

# **An Attitude of Gratitude**

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## **Scripture**

Colossians 2:6-7, 'So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness' (NIV).

## **Introduction**

Can you tell someone, 'I gratitude you?' Probably not. To say so, would also be an injustice to gratitude because gratitude is a feeling in your heart, it is an expression in words and it is paying it forward.

If you want to express gratitude, you have to engage at least 2 out of 3 of the following, one of which is God. That leaves you with the person who blessed you (optional because you may not know the person) or the person to who you are paying it forward (mandatory).

Practicing gratitude will help with depression, anxiety and general mental health. Gratitude will strengthen your relationships with God and with others. Gratitude will increase your well-being, guide you towards optimism, help you be happier and improve your self-control.

Gratitude is much more than saying 'thank you' because gratitude is a natural response to salvation and also acknowledges the goodness of God in our lives.

The Bible, theologians, and psychologists all agree that gratitude is good for you. We really need to practice it more!

## **A Feeling in Your Heart: Meaning**

We serve a good God and to see God's goodness in gratitude, you need a clear vision about matters, meaning who God is and what He has done for you. This in turn results in gratitude being a sincere and 'living' feeling of the heart. When we see how gracious God is to us, gratitude is our natural response because He saved us from a certain

death when He spoke life into death, i.e. we became born again. It is only through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that our hearts have a true 'living' feeling because sincerity, integrity, depth, genuine-ness and true-ness become God inspired. Gratitude is saying 'yes' to the life He has given you.

Jesus promised to give us life to the full (John 10:10). This life to the full is not defined by the what we have or don't have. We already have Jesus. When Jesus said about this life, 'abundantly' it means that this life to the full is superabundant, it is superior and it is blessed. It is way beyond what the world – i.e. biological cycle – can offer. It means that our lives are filled by the grace of Christ and that joy, peace and happiness is both a present and future reality.

Your life to the full will be defined by how you respond to trials, temptations, disasters and challenges. You can choose to respond from gratitude or not. But you should at least know this: one of the things that can sabotage and strangle this full life is an attitude of ungratefulness. You will have to ask yourself, 'which response is in my best benefit?'

Realistically though, Godly gratitude is infectious in that it will firstly change your heart and then the hearts around you because it has Godly meaning. It will help to form new and strengthen existing social relationship, help apologize and help others who are sitting with feelings of guilt to overcome.

But here is the 'thing:' you cannot be grateful to yourself. Therefore, we reach out in love from the heart and add meaning to lives.

Practical:

- Which people recently made sacrifices so that you can feel happy and thankful?
- How do you feel about them and what would you want to tell them?

### **An Expression**

Proper gratefulness is a Spirit filled attitude and emotion that leads to appropriate Spirit filled actions. We serve the Lord with gladness, i.e. optimism, delight, joy, laughter and

in good cheer. There is joy, laughter and celebration when we see God's goodness take root in the lives of others and they respond in gratefulness.

But you cannot express gratitude while grumbling. The Israelites, for example, complained about food and their hardships instead of expressing gratitude for their deliverance from Egyptian slavery and for the promised land ahead of them. Paul, on the other hand wrote (Philippians 2:14), 'Do everything without grumbling or arguing.' Paul understood gratitude and was able to express it.

It was said that something gratifies us by its presence and by the effort the giver put into choosing it. If we are willing to 'spiritualize' this statement, then we say to each other that we are gratified by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the love of the Father and effort of Christ on the cross.

Practical:

- Enter into prayer and share with God the Father what His love means to you, share with Jesus what His grace and work on the cross means to you and share with the Holy Spirit what His indwelling presence means to you.
- Share your appreciation (not merely a 'thank you') with someone who has recently blessed you.

### **Pay it Forward**

Do you think Godly gratitude is sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ?

According to the writer of Hebrews (13:15-16), gratitude is a fruit of our salvation. This means that if we are truly grateful for our salvation, we will also be willing to share the Good News. Without sharing the Good News, we are merely thankful. An attitude of gratitude doesn't happen by accident. Hebrews 13:15-16 is written in the present (imperative) tense. Nor is Paul saying, 'if you feel like the...'. Gratitude is expected and ongoing.

If you want to express gratitude, you have to engage at least 2 out of 3 of the following, one of which is God. That leaves you with the person who blessed you (optional because you may not know the person) or the person to who you are paying it forward (mandatory).

Trueblood wrote, 'Evangelism is not a professional job for a few trained men, but is instead the unrelenting responsibility of every person who belongs to the company of Jesus.' Anderson puts it into a language that I can understand, 'The simple definition of evangelism: Those who know, telling those who don't.'

Evangelism is an expression of gratitude.

Practical:

- If God has done anything good in your life this week, then share it with someone.
- Are you willing to tell 1 person about the Lord Jesus Christ?

## **Conclusion**

It is very obvious we live in a broken world. Broken lives, homes, relationships, political systems etc. And it is going to get worse as the return of Jesus comes closer. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 guides us to a great response to a broken world, 'give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'

Your life to the full is good and there is much in the fullness of your life that makes it worth living. First look up and then look around and you will see your fellow man through the eyes of Christ and practice gratitude because 'gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.' Melody Beattie.

I like gratitude and I pray that you do as well.

Amen.

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