



Gratitude: The Attitude That Transforms

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In her autobiography, Frances Jane Crosby wrote, "It seemed intended by the blessed Providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank Him for the dispensation."

The doctor who destroyed her sight in her infancy never forgave himself, but there was no room in Fanny's heart for resentment. "If I could meet him now," she wrote, "I would say 'Thank you, thank you'—over and over again—for making me blind."

Crosby accepted her blindness as a gift from God with a special purpose. "I could not have written thousands of hymns," she said, "if I had been hindered by the distractions of seeing all the interesting and beautiful objects that would have been presented to my notice."

For over a century, the church has reaped the benefits of one woman's thankful heart as we sing "To God Be the Glory," "Blessed Assurance," "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," and countless other songs that Fanny Crosby wrote in her lifetime.

The Choice That Lies Before Us

Fanny Crosby's example reminds me of a truth I have learned over the years. In every circumstance that comes my way, I can choose to respond in one of two ways: I can worship, or I can whine! You have the same choice before you. When we choose the pathway of giving thanks, especially in the midst of difficult circumstances, a radiance issues forth from our lives to bless the Lord and others. On the other hand, when we give in to whining, murmuring, and

complaining, we end up on a destructive slide that leads to bitterness and broken relationships.

Oh, what a price we pay for our personal and collective ingratitude! After more than two decades of ministry to hurting people, I have come to believe that a failure to give thanks is at the heart of much, if not most, of the gloom, despair, and despondency that are so pervasive even among believers today. I have also come to believe that many of the sins devastating our society can be traced to the root of unthankfulness.

Sadly, our modern culture is experiencing an epidemic of ingratitude. Like a poisonous vapor, this subtle sin is polluting our lives, our homes, our churches, and our society. But that means a grateful woman will be like fresh air in a world contaminated by bitterness and discontentment.

It all comes down to the choice we make about our attitude.

Gratitude Versus Ingratitude

Consider with me some of the contrasts between a grateful heart and an ungrateful heart.

- Grateful people are humble; ungrateful people are proud.
- A thankful person is conscious of God and others; an unthankful person is self-conscious and self-centered.
- A grateful heart is a full heart; an ungrateful heart is an empty one.
- People with thankful hearts are easily contented; unthankful people are subject to bitterness and discontent.
- A grateful heart will be revealed and expressed by thankful words; an ungrateful heart will manifest it- self in murmuring and complaining.
- Thankful people are refreshing, life-giving springs; unthankful people pull others down with them into the stagnant pools of their selfish, demanding ways.

With contrasts like these, is not the better attitude plainly evident? We are called to be thankful people, to recognize and express appreciation for the benefits we have received from God and others.

Paying Off Your Thankfulness Debt

From time to time, I find it helpful to take stock of my “gratitude accounts.” I ask myself, is there any circumstance in my life for which I have never given thanks? Is there some blessing I have received for which I have not expressed gratitude? Often I find that I owe a debt of thanks to at least one person.

Now, how about you? Is there an individual—a family member, a friend, an acquaintance, an associate, a teacher, a pastor—who has in some way touched or benefited your life and yet to whom you have not yet paid your debt by saying, “Thank you”?

Embrace the attitude of gratitude. Make a lifetime habit of giving thanks. You’ll discover that the world looks different when you learn to see it through the eyes of thankfulness.

Making It Personal

What outstanding debts do you have in your “gratitude accounts”? At the first opportunity, offer warm thanks to those in your life who have been a blessing to you. Some time ago, I sent a questionnaire to women from across the United States in relation to the matter of a daily devotional life. Here are some of the obstacles these women encountered in trying to develop a consistent devotional life. The barriers they identified are ones that most of us have experienced at one time or another in our walk with the Lord. For example, you may have found yourself thinking (or saying) . . .