



How Do I Make Gratitude My Constant Companion?

Colossians 3:2: (NASB) *Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.*



Human nature is a funny thing. We live in an age of instant gratification, an age of virtually no waiting for anything. We send a text, a tweet, a message or we post, and our expectation is for an almost instant answer or “follow” or response or reaction. What we want, we not only assume we can get - we assume we can get it immediately, in just the right color, brand and style. Getting and having have become so easy and expected that we have begun to overlook the value of patience, waiting and doing without. Human nature IS a funny thing. In this age of abundance, we are experiencing a very high rate of *dissatisfaction* and unhappiness. Why? One reason is that we have all but forgotten the preserving and healing power of gratitude. It is really simple - for happiness and contentment to flourish they require gratitude to be their constant companion.

When you were a kid, you were hopefully taught to say thank you. If I remember right, that was a lesson that needed constant reinforcement, as our natural childlike focus was always on ourselves. Growing up with gratitude is a continual learning experience. The more we focus on gratitude, the more Christlike we become with a positive effect on those around us.

Mother of all Virtues, *The Amazing Effects of Gratitude, BrainCraft*

Gratitude may be hard to define because it needs strong cultivation. Let’s look at a scriptural tutorial on the basics:

1. We have been redeemed by no efforts of our own, so let’s say thank you!

Hebrews 13:15-18: *A sacrifice of praise* - offering our praise is the *least* we can do. Sacrifice means offering. We have been redeemed through no effort of our own, so say “thank you” and mean it. Living in a state of gratitude is all about the quality of our sacrificial life.

2. Now that we have said it, let us prove our words by doing in our small way what was done for us. *Do not neglect doing good and sharing* - Saying we are grateful sets our expectation to live in a different way. This is transformative because it helps us to want to *live* more thankfully and not just say the words.

3. Gratitude is further expressed by our graciously working within God’s design for our growth. *Obey your leaders* - Be humble, working within how God set up the church structure. The Greek word for the church was *ecclesia* (*ekklēsia*) and in the early church the local group elected its own teachers. The congregation was to work with them for spiritual help.

4. Finally our gratitude is expressed by applying the privileges of grace we have been given to others. *Conduct ourselves honorably in all things* - We want to continually put forth that which we have been given. Gratitude changes how you think and what is important to you. Living our gratitude is all about the quality of our sacrificial life. It is not supposed to be easy, but it does not have to be miserable either. We can have both gratitude and joy even while experiencing great difficulty.

Health benefits, *Gratitude is Good for You, John Templeton Foundation*

Christian gratitude is the foundation for true godliness, which is the foundation for true contentment, which is the foundation for true happiness! **1 Timothy 6:6-8:** Putting things in a godly order is founded in gratitude and is the basic building block that will lead to happiness. This is a powerful way to build a happy life.

True contentment is a result of true perspective. You cannot fake contentment. True perspective can only be achieved through true gratitude and true gratitude can only be mastered by applying our trials to holiness.

It will come back to gratitude as the base and finding how to find gratitude even when things are not going well. There is always room for gratitude.

Gratitude Lesson: Gratitude is not natural in our imperfect selves. Knowing this will help us to make continual conscious efforts to keep gratitude in the front of our minds.



**Mastering gratitude sounds like a long journey.
Are there specific steps we should take to begin?**

Didn't someone once say that every journey begins with a single step? For us, this journey towards gratitude can begin in a lot of different ways, depending on one's life circumstances. We would like to suggest a four-step process to help us in making gratitude our constant companion.

Our four-step approach to adopting gratitude as your life-long companion will use the acronym "G.L.A.D." to make it easier to remember.

G=Generate - Generate an awareness of your surroundings.

"Generate" is putting out energy. So often we go through the activities of our lives by rote - we know the drill, we accept the drill and we comply with the drill. While that gets the job done, it does NOT lift us to higher levels.

 **Definition and brain scan, *The Amazing Effects of Gratitude, BrainCraft***

Be aware of your surroundings! God's very nature is to bless and provide: 2 Corinthians 9:10-15: This basic realization can help us be in awe. Because God's nature is to bless, those who serve Him will be fully equipped for service. ¹²*For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.* We praise Him for equipping us, which then spills over to those outside the faith. When gratitude is fully operational in someone's life, you can get a sense about that person as being content or genuinely happy or just different than everybody else. Gratitude produces energy. If we are seeing God as one who blesses, we can be sure we will be well-equipped for what we need to do. ¹³*Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,* ¹⁴*while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.* ¹⁵*Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*

Surpassing grace of God - our hope and desire should be to be a blessing to others as we have been blessed. Because He freely gave to us, we should freely give to others. This puts no reins on our giving. Something amazing happens when we bless others.

Generating awareness of all the little things is a great way to begin. If gratitude for simple and obvious things in life is good enough for our kids, then it should be good enough for us adults!

Generating awareness of your surroundings does not always lead to gratitude: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10: The Apostle Paul wanted this problem (likely his poor eyesight) to go away because he felt it was hindering his service to God. **Paul was looking for change, and for good reason! Here is where he was able to learn gratitude:** ⁹*And he has said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.* ¹⁰*Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.* What he saw as a problem ended up being a blessing for which he was grateful.

Gratitude Lesson: Gratitude CAN be found in our surroundings, but sometimes you need to look twice!

Sometimes we are surrounded by pretty lousy circumstances and as a result we do not expect to be seeing gratitude jump up in our face and say, "Look at me!" Such is life, but this does not mean that our gratitude search is over - on the contrary, it simply means that the gratitude we do find will be that much more valuable! Be G.L.A.D.! "G" was for generating awareness of our surroundings.

When it comes to life the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude. — Gilbert K. Chesterton

Gratitude is a choice that is easy and natural to bypass. To do so is to miss out on some of the greatest life-changing experiences.

L = Learn - Learn to find and focus on things that naturally bring gratitude, no matter how basic!



Getting “back to basics” is always reliable when starting a new habit and attracting a gratitude mindset. It requires new ways to see the old, the common and the unremarkable. A lot of our gratitude can be found in the unremarkable if we look long enough.

 **Social benefits, *Gratitude is Good for You, John Templeton Foundation***

To rejoice in the Lord is to live our Christian gratitude daily. This does not just happen, it is a learned behavior.

Two simple steps to attaining a rejoicing Christian attitude of gratitude: Philippians 4:4-8: If we are rejoicing in the Lord, we will put forth the best we have to offer, even if it is a little “rough around the edges.” *Be anxious for nothing* - how do you get to this point? *By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* God’s blessings come in His will and His way in His time for His purposes, but He is still “built” to bless. Do not expect to be blessed in the way you dictate to God. “God, I am in a tough spot. I need you to send me an extra \$10,000.” It has to be about His way, and His blessing is better than the \$10,000. His blessings end up being eternal. We must focus on Christlike behavior and prayerful, thankful living and allow the door of God’s peace to open. *Which surpasses all comprehension* - Talk about further cause for gratitude! Once we find this state of mind we need to learn how to keep this state of mind. The “L” in G.L.A.D. is for learning. The best learning comes from doing! For gratitude to dwell with us, we must be willing to dwell where it will flourish - in the presence of godly thoughts and behaviors.


 **Great fullness, *Gratitude Inspirational Video with Eckhart Tolle and Tony Robbins***

When we talk about being grateful, let’s talk about being in great “fullness” of life. “Great fullness” can always be accessible but it is rarely sought for. It grows and creates the energy needed to change you.

Finding it requires learning to dive deeply into the waters of praise and reverence: Psalms 95:1-6: Do we carry with us that attitude of shouting praise joyfully? Do we sing for joy? Why would we do those things? *The depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains* - these opposites both are God’s. *The sea is His...and His hands formed the dry land* - these opposites both are God’s.

Gratitude Lesson: Learning to see the reasons that surround you to be grateful will lead you to seeing those reasons and everything else in life through the lens of “great fullness.”

We have to clearly see and understand that which we would seriously apply. To truly apply anything to the point of making it a habit requires a firm and focused decision to absolutely make it our own. Permanently attaching ourselves to a gratitude based way of living is no exception and making such a decision will make us G.L.A.D.!

 **Benefits of noticing, *The Amazing Effects of Gratitude, BrainCraft***


Gratitude is thankfulness in an active way. It takes the core of thankfulness and expands it, lets it take root and stay in our lives. If you live with gratitude your life can change.

A=Abide – Abide in the present, for that is where gratitude flourishes.

Gratitude requires that we leave the past behind us, because the past steals away the value of the present. It is the same with the future - too much attention to the future dilutes the power of the present.

The past steals the value of the present and therefore steals our gratitude opportunities: Exodus 16:1-4: Because they were hungry, they longed for the “good ol’ days” of slavery and misery! Did they think that God would miraculously free and protect them only to let them starve? Did they show gratitude? Did they show faith?

Israel’s past was tyranny and then God’s care became obvious through the coming of Moses and the miracles they witnessed, but hardship did not cease - Israel’s choice was to dwell with their previous cries of desperation or allow them to become murmurings of thankfulness.

 **Tony Robbins, *Show Gratitude Always/Be Thankful, InspireDiscipline***

If you want to reset your thinking, be grateful. Gratitude flourishes in the present, even amidst trial and tribulation.



The future can easily dilute the power of the present, as we so long for trials to be ended we ignore the overruling power of our experiences: 1 Peter 4:12-13: *Do not be surprised at the fiery trials - keep on rejoicing - the life-altering experiences will test you to the "nth" degree, but somehow you have to keep rejoicing and find gratitude in the fact that this is sharing in the sufferings of Christ. Even if I do not feel good, I can still be grateful. Gratitude is not dependent on how we feel but is a function of how we choose to see.*

Gratitude in the present employs the value and power of right now to lift us higher right now. Our past can steal the present. When we are in the middle of a trial, we focus on, "I wish it was over. I wish it was over. I wish I did not have to deal with this. I wish things were different. I wish, I wish, I wish..." Longing for the future dilutes the present power of working through the trial. Psalms 92:1-4

Gratitude Lesson: Abiding in the present with unmistakable gratitude will change our outlook, our introspection and the value of our very presence to others!

When we change the way we look from the inside out, we can begin to act in a different way. That has an influence on those around us.

It would be so much easier if there was a "gratitude focus chip" that could be planted in our heads but that would also take away some of gratitude's most powerful influence. Think about it, by working at finding and focusing on gratitude we put out personal effort and that personal effort brings the satisfaction of a gratitude victory! This makes us G.L.A.D.!

D=Demonstrate - Demonstrate your gratitude in a palatable outward way.

There should be no mistaking that you are grateful, that you are in the present and living with that blessed "great fullness" of life and that it has transformed you! Demonstrating our gratitude comes in many ways. First, it shines through when we spread the gospel.

All of the things in the following verse are most appropriately delivered with great gratitude: Isaiah 61:1-2: *Good news to the afflicted - Christ died for all - we want to share that with everyone to let them know the beauty of God's plan. Bringing good news is an action. Our gratitude drives us to bind up the brokenhearted. We then proclaim - say it, talk it, show what it does. We want to comfort all who mourn. What joy we feel to share the resurrection of all when the reunion of all people will be real. If you can plant gratitude into your motivation, you come out so much stronger.*

 **Lyania Vanzant, Show Gratitude Always/Be Thankful, Inspire Discipline**

Demonstrating gratitude also comes through in our daily thoughts and actions:

Psalms 100:1-5: This is a vibrant set of Scriptures! Plant gratitude in your heart so you can take action and demonstrate gratitude - *shout, serve, enter, give thanks.*

Finally, demonstrating gratitude comes most powerfully when we are in severe circumstances: Acts 16:22-25: Preaching the good news of the Gospel put them in this terrible physical condition. They were captive, beaten and bleeding. What do you do in the middle of all of this? *Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.* How do you do this? You find the things that naturally bring you gratitude. They saw privilege in their suffering. Eventually the story ends with the jailer converting to Christianity. This truly shows us the power of the present when handled with gratitude.

Here is our inspiration for today's acronym, G.L.A.D.: Matthew 5:11-12

Gratitude Lesson: Our actual outward demonstration of gratitude solidifies our inward sense of gratitude and gives those around us the opportunity to draw from our gratitude's strength.

Gratitude is a life-changing experience. Let your light shine with gratitude!

*So, how do I make gratitude my constant companion?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*