



Living Well

Gratitude



Ed Edwards
President

Donna Edwards
Executive Director

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Check out these websites for more information:

For more detailed information about the ministry - www.livingwelloc.org
Photos and writings about the ministry - www.livingwelloc.blogspot.com
Encouragement/culture on marriage - www.livingwellinmarriage.blogspot.com
Wisdom Community School - www.wisdomcommunityschool.com

A Grateful Heart

Gratitude is the inward feeling of kindness received. Thankfulness is the natural impulse to express that feeling. Thanksgiving is the following of that impulse. Henry Van Dyke

We are not born with the attribute of gratitude. We are selfish and prideful, thinking that we deserve whatever we get.

We have to learn to be grateful. At some point, either our parents or our circumstances **taught us to be thankful for what we have.** To express that thankfulness to others and to God for what they do.

At some level, if I am really going to have a **truly grateful heart**, I have to recognize that I don't deserve what I get or what I have in life, even the things for which I worked.

My gratitude has to start with thanking God for His grace. I realize that **life itself is a gift** that only He can give.



Whatever intelligence, family, circumstances, physical ability, opportunities, or strengths that I have are from Him - **a gift from His heart of love for me.** I didn't determine in the womb what my attributes would be. **All that is good is from Him.**

Every good and perfect gift is from above. (James 1:17a)

To have a grateful heart, I start looking for all of the good that I have in my life. A good way to develop gratitude is to start making a list of what you have that is good.

Sometimes people don't see anything good in their lives. Start by answering these questions: Do you have a **roof over your head?** [not the house of your dreams, just a roof] Do you have **clothes to wear?** [not all the clothes that you want, but clothes of some kind] Do you have **food to eat?** [not all the food you want, and not eating out wherever you want, but food] Is there **anyone that loves you?** [not a perfect marriage/parents/children, but someone who loves you]

Thanksgiving

He who can give thanks for little will always find he has enough.

Having a grateful heart is not about how much we have; it's about **being thankful for whatever we have.**

If we aren't thankful for what we have, it means that we are not satisfied, we aren't content. **We want more; we expect, and even demand, more.**

The American holiday of Thanksgiving was first started by the Pilgrims. "They made seven times more graves than huts. **No Americans have been more impoverished than these who, nevertheless, set aside a day of thanksgiving.**" H. U. Westermayer

True thanksgiving is an expression of thankfulness - thankfulness to God and to others, who have contributed

to our lives. **I verbally or in writing express my gratitude and thanks to someone.**

If we don't thank God for the good in our lives, then we think we deserve more. If we don't thank our parents for the good that they did for us, then we begrudge all the things we think they did wrong. If we don't thank others for acts of kindness or thoughtfulness, then we think they owe it to us.

On the reverse side:

Thankfulness and Appreciation

The bonus

PO Box 720828
Oklahoma City OK 73172
www.livingwellokc.org
Phone: 405.792.2586
E-mail: info@livingwellokc.org

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

www.livingwellokc.org
www.livingwellokc.blogspot.com
www.livingwellinmarriage.blogspot.com

Practice

- ◆ Begin each day with thanking God!
- ◆ Write down one specific thing each day that you are grateful for.
- ◆ Express appreciation once a day to your spouse and children for something he/she did or a positive trait he/she exhibited.

Thankfulness and appreciation

There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread.
Mother Teresa

Being willing to express appreciation to another person could be one of the greatest assets to a relationship. The relationship could be a momentary one - such as the clerk in a store - or a long-term one, your marriage or other family members.

Two complaints that we often hear in marriage counseling are:

1. **From the husband:** she

doesn't appreciate how hard I work to provide for the family.

2. **From the wife:** he doesn't appreciate how much I do at home or with the kids.

A very simple solution to this distress is to thank each other! Yes, you thank your spouse for working hard to support the family (the husband or the wife). You thank your spouse for what they do at home or with the kids (the husband or the wife).

A thank you goes a long way towards building congeniality, civility, and intimacy in a marriage.

When speaking of what the life of a Christian should exhibit, Paul said, *Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.* (Ephesians 5:4)

You may think, "well she is just doing her job, what she is supposed to be doing. I shouldn't have to thank her for that," or "he could be doing more, he should be helping more, why would I thank him for that?"

You thank a person for what he did to show that you know that he did it and

that you are glad that he did it - no matter how small or how large the action.

Suppose you are at a meeting and drop your pen on the floor, a stranger sitting nearby picks it up and hands it to you. What do you do? **You thank him,** even though the gesture was small and you don't know the person.

How much more important to thank a spouse for any positive behavior, regardless of the size or responsibility!

The bonus

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. I Thessalonians 5:18

This verse troubles some of us, because we don't want to give thanks when we experience adversity or suffering. But God says it is His will for me. Whatever God wants for me is the very best. When He says to give thanks, giving thanks will be the very best for my life. **The bonus is that it benefits me to give thanks, not just the person that I thank.**

God doesn't need my thanks; He doesn't need anything from me. But **He wants me to thank Him because He knows that it is good for me.**

The world of science and research confirms what God says is true. Research from 2008 shows that **a person with a grateful heart sleeps better!** *When falling asleep, grateful people are less likely to think negative and worrying thoughts, and more likely to think positive thoughts. It appears that negative pre-sleep cognitions impair sleep, and gratitude reduces the likelihood of such thoughts, protecting sleep quality.*

Grateful people are happier too! *In a 10-week study comparing participants who kept a daily log of things they felt grateful for and those who didn't, members of the gratitude group demonstrated a 25 percent lift in happiness.*

Expressing gratefulness during personal adversity like loss or chronic illness, as hard as that might be, can help you adjust, move on, and perhaps begin anew.

Expectations can sabotage gratitude. When you expect certain things from people or from life, those expectations are not always met, making it harder to be grateful. **Giving up expectations opens the door to gratitude!**