

How Do I Make Gratitude My Constant Companion?

<u>Colossians 3:2</u>: (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

• Back in ancient Rome the philosopher Cicero described gratitude as the mother of all virtues. This concept of being thankful has been stressed in religion and philosophy for a long time. Back in 1820, Scottish philosopher Thomas Brown described gratitude as "that delightful emotion of love to him

who has conferred a kindness on us." But scientifically, gratitude doesn't qualify as a basic emotion like joy, sadness, or anger. There is no universal facial expression for it. As an emotion, gratitude is a little hard to define.

Gratitude may be hard to define because it needs strong cultivation.

Let's look at a scriptural tutorial on the basics:







Scriptural Tutorial

1. We have been redeemed by no efforts of our own, so let's say, "Thank you!"

Hebrews 13:15-18: ¹⁵ Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

2. Now that we have said it, let us prove our words by doing in our small way what was done for us.

¹⁶And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

3. Gratitude is further expressed by our graciously

working within God's design for our growth.

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

4. Finally, our gratitude is expressed by applying the privileges

of grace we have been given to others.

¹⁸ Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.

Basic scriptural tutorial on the why's and how's of gratitude.

1. *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. 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. *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. 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.



(1) Health benefits, Gratitude is Good for You, John Templeton Foundation

Do you want to be happier, healthier, and an allaround better person? There's a way that is free, easy and totally up to you. It's gratitude. Gratitude is much more than saying, "Thanks." It's a way of seeing the world. And with practice we can train ourselves to feel gratitude more frequently and powerfully. The scientific evidence is clear: practicing gratitude is good for you and your loved ones. Grateful people get sick less, have healthier hearts, exercise more, get better sleep.



Christian gratitude is the foundation for true godliness, which is the foundation for true contentment, which is the foundation for true happiness!

<u>1 Timothy 6:6-8</u>: (NASB) ⁶But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

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.



"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.

 (\neg, \neg) Definition and brain scan, The Amazing Effects of Gratitude, BrainCraft

• Today the Oxford Dictionary defines gratitude as "the quality or condition of being thankful; the appreciation of an inclination to return kindness." And we've only really started to study gratitude scientifically in the past 30 years. In a 2015 study, participants were asked to imagine how they would feel if a complete stranger saved their life. I mean, how would you feel? The participants had to rate how grateful they were to strangers who provided them with gifts of food and clothing all while they had their brain scanned in an fMRI machine. Researchers found their ratings of gratitude positively correlated with activity in brain areas associated with fairness and value judgments. It makes sense because gratitude is often thought of as a moral emotion.

Give yourself a gift of five minutes of contemplation in awe of everything you see around you. Go outside and turn your attention to the many miracles around you. This five-minutea-day regimen of appreciation and gratitude will help you to focus your life in awe. — Wayne Dyer

Be aware of your surroundings! God's very nature is to bless and provide: <u>2 Corinthians 9:10-15</u>: (NASB) ¹⁰Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; ¹¹you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.



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.

¹²For 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.

¹³Because 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, ¹⁴while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. ¹⁵Thanks 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.

There is so much to stop, consider and be grateful for. It is great to "know the drill," but it is greater to live with gratitude!

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The Thankfulness Song, Veggie Tales

I thank God for this day For the sun in the sky For my mom and my dad For my piece of apple pie For our home on the ground For His love that's all around That's why I say thanks every day

Because a thankful heart Is a happy heart I'm glad for what I have That's an easy way to start For the love that He shares Because He listens to my prayers That's why I say thanks every day

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:

<u>2 Corinthians 12:7-10</u>: (NASB) ⁷Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me - to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.

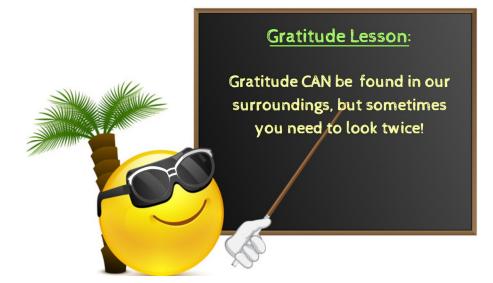


The Apostle Paul wanted this problem (likely his poor eyesight) to go away because he felt it was hindering his service to God.

Paul was looking for change, and for good reason! Here is where he was able to learn gratitude:

⁹And 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. ¹⁰Therefore 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.





I am not what you would call an "animal person," but my wife is. We have two small dogs. I confess, one dog was a lot for me; two dogs were monumental. But I am happy with them. My daughter, Emily, and her husband, Don, bought a house in July and a big storm came through the area about three weeks ago and blew a tree right on top of

their house. It smashed the roof in the middle of the night. We got the call and Emily and Don came to our house with their cat and dog. They have been living with us since. I have to generate an awareness of my surroundings. Here is my initial reaction: Animals are everywhere! Run!





But I have learned (and it has not been easy) to find the goodness when their dog plays with and bats around our little dog. Our other dog wants to eat their cat. I will continue this story as we go through this podcast, but it is an example of when sometimes you look around and think, wait a minute! This was not the script! This is not what I was expecting in my life.

I start with an awareness of my surroundings. What if those surroundings really aren't very good?

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.



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.

(I)) Social benefits, Gratitude is Good for You, John Templeton Foundation

• Grateful people are more optimistic, overcome adversity better and find greater joy in life. Grateful people are more generous with their time and money, are more forgiving, and build better relationships with loved ones. Just like strengthening muscles, you can build gratitude simply by exercising it. So, how do you develop an attitude of gratitude? Take the first step now. Write a letter to someone you know and tell them why you are grateful for them. Or think about the blessings you take for granted. Or start a gratitude journal and get serious about becoming more grateful.

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:

<u>Philippians 4:4-8</u>: (NASB) ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

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.

⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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!

⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

For gratitude to dwell with us, we must be willing to dwell where it will flourish - in the presence of godly thoughts and behaviors.

(I))Great fullness, Gratitude Inspirational Video with Eckhart Tolle and Tony Robbins

> • Gratefulness is the experience of the great fullness of life. And when you're in the great fullness of life, the bowl of life is so full, it's almost overflowing but not quite. Not yet dripping over the edges. And you're one with God, one with the universe and there is no other when you stand in and live in the great fullness of life. And that great fullness is so powerful that it overflows into the fountain of life, and that puts you in this other branch of gratitude he calls thanksgiving. And when you're in the branch of gratitude called thanksgiving, the bowl of life is overflowing. And you're so grateful that there's an "other" because all you want to do is give and share and serve and contribute and that's so fulfilling. It puts you back in the great fullness of life. So, you can live in that cycle. You can actually live in that cycle no matter what your financial circumstance is.

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:

<u>Psalms 95:1-6</u>: (NASB) ¹O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. ²Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.



I work alone and to keep my mind centered, I often sing hymns. My three favorites are "Great is Thy Faithfulness," "Amazing Grace," and "How Great Thou Art." This helps me to keep my focus away from worldly thoughts and things that waste time.



These hymns naturally bring gratitude and help us lift higher by choice.

Do we carry with us that attitude of shouting praise joyfully? Do we sing for joy? Why would we do those things? Read on!

³For the LORD is a great God and a great King above all gods, ⁴In whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also. ⁵The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land. ⁶Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

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.

One of the methods of learning to find what naturally brings gratitude is to look at the individual pieces. That is what Jonathan does with the hymns. Each of those hymns takes a slightly different look at the same God.

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.



Back to the story of the barnyard in my house. Emily and Don's puppy is a really happy, joyful dog but is clumsy with an exuberance that is hard to tamp

down. My nature says, "Get that dog away from the other dogs." But I nicknamed her "Prancer" and appreciate that when she runs through the house she catches air when she leaps, flying around having a great time. They have a tiny little cat that can climb around, through or over anything. I nicknamed her "Ninja." This is finding the good in something that would normally aggravate me. The gratitude comes from the fact that my daughter and son-in-law are okay.





The tree fell right over their guest room and bedroom. In the middle of the night they heard a huge bang and the ceiling buckled and the rafters shattered. There is a lot of water damage on that side of the house from the storm. But they are okay, and the dog and cat are okay and we are finding a way through it. Even though it doesn't suit my personal nature, it is a cause for deep and powerful gratitude.



So far, our journey toward gratitude is all about recognition. What about applying what we observe?

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.!

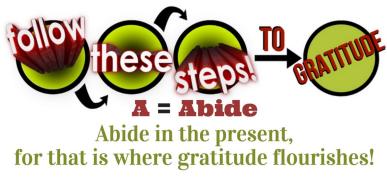
(I)) Benefits of noticing, The Amazing Effects of Gratitude, BrainCraft

• There are even benefits in just noticing how grateful you are. Another study asked people to write down three things that went well that day and why for one week. At the end of the week people were slightly happier than at the beginning, and over time their happiness scores kept improving. After one month, they were five percent happier and after six months they were nine percent happier. Just from one week of writing a journal! A similar study with participants with heart disease found that keeping a gratitude journal increased their heart health and quality of sleep, perhaps because it reduces stress. "Counting your blessings" quite literally makes people happier and healthier.



Rachel contributes: When the leper saw that he was healed... he fell down on his face at [Jesus'] feet, giving him thanks. Luke 17:15,16. Gratitude, I find, is meaningful thankfulness. This is a wonderful subject. To moan and groan is not good for us. We should be grateful for what we have and not what we think we want. We are impatient.

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.





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.

Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings. — William Arthur Ward

The past steals the value of the present and therefore steals our gratitude opportunities:

Exodus 16:1-4: (NASB) ¹...and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin...after their departure from the land of Egypt. ²The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³The sons of Israel said to them, Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

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?

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.

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.

 (η) Tony Robbins, Show Gratitude Always/Be Thankful, InspireDiscipline

• I think gratitude is the most spiritual, most important emotion of all. It's the antidote to the two things that stop us, which are fear and anger. Fear is why we don't take action and anger is why we get stuck. And you can't be grateful and angry simultaneously. You can't be fearful and be grateful simultaneously. It's really the reset button, and it's the cleanser of the soul. What it does when you're grateful - it's no longer about me, right? It's really about giving thanks, and when it's about giving thanks "you" disappear. When you disappear, I believe you reconnect to the Divine.

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:

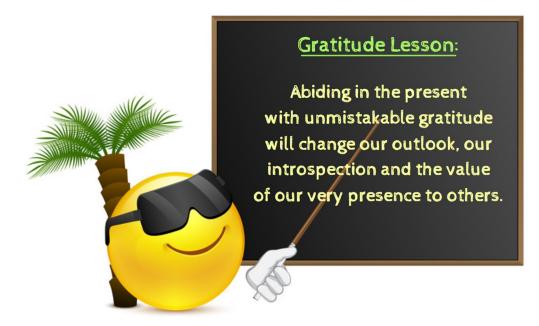
<u>1 Peter 4:12-13</u>: (NASB) ¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of his glory you may rejoice with exultation.

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.

<u>Psalms 92:1-4</u>: (NASB) ¹It is good to give thanks to the LORD and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; ²To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning and Your faithfulness by night, ³With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp, with resounding music upon the lyre. ⁴For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.



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.

So, gratitude transforms the very way we live right now! How do we make sure that gratitude stays?

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.!

Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude. Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness. Thankfulness may consist merely of words. Gratitude is shown in acts.

— Henri Frederic Amiel







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.

We are very grateful for the ability to talk about God on this podcast weekly for almost 20 years!

All of the things in the following verse are most appropriately delivered with great gratitude:

<u>Isaiah 61:1-2</u>: (NASB) ¹The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; ²to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

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.

(I)) Lyania Vanzant, Show Gratitude Always/Be Thankful, InspireDiscipline

• Understand that life is going to stop in different places and we've got to get grateful for every stop along the way. It'll stop in grief. It'll stop in sorrow. It'll stop in sadness. It'll stop in excitement, enthusiasm, it'll stop along the way. And each stop is teaching us something we need to know for getting to the ultimate end of the journey. So, be grateful about each stop! Some stops have better food than the others. Some stops have greater shopping than the others. Some stops have more learning than the others, but we gotta get grateful for every stop along the way and pay attention to how we respond to the stop.



Each stop is an opportunity for gratitude even if it is not a very abundant stop.

A personal friend of ours just passed away from pancreatic cancer. He was a quiet icon in my life. As a young Christian, he and his wife Linda noticed me as a kid and they took me under their wing and taught me about Christianity, responsibility and sacrifice by the way they lived. Dan was not a man of a lot



of words. One time we had a young people's meeting at a rented firehouse. Dan, his wife and three kids were there and had a long drive home ahead of them. I looked around and thought we were done cleaning up, because the place looked pretty good. He was still sweeping the floor. "It's clean," I said. Without stopping his sweeping, he smiled and said, "We always want to leave the place better than when we got here." I knew him well enough to know there would be no arguing with him, so I grabbed a broom and started to sweep as well. That to me epitomized the greatness of his personal character. His character was about "leave the place better than when you got there." He did that in every way, in every opportunity he had. His quiet



example was life-changing for me and I will always have a deep gratitude to him and Linda for having an incredible influence on me, by the Lord's grace.

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

<u>Psalms 100:1-5</u>: (NASB) ¹Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. ²Serve the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing. ³Know that the LORD Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. ⁴Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. ⁵For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations.

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:

<u>Acts 16:22-25</u>: (NASB) ²²The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. ²³When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; ²⁴ and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

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.:

<u>Matthew 5:11-12</u>: (NASB) ¹¹Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



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...!



And now <u>even more</u> to think about... only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!

The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings. – *Eric Hoffer*

Joy is the simplest form of gratitude. - Karl Barth

I am happy because I'm grateful. I choose to be grateful. That gratitude allows me to be happy. — Will Arnett

Let's gain a biblical perspective on the whole idea of Thanksgiving.

Old Testament:

Thanksgiving: Strongs #8426 properly, an extension of the hand, i.e. (by implication) avowal, or (usually) adoration; specifically, a choir of worshippers: – confession, (sacrifice of) praise, thanks (-giving, offering)

This word seems to imply a strong action and not merely a strong feeling.

<u>Psalms 26:7</u>: (KJV) That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving <8426>, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

<u>Psalms 50:14</u>: (KJV) Offer unto God thanksgiving <8426>; and pay thy vows unto the Most High:

Thanks: Strongs #3034 literally, to use (i.e. hold out) the hand; physically, to throw (a stone, an arrow) at or away; especially to revere or worship (with extended hands); intensively, to bemoan (by wringing the hands)

Again, action is paramount.



<u>Psalms 28:7</u>: (KJV) The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore, my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise <3034> him.

<u>Psalms 30:4</u>: (KJV) Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks <3034> at the remembrance of his holiness.

Some New Testament words and examples:

Thanksgiving: Strongs #2169 gratitude; actively, grateful language (to God, as an act of worship)

<u>Philippians 4:6</u>: (KJV) Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving <2169> let your requests be made known unto God.

Thanks: Strongs #3670 to assent, i.e. covenant, acknowledge

<u>Hebrews 13:15</u>: (KJV) By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks <3670> to his name.

The thankfulness and praise in the following Psalm bounces between the smallest human things and the largest heavenly things.

The Psalm begins by setting the context of praise and thanksgiving:

<u>Psalm 147:1-20</u>: (NKJV) ¹Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.

The comparison:

²The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. ³He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. ⁴He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.

The resulting praise:

⁵Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite

The first half of the comparison:

⁶The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground

The resulting praise:

⁷Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; Sing praises on the harp to our God,

The second half of the comparison:

⁸who covers the heavens with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow on the mountains.

The comparison:

⁹He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry. ¹⁰He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. ¹¹The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.

The resulting praise:

¹²Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!

The comparison:

¹³For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. ¹⁴He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest wheat. ¹⁵He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. ¹⁶He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes; ¹⁷He casts out His hail like morsels;

The resulting praise:



Who can stand before His cold? ¹⁸He sends out His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow. ¹⁹He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. ²⁰He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise the LORD!