

Transformed Through Gratitude

Have you ever gone out of your way for someone, worked hard on a project, a gift, the house, and the response you received was not what you had anticipated?

When I was a young teen I didn't have much money but wanted to bless a pastor at our church. So for a few months I shot different people sharing briefly why they were so thankful for this pastor, how he had effectively changed and transformed their life. When it was all done I compiled it onto a VHS tape, which was a square dvd that you had to rewind. A dvd is a digital movie like Netflix, only a physical copy. I wrapped it and gave it to the pastor. Later when I asked about it, he said he loved it so much.

Three years later we were helping relocate the church offices; his office was packed full of so much stuff. As we sifted through drawers and closets, I came across a wrapped up vhs gift to the pastor. It was my gift, never opened, never watched. Months of work to rest at the bottom of a messy closet.

Who here feels what I felt. Unappreciated, upset, hurt, my time was wasted.

Some of you are already getting worked up, having some of those memories flood your minds again. Today I want to flip the thinking on this.

Luke 17:11-19

¹¹“As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, He reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. ¹²As He entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, ¹³crying out, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ ¹⁴He looked at them and said, ‘Go show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy....

Explain::

¹⁵One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, ‘Praise God!’ ¹⁶He fell to the ground at Jesus’ feet, thanking Him for what He had done. This man was a Samaritan....

Explain::

¹⁷Jesus asked, ‘Didn’t I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’ ¹⁹And Jesus said to the man, ‘Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you.’”

Today I want to talk about the attitude of gratitude.

Gratitude is a lost art.

This goes beyond just saying thank you for stuff, because half the time we say it without ever thinking of the gratitude behind it. We have Arya say thank, and yet she doesn't fully understand the idea of being thankful. Gratitude is so much more than just a little saying.

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others.”
~ Cicero

Every virtue stems from gratitude, and understanding gratitude will lead you to all of the other virtues. But it goes beyond that.

Spiritual disciplines are activities, and life disciplines we can do to develop our walk deeper in Christ. And when looking at the deep list of these disciplines, filled with Greek and Latin words, and deep ways of growing in your walk, one that rates extremely high up on the list is the simple yet difficult practice of gratitude.

Because—Really grasping gratitude, and living life through its lens, will have a major impact on your life.

As we continue in this series of making great families, I believe if you take this topic to heart and really apply yourself to mastering an attitude for gratitude, this will transform not only your families, but your personal life and walk with God.

1. Gratitude transforms our perspective

John 6:5-11

⁵“Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for Him. Turning to Philip, He asked, ‘Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?’ ⁶He was testing Philip, for He already knew what He was going to do. ⁷Philip replied, ‘Even if we worked for months, we wouldn’t have enough money to feed them!’ ⁸Then Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up. ⁹‘There’s a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?’ ¹⁰‘Tell everyone to sit down,’ Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks

to God, and distributed them to the people. Afterward He did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted.”

Jesus was approached with a problem. And like most people with a problem, no one came forth with a solution, just the issue. Jesus challenged them, “You feed them.” Suddenly Andrew comes up with a boy with just a little food.

If I had been there I might have gone.. “seriously that is not enough.. why bother trying?” Yet Jesus’ response is completely different from what our answer and thoughts might have been. He gave thanks and gave them out.

Everything screams this isn’t enough... and yet—there was gratitude for what was had. Even though by human standards it wasn’t enough. Did you ever think, “Why would Andrew even offer that?” Maybe he was showing some gratitude knowing Jesus could do something with it.

It is very easy to walk around defeated and beaten up when we see how much less we have than others. When we view our walks compared with other people’s Christianity. Or how God shows up in someone’s life, and yet He ain’t showing up in yours.

I would hear stories of students going on missions trips that someone miraculously paid for their trip in one check, and they didn’t have to work like I was having to. “God, why can’t you show up for me like that?”

Or, in our families, we can compare our spouse’s attitudes, their romanticness, or lack there of, or how our children aren’t getting the grades we felt they should, or don’t listen as well as your friends.

It’s very easy to fall into this thought process of seeing the negative... The lack we have... The slights we have received. And once we buy into that thought process, it is a slippery slope that changes our entire perspective.

But what is amazing is when we begin to be grateful, and live in this gratitude that our Perspective begins to transform.

So how do we change our perspective?

- **Be grateful for the small things**
- **Cut out the negativity**

These two kind of go hand in hand. This isn’t to say: if you see something wrong, ignore it. But often times we hang on to negativity much longer than we

should, and we allow it to poison our thoughts and attitude. What if you cut out some of the negativity you are feeling and experiencing? What you are drawn to easily. And choose to show gratitude to even the smallest, positive things you see or have experienced in your life, or your families.

Something happens when:

Where we start saying, “God, I thank You for Your love for me... I thank You that You died for me. I am not worthy of this love and yet it’s there...”

Something begins to change.

When we start saying, “Ya know my kid might not be a straight A student, but I am thankful they are doing the best they can; yeah, they may talk back occasionally, but look at all of these times they are respectful and loving. I am blessed.

Something begins to change.

When we say, “Yah, my husband or wife might not take me to 5 star restaurants as much as I want to, but they take care of the kids, they love me unconditionally, they are a Godly man or woman that puts God first, and me and the kids second.”

Something begins to change.

When we start living with a grateful attitude of Andrew that says, “I don’t have much here, but I am beyond blessed with what I have. And, if anyone can do something with this, God, You can.”

Something begins to change.

Living in an attitude or lifestyle of gratitude shifts our perspective from what I don’t have to how much I really do. And how valued those are.

2. Gratitude awakens happiness

I am gonna make some enemies with this one.

I grew up about 45 mins outside of Foxboro stadium. I grew up in a diehard football family. My home team has always been and will always be the New England patriots. And there is no bigger, more widely known patriot player than the great Tom Brady. Now those who like sports may have different things to

say about the team or Brady himself. But at camp we were talking about an interview he had done and its one of those that you have to see to believe. This interview was coming off of the heels of winning his 3rd superbowl ring. He is wealthy, top athlete, multiple mvps, beautiful wife and family and look at what he had to say.

::Tom Brady Video Clip::

Now that will preach on so many levels.. Especially when he says God, there has gotta be more than this. Almost a prayer if it was said another way.

Deut 8:10-14

¹⁰“When you have eaten your fill, be sure to praise the LORD your God for the good land He has given you. ¹¹But that is the time to be careful! Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the LORD your God and disobey His commands, regulations, and decrees that I am giving you today. ¹²For when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes to live in, ¹³and when your flocks and herds have become very large and your silver and gold have multiplied along with everything else, be careful! ¹⁴Do not become proud at that time and forget the LORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt.”

Do not forget the One who provided it all, the One who provided the happiness. The Israelites received all of God’s blessing but then would forget about God, and then when they were no longer content, when they found that things didn’t bring them happiness they ran back to God.

Like Tom and many others, we are surrounded by so much, it creates this desire of always wanting more. The more we get the more we want because many feel that is where true happiness lies.

But if that’s the case why are so many down, depressed and constantly searching. If the Iphone 8 brought you all the happiness why would there be a need for the Iphone 9 or 10?

We lean more towards depression, anxiety, stress, and more because we are no longer grateful, and when we live in ingratitude we live in want.

Now I love Christmas, but isn’t it kind of funny that Thanksgiving is slowly getting replaced by the desire for me. Black Friday is now stretched all the way over to mid Thanksgiving. A day about being thankful is being replaced by a day

that is about fighting to get what you want and don't really need and beating others to get it.

I think that is symptomatic of our culture and our values.

How do we awaken Happiness with Gratitude?

- Acknowledge the blessings you are living in

But what happens when we replace our desire for so much more, and comparing what we have to what others have... We start to realize how much we do have.

Your car that isn't as nice and might be a decade old is better than having to walk like millions have to.

Your faucet that gives you issues, provides you greater access to cleaner water than many receive

- Remember to be thankful to God

This is not to knock.. but when we start being grateful.. really grateful to God for what we have.. When we are grateful for what our family, kids, husband, wife has done, instead of what they are lacking, we start to realize the blessings that are right in front of us!

Maybe some of us are finding that happiness is eluding us because our focus is on what we don't have instead of what we have.

Maybe we feel so far from God and as a result, from the happiness that He provides, because too many times I've treated Him like a personal Genie just asking for what He can give me..

But when I worship Him, when I glorify Him, when I thank Him, I realize how much He loves me more than I deserve, how He has provided for me, how He is with me..

Pursue a life of Gratitude and start to awaken that happiness that has been alluding you,

3. Gratitude is contagious

How does this affect my family? How does me having gratitude, change their attitudes, their focus? I work on me, but what about them? I still need to be around them and live with them.

Have you ever been around someone that loved something so much, it pulled you in. Someone that was so passionate about a TV show you had to check it out. Someone that was passionate about a restaurant and so you had to try their chicken.

When people are really living with an attitude of gratitude it has the same effect.

When you start adopting this stance with your kids. And you start being grateful about what they are doing right, encouraging them with the good you see, and how proud you are.

When you start pointing out constantly the positives in your spouse, and what they do that is just stellar.

With your friends, at your job, it creates this effect of.. what do they have.. I want that..

Don't believe me?

Acts 16:25-30

²⁵“Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening....

After being arrested, beaten, for doing right.. You don't get this attitude by faking it. They were praising and worshiping God, an attitude of gratitude.

²⁶Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! ²⁷The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. ²⁸But Paul shouted to him, ‘Stop! Don’t kill yourself! We are all here!’ ²⁹The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’”

**- A lifestyle of gratitude is contagious:
When you are grateful in all circumstances**

These men were in prison for doing right. If anyone had a right to complain, be upset, feel slighted, it was Paul and Silas, and yet what are they doing, in the midst of their trouble, while in prison? They are praising and worshipping God. You don't get a bigger example of gratitude than honoring God in the midst of the issues.

What a response from this man. He had been watching what they were doing, their attitudes, their respect, their witness, their gratitude. And then was like, "I want what you have!"

When you start thanking God for how much bigger He is than your troubles. For the blessing and provisions you currently have .. It changes your focus.

When you start being thankful and showing gratitude for the big things, and the small things. Your family members, the successes.. when you start being grateful for even some of the hardships, and growth points..

It changes you to the point where it becomes obvious to others. And they want the happiness, the joy, the attitude you have.

The question is: "What would happen if we started adopting this attitude of gratitude—in our lives, in our families, in our church?"

Imagine how that would change us, and others..

Are you living in gratitude?

COMMUNION

Luke 22:17-20, "Then He took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then He said, 'Take this and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come.' ¹⁹He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then He broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, 'This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' ²⁰After supper He took another cup of wine and said, 'This cup is the new covenant between God and His people—an agreement confirmed with My blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.'"