

# Don't Let Ungratefulness Turn You Into a Spoiled American

My frequent trips to developing nations always help me adjust my attitude. Just when I start to feel spoiled and entitled, I meet people from places like Congo, India and Honduras—and I realize just how blessed I am.

This happened to me again last week during a trip to El Salvador. On Friday I listened to fifteen distraught mothers tell me how their sons had vanished. Most of these boys are probably the victims of gang violence, but nobody knows for sure. The government can't give these women any clues as to what happened, and there are no dead bodies. Their beloved sons are gone, but their grief is ten times worse because they can't have any closure.

I was asked to minister to these women and pray for them. I've never felt so challenged. I couldn't possibly relate to the level of pain they feel every day. As their tears flowed, so did mine. Thankfully one of the women who was not already a Christian decided to give her life to Jesus.

After listening to these tragic accounts, all I could do was worship the Lord and thank Him for His goodness. My own problems fade quickly when I realize how much others suffer. As you celebrate Thanksgiving this year, please consider how blessed you are by asking these questions:

1. **Do you have religious freedom?** The majority of the world's population—75%—live in areas with severe religious restrictions. And Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution simply because of their belief in Jesus Christ. About 1.6 billion people in the world live in repressive societies where they have no say in how they are governed.

2. **Do you have money in a bank?** More than 2.5 billion adults around the world are unbanked, according to data based on Gallup polling in 148 countries. Two-thirds of people without accounts said they simply don't have enough money to use a bank.
3. **Do you eat three meals a day?** The World Health Organization estimates that one-third of the world's population is overfed, one-third is underfed and one-third is starving. Approximately 925 million people in the developing world are chronically undernourished.
4. **Do you own shoes?** About 300 million children around the world don't own a pair of shoes. It is estimated that 2 billion people worldwide are currently plagued with parasitic diseases that could be prevented simply by wearing proper footwear.
5. **Do you drink clean water?** About 1.1 billion people in the world don't have access to clean drinking water. Because of that, about 9 million people will die this year because of water-related illnesses. The next time you open a bottle of Dasani, remember that millions of women around the world spend an average of four hours daily walking to get water.
6. **Did your mother survive when you were born?** Approximately 800 women die every day from complications during pregnancy and childbirth. This is equivalent to 33 women an hour. Almost all these deaths occurred in developing countries, and most could have been prevented.
7. **Did you live past age 5?** Some 21,000 children die every day around the world because of poverty and preventable diseases. That is equivalent to one child dying every four seconds. The annual death toll is 7.6 million children a year.
8. **Do you enjoy reliable electricity?** About 1.5 billion people in this world have no access to electrical power. Do you enjoy that oven in your kitchen? The next time you prepare a meal, remember that 2.5 billion people in

the world still use wood or charcoal to cook their food. Do you enjoy your washing machine? About 5 billion people in the world still wash their clothes by hand.

9. **Do you have a roof over your head?** The U.N. Commission on Human Rights says there are 100 million homeless people in the world. One in 3 children in the world live without adequate shelter. And today there are about 42 million people who are living as refugees. Most were displaced by war and live in crude camps.
10. **Do you own a car?** The United States still has the highest number of motor vehicles in the world. Globally, only 1 out of every 8 people has access to a car. Many of the others either walk, take crowded buses or public vans or ride on bicycles, rickshaws or animals. Did you fly somewhere in the past year? You are blessed. Only 5% to 7% of people in the world have ever flown in an airplane.
11. **Do you have a flushable toilet?** The United Nations Development Program reports that 2.6 billion people do not have access to any toilet facilities. India has the largest percentage of people who lack adequate sanitation. About 638 million Indians must go outdoors.
12. **Can you read?** Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names. There are 72 million children who should be in school but are not enrolled. And if you have a college degree, you are in a privileged minority; only 6.7% of people in the world have a college diploma.

King David wrote: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Ps. 103:2). Thanksgiving is not an optional virtue. Without it, our pride swells and our selfishness consumes us. Thanksgiving is an important exercise because it calibrates our hearts. When we adjust our whiny attitudes, we stop complaining and remember how we are blessed and who deserves the credit for our blessings. Happy Thanksgiving!

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**J. Lee Grady** was editor of *Charisma* for 11 years and now serves as contributing editor. He directs the Mordecai Project (), an international ministry that protects women and girls from gender-based violence. His latest book is *Set My Heart on Fire* (Charisma House).