

PR WISE CHOICES



THE INSIDE RUNNING

An attitude of gratitude is a decision. It doesn't seem to be part of our national psyche. Maybe being appreciative of someone is acknowledging that they have done well or blessed us in some way.

The closest thing to a national outpouring of appreciation, respect and gratitude comes along on ANZAC Day. Poppy day overcomes the tall poppy syndrome. I have taken my children to the dawn parade at the Auckland Cenotaph. Over the years the crowd has grown larger. I go because I appreciate the sacrifice made by young men years ago – whether they wanted to or not. I am grateful that I am not going over the top of a trench as a whistle blows at 5.30am. I want my children to learn about history when we live in an abnormal period of prolonged peace.

As Christians, we have even more to be thankful for. Yet we can also let seeds of discontent grow. This often manifests as criticism instead of appreciation for those who lead and serve in the church.

Let's be different – and be known by our fruits.

John

John Subritzky

GRATITUDE | PRACTISE BEING THANKFUL

The problem is often not our situation, but our attitude.

1. Ephesians 5:17–21 - Marks of being filled with the Spirit:
 - Praise and worship - speaking and singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs
 - Giving thanks to God always
 - Submitting to one another
2. 1 Thessalonians 5:16–22 - Rejoice, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks.
 - Greek: "giving thanks" (eucharisto) related to "grace" (charis). The grace of God is expressed in thankfulness.
3. 2 Timothy 3:1–5 - Progressive degeneration of human character - includes unthankfulness.
4. Thankfulness must be cultivated - it is a decision.

Adapted from Derek Prince Ministries, 1986



FACTOID

In an experimental comparison, those who kept gratitude journals on a weekly basis exercised more regularly, reported fewer physical symptoms, felt better about their lives as a whole, and were more optimistic about the upcoming week compared to those who recorded hassles or neutral life events. (Emmons & McCullough, 2003)

BE GRATEFUL . . .

. . . for Taking a Hit?

Key Bible Verse: Whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus . . . giving thanks . . . to God (*Colossians 3:17*). *Bonus Reading: Psalm 66:8–12*

Rooming with John Listemann at officers' school in Quantico, Virginia, I'd learned he was a Christian and a nice guy. Assigned to the same battalion at Camp Pendleton, I'd observed an aggressive, technically proficient leader.

On a December morning in 1965 in Vietnam, John and I went to war. His war lasted one day. Moving on patrol down a jungle trail, we rounded a corner and ran into an ambush. The first round, a 50-caliber round, hit his kneecap with a loud crack that threw him up in the air. As he dropped, the second round hit him below the heart and exited his side. I was also wounded, but nowhere nearly as bad. I saw John about 30 meters

away on his back, his leg blown off. I crawled up to him to see if I could do anything. Before I could ask, he turned to me and said, "How are you doing, Chucker? Are you okay?" "I'm okay," I assured him.

"Are my men safe?" he asked. "John, your people are okay," I replied. As I looked on dumbfounded, he turned his head skyward and said, "Thank you, Lord, thank you. Thank you for caring for my people. Thank you for caring for me."

(We both survived, were evacuated, and I later became a Christian.)

—General Charles Krulak, U.S. Marine Corps (retired)

My Response: Have I expressed unexpected gratitude? What was its effect?

Thought to Apply: A really thankful heart will extract motive for gratitude from everything, making the most even of scanty blessings.

—SOURCE UNKNOWN

GRATITUDE: A KEY TO WHOLENESS

Have you noticed what God has done for you lately?



Gratitude is not just a nice addition to a generally good character. It is indispensable to Christian character.

"One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well". (Luke 17:11–19)

Three things about the grateful leper make him so exemplary that Luke uses his story as a prime illustration of gratitude.

1. AN EYE FOR GIFTS

First, the grateful leper recognised that he had received a gift. Returning to Jesus and casting himself before Him, the one grateful leper poured out heartfelt thanks. Notice that Jesus didn't tell any of them to come back and thank Him. Gratitude can never be solicited. It can only be freely given. If this story is indicative of human nature, we probably miss about nine out of ten opportunities to be grateful.

2. GREAT THANKS FOR GREAT GIFTS

Second, the grateful leper's thanks corresponded in magnitude with the greatness of the gift. His life was radically improved, so he responded with radical gratitude at the feet of Jesus, soiling the very flesh that had been made clean and "praising God in a loud voice".

3. GRATITUDE: GOOD FOR THE HEART

Third, the grateful leper experienced not only outward cleansing but also inward healing. Ten were cleansed, but to only one did Jesus say, "...your faith has made you well".

Weren't all ten made well? No. The nine were no longer leprous, but they were still sick at heart.

HOW TO CULTIVATE GRATITUDE

1. Practise thanking God for every circumstance. What do you have to thank God for?
2. Be grateful even for little things. "...Giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph 5:20)
3. The less you concentrate on future needs, the more you will enjoy present privileges. "...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances". (Phil 4:11)
4. Humble yourself and show your appreciation. The one leper gave thanks in a way that would embarrass most people.

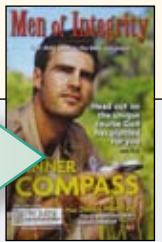
The practice of gratitude might change your whole outlook on life. Begin in prayer, then continue with comments, phone calls and notes.

Adapted from an article by Matthew A. Thomas

"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others." Cicero

"The best kind of giving is thanksgiving." Chesterton

Men of Integrity Devotional



Topics May / June

- Worship: on whose terms?
- Resolving marriage discord
- Transformation is an inside job
- Confident doubt-handling
- The Good News under wraps
- Hold back or open up? – accountability / transparency
- How men measure themselves
- Divine table talk

If you don't get this devotional, call Promise Keepers for a sample.

NEXT MONTH: MISSION



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| Dunedin | 25-26 July |
| Christchurch | 15-16 August |
| Tauranga | 29-30 August |
| Wellington | 12-13 September |
| Auckland | 10-11 October |