

good manners

An Attitude of Gratitude

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“The ship of my life may or may not be sailing on calm and amiable seas. The challenging days of my existence may or may not be bright and promising. Stormy or sunny days, glorious or lonely nights, I maintain an attitude of gratitude. If I insist on being pessimistic, there is always tomorrow. Today I am blessed.” —Maya Angelou

An attitude of gratitude. Seems pretty simple, doesn't it? An attitude of gratitude. Pretty easy to be thankful when things are going our way, right? Well... maybe we even sometimes forget to stop for a moment and contemplate the blessings of each day. Maybe we are so busy sailing on smooth waters that we take for granted the roof over our head and the food on the table.



How about when things aren't so good? Life can be hard. Challenging circumstances hit unexpectedly. Now here's where the attitude part comes in. We've all run into those people. You know, the ones who no matter what's going on, always look at the bright side. The one's who see the pumpkin pie as half left instead of half gone. Have you ever noticed some of the happiest people are those with nothing? Actually, that statement is false. They really have everything. They may not have material possessions, but they have something far better. An attitude of gratitude. They have learned how to take what they have and make the best of it. No complaining. No excuses. No blaming. They are thankful for all things, big and small.

Take time each day to consider the good things in your life. Make a list. Be specific. You will be astonished how many blessings are all around you. Supportive wife. Trustworthy friend. Hardworking son. Delicious meal. Car that goes from point A to point B. A smile from a stranger. Beautiful sunrise. A happy dog who greets you each day. You get the point. Look at all things, big and small. Begin a family tradition. At the end of each week gather everyone together, light candles, and allow each person to share one thing they are thankful for that happened that week.

After contemplating your own personal areas of gratitude, begin expressing gratitude to others. When's the last time you said thank you to a co-worker for helping with that project? How often do you express appreciation to your friends for just being there? Do you take time to thank your kids for taking out the trash or getting the mail? Or, how about your spouse? Do you say thank you for the small tasks that are done each day? It's so simple to express gratitude...especially for the good things. It's just a matter of simply saying thank you. A sincere thank you.

I love the following story that appeared in a newspaper years ago. This story demonstrates so beautifully how a young child, who probably had little, showed gratitude for a simple act of kindness.

"The District of Columbia police auctioned off about 100 unclaimed bicycles Friday. 'One dollar,' said an 11-year-old boy as the bidding opened on the first bike. The bidding, however, went much higher. 'One dollar,' the boy repeated hopefully each time another bike came up.

The auctioneer, who had been auctioning stolen or lost bikes for 43 years, noticed that the boy's hopes seemed to soar higher whenever a racer-type bicycle was put up.

Then there was just one racer left. The bidding went to eight dollars. 'Sold to that boy over there for nine dollars!' said the auctioneer. He took eight dollars from his own pocket and asked the boy for his dollar. The youngster turned it over in pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters - took his bike, and started to leave. But he went only a few feet. Carefully parking his new possession, he went back, gratefully threw his arms around the auctioneer's neck, and cried."

Now that's an attitude of gratitude. That young boy expressed his gratitude without saying a word. No words could have expressed his thankfulness better. He could have grabbed the bike, ridden off, and never looked back. But, he didn't. His heart was overwhelmed with a gratitude that could not be repressed. Just imagine the auctioneer's shock. At the most, he probably expected a simple thanks. Isn't that what most of us hope for? Just a simple thanks.

Why then does it seem so hard for so many to express gratitude? It's actually an act of humility to say thank you. To acknowledge simple acts of kindness requires a deliberate awareness of what others do to make our lives happier, easier, or special. Take time each day to notice what others

do for you. Even the smallest act should be recognized. Show appreciation by saying thank you, sending a card, returning a favor, or giving a hug. The time it takes to say thank you is a fraction of a second. The effects of that thank you last a lifetime. November is a very natural time to express gratitude. Begin your Thanksgiving meal this year by sharing blessings with family and friends. But, don't stop after the meal is finished, the dishes cleared, and the day comes to an end. Incorporate an attitude of gratitude into each and every day.

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