



Gratitude: The Attitude That Changes Everything

Sunday 21st September is World Gratitude Day.

Gratitude is not just polite manners; it's powerful medicine. It is like oxygen for the soul: we don't thrive without it. We are, as it were, hard-wired to say 'thank you' not just to people, but to someone beyond ourselves.

And here's the awkward question for the atheist: if you don't believe in God, who do you thank when you see a glorious sunset, hear a newborn baby's cry, or survive a near miss on the motorway? Nature isn't listening. Evolution isn't either. But heaven is.

Gratitude is riches; ingratitude is poverty. Gratitude is contagious so let's spread it!

Gratitude is good for us

Gratitude is a gift that blesses both the giver and the receiver. It's a mood booster, a perspective shifter and a spiritual disinfectant.

- Anger struggles to take root in a thankful heart. Try being furious while singing, 'Thank you, Lord!' – it doesn't work. Gratitude doesn't change the situation, but it changes us in the situation. Very few disputes begin with, 'I just want to say how grateful I am . . .'
- Pride resists gratitude because it refuses to admit dependence. But gratitude is humility in action, saying, 'I need others and I need God.'
- The Bible says, 'Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall' (Proverbs 16:18 NIV). Gratitude is the parent of all virtues because it recognises that we are not self-made.
- Envy wilts when gratitude flourishes. Gratitude says, 'I am content with what I have.' Adam and Eve had paradise but discontentment made them reach for the one fruit they didn't have. Gratitude would have saved them and us a lot of trouble.

Psychologists now confirm what Scripture has always taught: grateful people are happier, healthier and more hopeful. People today talk about mindfulness. I say, try thankfulness – it works!

Gratitude is good for others

Gratitude is love in its simplest form. It costs nothing, yet it can make someone's day.

A word of thanks turns a tedious job into a worthwhile one. Gratitude oils the gears of marriage, family and friendship. Withholding gratitude dries up relationships. No wonder so many managers and leaders lose people not because of pay, but because of their inability to say, 'Thank you.'

A thankless heart divides. A grateful heart unites. Gratitude doesn't just make *you* better, it makes *us* better.

Gratitude is good before God

For Christians, gratitude is not optional but essential. We serve a God who made us, loves us, redeemed us in Christ and fills us with his Holy Spirit. We are people of thanksgiving!

- 'Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise' (Psalm 100:4 NIV).
- 'Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!' (2 Corinthians 9:15 NIV).
- 'Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances' (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV).
- 'By prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God' (Philippians 4:6 NIV).

And just peek at Revelation – heaven resounds with thankfulness! We'd better start rehearsing now. Gratitude isn't just for today; it's training for eternity.

Of course, gratitude does not mean pretending everything is fine. The world is broken, but when we give thanks to God, we celebrate the light in the midst of the darkness. Gratitude doesn't deny pain, it defies it.

Practising gratitude

Gratitude needs nurturing. Our culture is self-obsessed and over-busy. People are quick to demand their rights but slow to express thanks. Yet gratitude has a lot going for it. It frees us from toxic emotions, strengthens relationships and aligns us with God's will.

Gratitude is not a day in the diary but a lifestyle for eternity.

A heart response

Lord, thank you for the gift of life, for the people who bless us and above all for Jesus, the greatest gift of all. Forgive us for the times we complain more than we praise, grumble more than we thank. Teach us the rhythm of rejoicing, the discipline of thanksgiving and the joy of contentment. May gratitude flow from our lips, our hearts and our lives, so that those around us may glimpse your goodness through us. Amen.

When we thank God, we stop staring at what we lack and start celebrating what we already have. Gratitude is not simply an attitude – it is the attitude that changes everything.

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