



# Your Invitation to Transformation

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Several years ago as I wrote [Choosing Gratitude](#), I spent many months looking carefully at what the Scripture has to say about the grace of gratitude. I meditated on what it means to be a grateful person and why it matters. This wasn't merely an academic exercise for me. It was so much more. The Lord took me on a personal journey—a journey I'm still very much on. He showed me how vital it is to train my heart to respond to all of life with a thankful spirit, even in situations and seasons that I find unpleasant or difficult.

The trek wasn't always an easy one—along the way He shed light on things in my heart that were not pretty. His Spirit brought conviction as my responses under pressure were held up to the standard of how I've counseled and challenged others (not to speak of the standard of His Word!).

But it was a good and needed process in my life, and the changes God brought (and is still bringing!) in my perspective and my character, along with the freedom that comes from saying, "Yes, Lord!" have more than compensated for the hard places.

## Making Gratitude A Way of Life

Prior to this journey, if someone had asked me, "Are you a grateful person?" I would have scored myself "above average" on that front. And I think those who know me would generally agree.

Thanks, in large measure, to parents who insisted that the next order of business after receiving a gift was to write a thank-you note, the importance of expressing gratitude was impressed on me from my earliest years. It's just part of good manners, right? The polite thing to do. Though I didn't always appreciate it at the time, I'm glad for that training today.

Over the years, I have sought to make gratitude a way of life. And I have experienced many of the blessings that accompany the "attitude of gratitude."

However, I've seen that if I am not ceaselessly vigilant about rejecting ingratitude and choosing gratitude, I all-too-easily get sucked into the undertow of life in a fallen world. I start focusing on what I don't have that I want or what I don't want that I have. My life starts to feel hard, burdensome, wearisome, and overwhelming.

At times, I have allowed myself to get pulled back into that dangerous current. I have seen how a lack of gratitude manifests itself in fretting, fuming, complaining, and resenting—whether within the confines of my own thoughts or, worse yet, through venting those thoughts to others.

But in those moments when I have found myself gasping for air, feeling that I was going under, I've discovered that *gratitude truly is my life preserver*. Even in the most turbulent waters, choosing gratitude rescues me from myself and my runaway emotions. It buoys me on the grace of God and keeps me from drowning in what otherwise would be my natural bent toward negativity, doubts, discouragement, and anxiety.

Over time, choosing gratitude means choosing joy. But that choice doesn't come without effort and intentionality. It's a choice that requires constantly renewing my *mind* with the truth of God's Word, setting my *heart* to savor God and His gifts, and disciplining my *tongue* to speak words that reflect His goodness and grace—until a grateful spirit becomes my reflexive response to all of life.

## A Powerful Secret

As you go throughout your daily life, I want to encourage you to choose gratitude, first and foremost because it is the only fitting response to a good and gracious God who has delivered us from our guilt. But if from nothing more than self-interest, choosing gratitude makes sense.

To a significant degree, your emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual well-being, as well as the health and stability of your relationships with others, will be determined by your gratitude quotient.

Cultivating a thankful heart is a safeguard against becoming bitter, prickly, and sour. A grateful child of God can't help but be a joyful, peaceful, radiant person.

If you find discouragement, depression, fear, or anxiety among your frequent companions, you may tend to attribute them to difficult or painful circumstances that surround you. But I want to suggest that as challenging as your situation or your season of life may be, your frame of mind likely has less to do with your distressing circumstances than with your need to develop a thankful heart.

How else can you explain those believers around the world—spanning from ancient times to the present day—who scrape by with less than most of us can fathom and whose days are perpetually beset with trials and tragedy, but who nonetheless manifest irrepressible peace and joy?

I was struck by a comment made by theologian and author Dr. Wayne Grudem in a blog interview. When asked by C. J. Mahaney about areas where he was vulnerable to discouragement in ministry, Dr. Grudem responded, “Honestly, I don’t often become discouraged. I continue to see evidence of God’s work in my life and the lives of those around me, and I am simply overwhelmed with thankfulness to Him.”

This is a timely word. For in the midst of widespread home foreclosures, skyrocketing unemployment, and plummeting stock prices here in America, along with unending news of global unrest, conflict, starvation, and disease, it has become increasingly natural for people to become discouraged, even to feel, at times, as though God has abandoned this world. For those who love and follow Christ, the rising tide of secularism and moral relativism provides all the more temptation to become despondent.

I am convinced that we must cultivate the grace and spiritual discipline of gratitude if we are to avoid losing our footing in these days. An important key to not becoming overwhelmed by what is going on around us is looking for evidences of God’s hand at work in the midst of the turmoil and being “simply overwhelmed with thankfulness to Him.”

It is striking to me how many times in Scripture—particularly in the book of Psalms—we are exhorted to give thanks, to praise the Lord, to sing to the Lord. Even more so to think how many of those passages were penned by someone in dire straits.

There is a reason for this constant biblical call to be thankful people. It points to a powerful secret, but one that so few recognize, that it is overlooked in most anthologies I have seen on Christian virtues.

You see, gratitude is not something that can be dismissed as a “second tier grace”—it is foundational. And it is transformational. I truly believe a grateful spirit, rooted in the soil of God’s goodness and grace, will radically impact how you view and respond to *everything* in your life.

So I invite you to join me in choosing and pursuing this simple but profound trait called gratitude. I pray it will be for you a journey to greater freedom and joy—a journey closer to the heart of God.

Adapted from [Choosing Gratitude](#) © 2009 Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth. Published by Moody Publishers.