

The Magic of Gratitude

The context upon which we view our world truly sets the stage for what we see as our reality. In this year's annual message we will examine how being grateful each and every day provides us with a meaningful personal foundation.

Interestingly grace and gratitude come from the same Latin root – gratus and from gratitude comes grace. So let's start with gratitude. Two foremost experts in the area of gratitude are Robert Emmons of the University of California and Michael McCullough of the University of Miami. They found that ...

'A life oriented around gratefulness is the panacea for insatiable yearnings and life's ills. At the cornerstone of gratitude is the notion of undeserved merit. The grateful person recognizes that he or she did nothing to deserve the gift or benefit; it was freely bestowed.'

The first magic of gratitude is that it serves as an antidote to negative thoughts and emotions; it protects us from cynicism, entitlement, anger and resignation. As Dewitt Jones says, *'when we focus on what is working well, it gives us the energy to fix what isn't.'* An illustration of the kind of impact that having daily gratitude has is from a study by researchers from the University of Minnesota and the University of Florida, where participants wrote down a list of positive events at the close of each day, along with why the events made them happy. The results of this study showed a decrease of their self-reported stress levels and gave the participants a greater sense of calm at night.

The second magic of gratitude is that it moves us to a state of grace. The noun grace provides the following dictionary definitions: elegance, politeness, generosity of spirit, pleasing quality and gift of God to humankind. Oh, to experience and view each day in such a manner.

The final element of the magic of gratitude is the cascading impact on those we are grateful for and sharing this with them. We all know the impact when a family member openly shares their love for us and how this raises our spirits and sense of well-being.

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The same applies in sharing our gratitude with everyone we come in contact with: being a friend, lending a helping hand, sharing kind words, expressing what they mean to us, saying thank you, etc. Sharing our gratitude to others provides feedback on their value and meaning in our lives. This is an invaluable gift to share with others.

Living a life of grace then is the opposite of viewing life as a struggle. As in anything of value and meaning in life, grace requires practice and commitment. I have followed the teaching of Shawn Achor in this regard by documenting 3 gratitudes at the end of each day and identifying the 'why' I see them as such. This is an uplifting way to finish each day. A second practice is to show your gratefulness with those who touch you in a positive manner. Don't lose the opportunity to lift another person's day. As Ken Blanchard said – *'good thoughts not delivered, mean squat!'*

So, practice being grateful for your own blessings and for those that make your life so meaningful. We do have so much to be grateful for: living in one of the best countries in the world, having the opportunities that we have and the ability to live with our daily choices.

May 2016 bring you good health and a life of well-being.

Well Being Defined:

1. You subtly feel that everything is okay
2. You accept that you are okay
3. There's a freshness to new experiences
4. You enjoy the flavour of your experiences
5. You spend each day emphasizing the positive possibilities and countering the negative implications

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