

## The Attitude of Gratitude

*By Lauren Parsons*

Following on from last month's article on thoughts, today I'm writing about a very simple, very effective principle that can literally transform your life.

Age old wisdom tells to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." And today I'd like to give you some practical steps in order to apply the **Principle of Gratitude** to your own thought life right now.



We talk about the expression of the glass being either 'half full or half empty.' In actual fact a glass of water can be both at the same time, it is all a matter of perspective and depends on how you choose to label it at any given moment. You choose how you view the glass of water life has poured for you. If you are grateful for the water that is there and see how full the glass is, how does that make you feel, act and respond compared to the approach of seeing how empty it is?

You see we can either choose the grateful or resentful approach to each and every thing in our lives. Again the choice is ours, and we do always have the choice. We may not be able to change the situation or the facts, but we always have the power to choose how we perceive them and in turn how we'll respond.

You may have heard of the saying; "God grant me the grace to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."

An example of someone who epitomises this is W Mitchell. An inspiring man who at a young age, when he had everything going for him, had a motorcycle accident which turned him into a human fire ball, receiving burns to 65% of his body and almost killing him. After months of painful recovery he was left confined to a wheel chair with a disfigured face and tiny stumps in the place of fingers. At that point he made the choice to embrace the positives of his situation and use it as a platform from which to inspire others. He is now an international celebrity, key note speaker, current president of the world speakers association and travels extensively spreading the message of his book, titled "Its not what happens to you, its what you do about it." For more details go to his website [www.wmitchell.com](http://www.wmitchell.com) and spend 5 mins watching video footage of this amazing man who is a moving example of someone who has shown gratitude for every little bit of good despite the challenges he has faced!

So often we take ourselves down to the 'woe is me' camp and complain about how unfair things are and how 'lucky' others are. It is easy to play the blame game and we all do it at times as it can be so comforting to take the pressure off ourselves. At other times we head over to the 'green eyed monster' jealousy camp and compare ourselves to others, looking at the things or opportunities they get and again feeling sorry for ourselves and resenting life for not giving us those same things.

Both of these approaches block out any chance for gratitude to work.

You may be reading the above thinking, "Yeah ok Lauren, that's easy to say, but you just don't know how bad my situation is." What I would reply is that we all have and will face very difficult challenges at times, myself included, and that no matter what situation we are in, it is always possible to find something to be thankful for. At times, especially when tragic events occur, it may only be that we are thankful for what we have learnt or for how we are now better equipped to comfort and help others that may go through the same experiences in the future. This is still something to be grateful for.

The reason why gratitude is just so powerful is because of the same principle as last month's article;

**"WHAT WE FOCUS ON INCREASES"**

By focusing on the good things we have in life, our whole attitude changes. We get out of the 'woe is me' and 'green eyed monster' camps.

Sometimes it's the smallest things in life that we do take for granted. If we really do take a reality check we can all find things to be thankful for. Did you know that if you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over

your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world and that if you can read this message, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read anything at all. Besides this I'm sure there are many more things that you could say you're thankful for right now if you really tried.

An attitude of gratitude is like lifting up your chin and looking upwards and rising up to your full height rather than hanging your head and following your gaze down in a negative spiral.

### **So how do you start to embrace this principle?**

Here are the 3 practical ideas that I most often recommend. Which ever one suits you will depend on your own style – do you like pondering things, writing things out or verbalising things?

1 First thing in the morning as part of your daily routine (e.g. while showering, having a coffee, shaving or brushing your teeth) take the time to think of one or more things that you are either thankful for from the day before or that you are looking forward to that day. Alternatively you may like to do this at night, just see what suits you. Do ensure that you tie it to a specific task so that you remember to do it DAILY!

2 At the end of the day (or again whenever is best to find 5 minutes for yourself), write down a list of all the things you are thankful for. This is the one that I personally use and I find that often it is the same things over and over again that I put down. Things like my family, friends, being in good health, the opportunities I have to help others and even the simple things of being warm, having good food and clean water. Once you start you will find that your list is often longer than what you'd thought.



3 Each day, set aside time to talk to someone and tell them all the things you are thankful for from that day. They can do the same with you and you will be benefiting each other. This could be a partner or a close friend or family member, or if you prefer you can even just talk to yourself in the mirror! Ideally set a regular time and place to do this – again so that it becomes a life habit.

I guarantee that if you can use one of these strategies every day for a week you will see changes; immediate changes in how you feel and flow on changes in terms of what unfolds in your life as a result.

One last note - If you do find yourself back in the 'resentful' camp from time to time – that's ok. Don't beat yourself up for it. If you can recognise it then you can chose to leave that place and take yourself on that upward spiral again simply by thinking of one thing to be grateful for and choosing to focus your energy on that.

I wish you all the very best with it. Yours in thankfulness,

Lauren