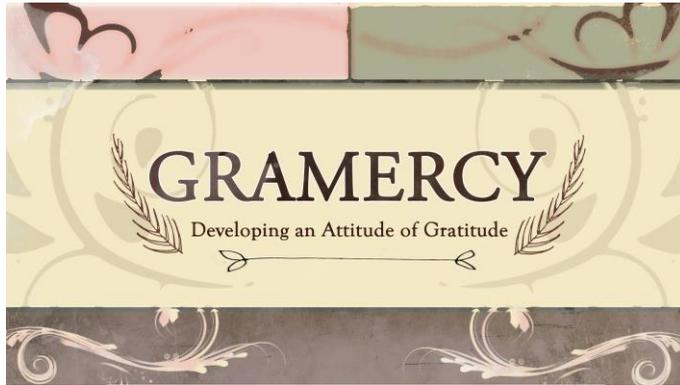


Gramercy:

“Thankful to...”

Part 1



*“Be thankful in all circumstances,
for this is God’s will for you who belong*

...to...

Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18

A. Gramercy: Gratitude or surprise...

An expression of great thanks!

“Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”

1. Be thankful – A command!
2. In all circumstances – A chance to exercise the command!
3. God’s will – God’s plan is to be thankful!
4. For you who belong – A perfect plan for life and health!

B. The command so easily forgotten...

“Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.” Psalm 106:1

1. Giving thanks is not an act of our feelings but rather an act of our will!

2. Giving thanks is a command no matter what we feel!
3. Giving thanks keeps us remembering Who is in control of all things.
4. Giving thanks keeps our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits trusting!

C. God’s will to keep us surrendered...

“And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.” Colossians 3:15

1. God’s will for us is to give thanks!
2. God’s will for us is to learn to be content.
3. God’s will for us is to remain positive as we focus on the promises of God.
4. God’s will for us is to trust Him with all the details of our lives...and give Him thanks!

D. Giving thanks is the antidote for...

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.” Philippians 4:6

1. Worry and anxiety
2. Bitterness and unforgiveness
3. Jealousy and envy
4. Doubt and depression

E. Best plan to keep us focused...

“I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.” Psalm 116:17

1. I belong to God!
2. God has my best in His heart!
3. God will only work for my good!
4. God loves me more than I could ever begin to understand!

Your assignment for the first week is:

1) A powerful way scientists have found can increase your well-being is simply making **daily gratitude lists**. Write down 5 things you feel grateful for every day. This simple (and short!) act can significantly increase your happiness.

Benefits of Gratitude:- Emma Seppala (Psychology Today)

HAPPINESS

1 - Increases your Happiness. Counting your blessings leads to heightened well-being, especially positive mood (and who couldn’t use more of that?)

2 - Brings you Happiness that Lasts. In fact, an attitude of gratitude can not only help you **increase** positive emotion, but also **sustain** it. Heck, ice cream can make us happy in the moment but gratitude leads to long-term happiness

3 – Protects you from Stress & Negativity. Gratitude is associated with decreased anxiety and depression and increased social support

4 - Reduces Your Materialism. One reason gratitude boosts our well-being is that it reduces materialism which is a good thing because materialism is linked to less happiness

RELATIONSHIPS

5 - Makes you more socially intelligent.

6 - Leads to better relationships. Gratitude strengthens your relationships and helps you create and maintain good relationships and feel more connected

7 – Makes you Sexier. Gratitude improves romantic relationships by making people feel more satisfied in their relationships and connected to their partner.

HEALTH

8 – It Even Improves Sleep Quality & Duration- in part because you have more grateful/happy thoughts before you go to sleep. Count blessings, not sheep?

9 - Strengthens Your Willpower to Make Better Decisions Gratitude make you stronger and helps you achieve your goals and make smarter long term decisions

10 - Benefits you at all ages from adolescence to adulthood

IMPACT

11 – Makes you a better person. It makes us better, more altruistic, moral and ethical people and we become more helpful and kind to others.

12 – Makes others better people too: those we thank are more likely to become more ethical people too.

13 – Makes the World a Better Place. When you express your gratitude to someone, that person will go on to be kinder to others

Don't feel grateful? No worries! It's accessible to anyone. Whether we're sick or well, old or young, employed or unemployed, if our heart is beating, air is flowing in our lungs, and we have had a meal today, we have something to be grateful for. "Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a Rather Large Amount of Gratitude" (A.A. Milne, *Winnie the Pooh*).

If you want to get healthier, give thanks.

Share this:

By Elizabeth Heubeck WebMD

What would happen if we extended the tradition of giving thanks, typically celebrated just once a year during the holiday season, throughout the entire year? Such gratitude would be rewarded with better health, say researchers.

No pill? No strict diet or exercise regimen? Can just a positive emotion such as gratitude guarantee better health? It may be a dramatic departure from what we've been taught about how to get healthier, but the connection between gratitude and health actually goes back a long way.

"Thousands of years of literature talk about the benefits of cultivating gratefulness as a virtue," says University of California Davis psychology professor Robert Emmons. Throughout history, philosophers and religious leaders have extolled gratitude as a virtue integral to health and well-being. Now, through a recent movement called positive psychology, mental health professionals are taking a close look at how virtues such as gratitude can benefit our health. And they're reaping some promising results.

Benefits of Gratitude

Grateful people -- those who perceive gratitude as a permanent trait rather than a temporary state of mind -- have an edge on the not-so-grateful when it comes to health, according to Emmons' research on gratitude. "Grateful people take better care of themselves and engage in more protective health behaviors like regular exercise, a healthy diet, regular physical examinations," Emmons tells WebMD.

Stress Buster

It's no secret that stress can make us sick, particularly when we can't cope with it. It's linked to several leading causes of death, including heart disease and cancer, and claims responsibility for up to 90% of all doctor visits. Gratitude, it turns out, can help us better manage stress. "Gratitude research is beginning to suggest that feelings of thankfulness have tremendous positive value in helping people cope with daily problems, especially stress," Emmons says.

Immune Booster

Grateful people tend to be more optimistic, a characteristic that researchers say boosts the immune system. "There are some very interesting studies linking optimism to better immune function," says Lisa Aspinwall, PhD, a psychology professor at the University of Utah. In one, researchers comparing the immune systems of healthy, first-year law students under stress found that, by midterm, students characterized as optimistic (based on survey responses) maintained higher numbers of blood cells that protect the immune system, compared with their more pessimistic classmates.

Optimism also has a positive health impact on people with compromised health. In separate studies, patients confronting AIDS, as well as those preparing to undergo surgery, had better health outcomes when they maintained attitudes of optimism.

Gratitude in the Face of Loss

Even in the face of tremendous loss or tragedy, it's possible to feel gratitude. In fact, adversity can boost gratitude, recent findings show. In a web-based survey tracking the personal strengths of more than 3,000 American respondents, researchers noted an immediate surge in feelings of gratitude after Sept. 11, 2001.

Why would such a tragic event provoke gratitude, and what is its impact? Christopher Peterson, PhD, the University of Michigan psychologist who posted the survey, attributes this surge in gratitude among Americans post 9/11 to a sense of increased belonging. These feelings offered more than community building. Gratitude in the aftermath of 9/11 helped buffer people against the negative effects of stress, making them less likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, explains Emmons.

Who Feels Gratitude?

How is it that some people manage to feel grateful in the face of challenging life circumstances, while others sink into despair? "So much of gratitude is about one's perspective and framework for looking at the world and at self. People who tend to be more mindful of the benefits they've received tend to focus their attention outward," Emmons explains.

You don't need to have a lot to be mindful of what you've got, according to Edward Diener, PhD, a psychology professor at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, who has studied extensively life satisfaction of people from various cultures. He found that people in India living in poverty report low levels of life satisfaction. However, a high percentage of people in affluent Japan do, too. Diener suggests that an emphasis on materialism is to blame.

Who, then, has a high level of life satisfaction, if not the very poor or the very rich? The middle class do, according to

Diener's findings -- particularly those who have risen from poverty. Moreover, he reports that the people of Ireland, a country boasting a "count your blessings" culture, report high levels of life satisfaction. As for a group of multimillionaires from the Forbes 400 list? They weren't much happier than the average suburbanite.

Cultivating Gratitude

Income level is by no means the only measure of satisfaction with one's lot in life. "There tends to be higher levels of optimism among people who have faced losses early in life, suggesting that adversity can promote personal growth over time," Aspinwall tells WebMD. But you don't have to wait for a tragedy to grow your feelings of gratitude. You can start today. Here's how:

- Maintain a gratitude journal. Emmons' research showed that people who keep gratitude journals on a weekly basis exercise more regularly, report fewer physical symptoms, feel better about their lives as a whole, and maintain greater optimism about the future.
- Create a list of benefits in your life and ask yourself, "To what extent do I take these for granted?" Some people need such concrete visual reminders to maintain mindfulness of their gratitude, explains Emmons.
- Talk to yourself in a creative, optimistic, and appreciate manner, suggests Sam Quick, PhD, of the University of Kentucky. This could entail simply reflecting on things for which you're grateful or, if you're facing a challenging situation, seeing how it can ultimately be beneficial. For instance, having to cope with particularly difficult people in your job or neighborhood can improve your patience and understanding.
- Reframe a situation by looking at it with a different, more positive attitude, offers Quick. He provides this example: Rather than seeing his 6-year-old daughter as cranky, irritable, and troublesome, a father might reach the conclusion that the youngster is tired and needs rest.
- Not convinced these simple gratitude-enhancing strategies can improve your overall health and well-being? "Try it out for yourself. What's the alternative? I think gratitude is the best approach to life," Emmons says.