



guidelines for living

a 5 minute message

November 24, 2017

BEYOND THANK YOU

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Colossians 3:15

There is a difference between expressing thanks for something and being genuinely grateful for it. For example let's suppose you are a craftsman and you contract to do a certain amount of work for so much money, and you fulfill your obligation. The work is done within the prescribed period of time and you do it well. When you fulfill your contract you are paid. Common courtesy demands that you respond, saying, "Thank you!" as you pick up the check in the brown manila envelope and take your tools home.

Suppose, however, when you open the envelope to your great surprise you discover that more than twice what you expected is in the envelope. Being an honest person you go back and say, "I think a mistake was made. There is twice the amount that you owe me in the envelope," and you are told, "Yes, I know that, but I appreciate what you have done and I wanted you to have a bonus." Now the emotion that you feel is gratitude, one that goes far beyond a social, perfunctory thank you.

In many countries of the world when you do something for someone or give them something, don't expect "thanks," because that's not part of the culture. Why? Because they are ungrateful for what you do? No, because they feel that saying, "Thank you! is too easy, merely words. Gratitude, they believe, has to be expressed in more tangible ways—doing something in return.

But what if someone did something for you so great that you could never repay the individual? How would you respond? Obviously for the rest of your life, you would be indebted to that person, right?

Sincere, genuine gratitude isn't merely a matter of empty words but of heart-felt expression of appreciation. Gratitude is never an undefined "good feeling" about something or someone. It reflects a specific deed or action of another, and a person to whom you owe something, whether or not you can ever repay that gift.



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In a very real sense that is what God's grace is about. Grace—God's great favor and kindness—is what brought God's Son to Earth, providing for our salvation. Grace and God's faithfulness in extending His mercy to us is what sustains us and what keeps us.

May I challenge you to take a sheet of paper and draw a line down the center of it. On one side write, "What I have that I am thankful for," and on the other side write, "What I do not have that I am equally thankful for." On the one side you may write things such as family—a wife and children, your home, spiritual blessings, and, perhaps, material possessions. Would you also write down some of the difficulties and challenges of life, reflecting on what God has also taught you through them?

But then what about the other side? What do you write there? Would you put riches and fame, understanding that in the simplicity of your life there is peace? Would you also acknowledge that it is in what you lack that you have discovered the sufficiency of God, who has brought friends and experiences into your life that you would never have known had you not faced difficulties and trouble?

Had God's children not been hungry in the wilderness, they would never have known manna. Had Daniel not been in the lion's den, he would never have known God's sustaining power. Had Peter never been in prison, he would never have known deliverance by an angel.

Gratitude—going beyond simply saying, "Thanks!"—is a habit that is often developed through hardship, even suffering and difficulty. Sincere thanksgiving embraces what you are thankful for and to whom you are grateful. Indeed.

Resource reading: Psalm 103