersonal gratitude replace theistic gratitude for nonbelievers, and does it serve similar psychological and relational functions? Does it even mean the same thing (e.g., does "feeling fortunate" come to replace "feeling grateful")?

WHAT IS BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THIS COMPETITION?

- Projects that are fundamentally concerned with the effect of gratitude to God on health, well-being, happiness, coping or other similar outcomes are valuable, but should be excluded from the present funding competition, which focuses on foundational questions. Projects that are primarily correlational in nature and psychometric work on measures of gratitude to God in adults are not encouraged.
- Projects exploring comparisons among experiences and expressions of gratitude across religious traditions. The focus of the project is not a comparative examination of gratitude (e.g. are Buddhists more or less grateful than Christians?) but rather how people experience gratitude to God and other supernatural agents or forces.
- Projects that focus on collaborations between psychology, theology, or philosophy of GTG and the ministry. The John Templeton Foundation has funded numerous projects that have supported collaborative work between academics and ministry professionals, but the focus here is on advancing basic scholarship on GTG.
- Projects that are historical in nature are beyond the scope of this competition.

RESEARCH WORKSHOP AND CAPSTONE CONFERENCE

To stimulate dialogue among grantees, and to communicate insights generated from the projects to a broader audience, the project will include two meetings, scheduled for December 2020 and October 2022. The first will be a research workshop toward the beginning of the grant period designed to allow grantees to present their proposed projects, to receive feedback, and to stimulate interdisciplinary collaboration. The second is a capstone conference toward the end of the grant period designed for grantees to present their findings to a larger, public audience and to stimulate future collaborative efforts. Awardees must commit to attending both conferences.

Research Workshop

We will convene an informal two-day workshop where researchers will discuss and present their work. This meeting will serve to launch the individual research projects, each of which will have been recently initiated. Researchers and scholars will provide overviews and updates on their work-in-progress and get feedback from attendees. The workshop will be held in Palm Springs, California, the site of previous academic meetings on intellectual humility. The location is accessible from major airports and from the Southern California region.

Capstone Conference

A large research conference will be convened toward the very end of the project. All grant awardees will be expected to participate, and project leaders will share the results of their research, insights, and discoveries. The purposes of this capstone conference are: (a) to strengthen ties among leading researchers and other scholars on gratitude to God, (b) to allow PIs to provide feedback to one another that will improve their future work on gratitude to God, and, (c) with portions of the conference, to share ideas and knowledge with the broader intellectual community, including graduate students and other young researchers who may select gratitude to God as a research topic.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

PROPOSAL TYPES

Empirical Proposals

There are two levels of empirical awards: Regular Grants and Early Career Grants.

Applicants seeking regular grant support for empirical projects may request up to \$250,000 for projects not to exceed two years in duration. Exceptionally promising projects requiring greater funding will be considered. We anticipate making up to 9 empirical regular grant awards.

Applicants seeking funding for an Early Career Award may request up to \$25,000 for projects not to exceed one year in duration. We anticipate making up to 6 early career awards. Each project team (regular grant or seed grant) must include at least one psychologist in a leadership position, but empirical researchers from other disciplines are also welcome to apply as part of an interdisciplinary collaboration with a psychologist.

Letters of Intent are due by January 15, 2020. Notification will be made by March 1, 2020, with submission of full proposals no later than April 30, 2020. Final award decisions will be issued by July 1, 2020. All funded projects will run for two years with a start date between September 1, 2020 and November 1, 2020 and an end date between August 31, 2022 and October 31, 2022.

Non-Empirical Proposals

There are two levels of non-empirical awards: Regular Grants and Early Career Grants.

Investigators with expertise in philosophy, theology, or religious studies seeking support for non-empirical projects may request up to \$100,000 for projects not to exceed two years in duration. We anticipate making up to 6 non-empirical regular grant awards.

Applicants seeking funding for an Early Career Award may request up to \$15,000 for projects not to exceed one year in duration. We anticipate making 4 total awards.

Letters of Intent are due by January 15, 2020. Notification will be made by March 1, 2020, with submission of full proposals no later than April 30, 2020. Final award decisions will be issued by July 1, 2020. All funded projects will run for up to two years with a start date between September 1, 2020 and November 1, 2020 and an end date between August 31, 2022 and October 31, 2022.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY

For the regular grants, the PI must have a Ph.D. or an appropriate terminal degree (e.g., Psy.D., DMin, D.Phil, JD, MD) and be affiliated with either 1) an accredited college or university, or 2) a recognized institution with academic interests (such as a research center or institute) prior to the beginning of the supported research. A letter of institutional support is required to accompany full proposals. Questions about meeting these criteria may be sent to gratitude.to.god@biola.edu.

For the Early Career grants, the PI must be either advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree (or appropriate terminal degree) and working on their dissertation or be no more than five years post terminal degree. Applicants are allowed to be PI for only one empirical proposal or one non-empirical proposal for this competition, but may serve in other capacities (consultant, collaborator) on other proposals.

SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Empirical Proposals

1. Letter of Intent (LOI) Stage for Empirical Proposals

All applicants are required to submit:

- i. A complete curriculum vitae for the project leader and all other team members (if applicable).
- ii. A letter of intent that includes the central questions of the project, the background and significance of the questions, and identification of which RFP question(s) (listed above) the project addresses, and a summary of the methodology and specific hypotheses in testable form. The letter should be between 1,000-1,500 words (references do not count toward this total).
- iii. The amount of funding requested (one sentence of rationale is fine for this). No budget narrative or justification is needed at this stage. The amount can be revised at the full proposal stage but should not normally exceed a 20% increase over that specified in the LOI.

2. Full Proposal Stage for Empirical Proposals

Those applicants who are invited to submit full proposals must include:

- i. A cover letter with the title, amount requested, duration of the project, and team members (if applicable).
- ii. A description of the work to be carried out, not to exceed 6,000 words (references do not count toward this total). The description should include the central questions of the project, the background and significance of the questions, identification of which of the RFP question(s) (listed above) the project addresses, a summary of the methodology and hypotheses, and a statement describing how the proposed project could be impactful beyond the psychology of religion.
- iii. Applicants commit in advance to best practices in open science, including (A) preregistration of all hypotheses and of analytic code for all confirmatory work; (B) sharing of all research materials; and (C) sharing of all research data. Proposals should meet the standards required to be awarded relevant badges as described at <https://osf.io/tvyxz/wiki/1.%20View%20the%20Badges/>. If applicants have legal or ethical concerns about sharing their research data, they may provide a statement of explanation.

- iv. A project abstract of up to 500 words that explains the project which would be published on the project website (and possibly in Templeton materials) and included in publicity materials if the proposal is funded.
- v. A timeline.
- vi. A detailed budget with accompanying narrative explaining line items. Overhead is limited to 15%, and funds cannot be used for major equipment purchases.
- vii. Approval of the department chair and the institution's signing officials.

NOTE:

For all awards, applicants must commit in advance to making all research outputs openly accessible, without embargo. Article processing charges for non-hybrid journals are an allowable expense, but need to be incurred within the overall 3-year project duration (by 12/31/22).

SUBMISSION:

The project website (www.gratitudetogod.com) will not be functional until January 1, 2020. All application materials, letters of intent and full proposals submitted after January 1, 2020 should be submitted to the project website. Letters of intent submitted before this date should be submitted to gratitude.to.god@biola.edu with the words "Letter of Intent" in the subject line. Questions about the application process can be asked on the website (after January 1, 2020) or via the email address (prior to January 1, 2020). Full proposals will be accepted only from applicants who have been invited to submit by the project directors, on the basis of the letter of intent phase.

Non-Empirical Proposals

1. Letter of Intent (LOI) Stage for Non-Empirical Proposals

All applicants are required to submit:

- i. A complete curriculum vitae for the project leader and all other team members (if applicable).
- ii. A letter of intent that includes the central questions of the project, the background and significance of the questions, identification of which of the RFP question(s) (listed above) the project addresses, and a summary of the main ideas and arguments. The letter should be between 1,000 – 1,500 words (references do not count toward this total).

- iii. The amount of funding requested (one sentence is fine for this). No budget narrative or justification is needed at this stage. The amount can be revised at the full proposal stage, but should not normally exceed a 20% increase over that specified in the LOI.

2. Full Proposal Stage for Non-Empirical Proposals

Those applicants who are invited to submit full proposals must include:

- i. A cover letter with the title, amount requested, duration of the project (not to exceed two years), and team members (if applicable).
- ii. A description of the work to be carried out, not to exceed 3,000 words (references do not count toward this total). The description should include the central questions of the project, the background and significance of the questions, identification of which of the RFP question(s) (listed above) the project addresses, and a summary of the main ideas and arguments.
- iii. A project abstract of up to 500 words which explains the project and its significance and which would be published on the project website and possibly in Templeton materials, and included in publicity materials if the proposal is funded.
- iv. A timeline.
- v. A budget with narrative justification.
- vi. Approval of the department chair and the institution's signing officials.

NOTE:

For all awards, applicants must commit in advance to making all research outputs openly accessible, without embargo. Article processing charges for non-hybrid journals are an allowable expense, but need to be incurred within the overall 3-year project duration (by 12/31/22).

SUBMISSION:

The project website (www.gratitudetogod.com) will not be functional until January 1, 2020. All application materials, letters of intent and full proposals submitted after January 1, 2020 should be submitted to the project website. Letters of intent submitted before this date should be submitted to gratitude.to.god@biola.edu with the words "Letter of Intent" in the subject line. Questions about the application process can be asked on the website (after January 1, 2020) or via the email address (prior to January 1, 2020). Full proposals will be accepted only from applicants who have been invited to submit by the project directors, on the basis of the letter of intent phase.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The judging panel will consist of philosophers, theologians, religious studies scholars, and psychologists who will review proposals in their area of scholarly expertise. Proposals will be evaluated on the following dimensions:

- *Depth and integration:* Proposed projects must address one or more of the identified domains of gratitude to God research as articulated in the RFP **or** must hold unusual potential for substantially deepening understanding within one particular domain. Proposals should explicitly identify which domain is being addressed. Depth is more important than breadth.
- *Conceptual grounding:*
 - Proposed empirical projects must test hypotheses that clearly emerge from current literatures and that address fundamental questions.
 - Proposed nonempirical projects must consolidate and develop existing theory and findings in such a way as to lead to new understanding of fundamental issues in GTG or potentially open new avenues for empirical work.
- *Scientific merit:* Proposed empirical projects must have realistic and rigorously developed methods, strong research design, and appropriate plans for analysis.

Full proposal selection criteria will include: Relevance of the project to the themes of the RFP as described above, coherence of the intended research plan, originality, grounding in the literature, innovation, and significance of the intended project, feasibility of the project in the specified timeframe, prior research accomplishments of the project leader and other team members, quality of the budget justification, and balance and complementarity among the various projects to be funded. While additional funding from other sources is not required, applicants are encouraged to seek such funding and to list the amount and sources of additional funds in their proposals. All applications must be submitted in English and all payments will be made in US dollars.

TIMELINE

Key Dates:

- Letters of intent are due by January 15, 2020
- Invitations to submit full proposals will be issued by March 1, 2020
- Full proposals are due no later than April 30, 2020
- Final award decisions will be issued by July 1, 2020
- Research to begin September 2020 - November 2020
- Research must be concluded by November 30, 2022

Other dates:

- Launch conference: December 2020
- Capstone conference: October 2022