

Applying This Simple Biblical Principle Could Totally Change Your Life

True appreciation for God evokes the most profound expressions of gratitude, admiration and worship of which the human spirit is capable. Ironically it is in those humble expressions of adoration to our Creator-Redeemer that we also find ultimate fulfillment and satisfaction in life.

Ellen Vaughn, in her book *Radical Gratitude*, recounts how the transcending power of a grateful heart caused men and women who faced hardship and tragedy to win in the face of life's overwhelming challenges. She cites the powerful views of gratitude that philosophers in the classical Western tradition have held.

The Roman sage Cicero called gratitude not only the greatest of virtues but the parent of all others ... Plato and Socrates wrote that citizens have a duty of obedience to the state based on gratitude for its benefits. Shakespeare wrote, "O Lord that lends me life, lend me a heart replete with thankfulness!" Immanuel Kant said that ingratitude was the "essence of vileness."

The power of gratitude to impact our lives, according to the philosophers, lies in understanding that gratitude "is not only the greatest, but is the parent of all the other virtues."

Conversely, all kinds of evil—the essence of vileness—gain entrance to our lives through the terrible vacuum in our hearts created by our lack of appreciation for our Creator. Every eternal virtue in life triumphs over evil when we learn to allow our hearts to be filled with gratitude. The apostle Paul confirmed the impact that expressing gratitude has on our

lives.

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ... Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:4, 6-7, NIV).

As we learn to place high value on the Creator and His creation, we discover the great value of our own lives as well as of the lives of others. This sense of significance in itself is a powerful impetus for overcoming life's challenges.

Often our lack of appreciation can be heard in our whining complaints: “If only I had this” or “If only I could do that.” These and similar statements reveal our selfish nature that lacks appreciation for God's divine gift of life to us. Instead of expressing gratitude daily for what we have, we focus on what we do not have. As a result, we are blinded to all of life's good things we could be enjoying.

Those are internal obstacles to seeing the beauty of life clearly. Our degree of spiritual sight hinges on the honesty and sincerity with which we appreciate our Lord. Many people do not appreciate the Lord and His gifts because they are content with the attractions of superficial observations and desires, and they are selfish and proud. Answering the following question may be the beginning of a new life perspective for some: How can I remain indifferent to the marvelous design of my body and the Creator's eternal plans written within it?

In acknowledging that we owe our lives to the Creator of life, we are expressing dependence on another, which is uncomfortable to our independent minds. However, if we admit the fact that we did not create ourselves, it follows that we cannot know the purpose for which we exist without consulting

with the Creator. If we choose to go blindly through life without acknowledging our dependence on our maker, we are doomed to live in the misery of ingratitude. {eoa}

*This article is adapted from A Journey to Gratitude: 30 Days to Discovering the Life-Changing Dynamic of Appreciation by **James P. Gills, M.D.** Gills is the founder and director of St. Luke's Cataract and Laser Institute in Tarpon Springs, Florida. In addition to earning a reputation as the most experienced cataract surgeon in the world, he has dedicated his life to restoring more than physical vision. Dr. Gills has been an active author about spiritual topics for many years. His books include Love: Fulfilling the Ultimate Quest, Darwinism Under the Microscope, Come Unto Me and the God's Rx series.*