

# An Attitude of Gratitude

The month of November and the approach of Thanksgiving weekend always lend themselves to days of reflection on the countless ways in which our lives have been blessed. We tend to gather at a relative's house, where the table is set with copious amounts of food as we visit with family and loved ones. When it is finally time to eat, many families join together in prayer, thanking God for the wonderful meal and the many blessings that a family brings to one another. As Thanksgiving Day comes to an end, family members go their separate ways with full tummies and a sense of gratitude for loved ones. For many, this "Attitude of Gratitude" soon passes, and we go back to our daily lives.

What if we could maintain this thankfulness throughout the rest of the year? Imagine how happy we would be if we were truly thankful for all the blessings in our lives! I am reminded here of the "World's Funniest Joke." At the start of the 21st century, thousands of people around the world were polled to determine what joke would be deemed most humorous. The following was the favorite:

*Sherlock Holmes and his trusty assistant, Dr. Watson, were on a camping trip. In the middle of the night, Sherlock awoke and immediately took notice of the billions of brightly lit stars in the sky. He nudged his friend, who was sound asleep, and said, "Watson, I want you to look up at all the stars in the sky and tell me what you deduce from what you see."*

*Watson, who was well aware of his friend's uncanny ability to trick him with these types of questions, was determined not to let it happen again. After pondering for a few moments, he replied, "Well, Sherlock, I recall from my background in astronomy that all of those stars in the sky are actually suns, very much like our own. As such, it is highly likely that many of them have planets revolving around them, as in our own solar system. Consequently, I would deduce that somewhere in the universe, there is a planet very similar to Earth, and that there is, indeed, life elsewhere in the universe!" Watson was confident that he'd nailed it. With a smug look on his face, he asked, "Well, Sherlock, how did I do?"*

*Sherlock replied, with a rather disgusted tone to his voice, "Well, Watson, you nitwit... you were supposed to deduce that someone has stolen our tent!"*

Although I know I've laughed harder at other jokes over the years, I think there's an important message we can take from poor Dr. Watson's ill-fated deduction. How many times in our lives do we fail to see what is right in front of us because we are so intent on gazing at the stars beyond? How often do we take our families and loved ones for granted while we are in pursuit of a higher salary, a new car, or a bigger home? How often do we sincerely take the time to thank God for the countless blessings in our lives?

A little different perspective on this is to imagine how desperate you would immediately become if you were suddenly approached on the street by someone who took your keys and wallet or purse away. Imagine how you would feel if you were told you would never see your family, your home, or your vehicle again and that you were destined to live the rest of your life on the street with none of these comforts! After two weeks on the street, imagine how ecstatic you would be if that same person gave back your wallet and keys, said your family and friends were waiting at home for your arrival, and your life was going to return to normal. Wouldn't we all feel totally blessed? I'm sure this exercise would help us realize just how fortunate we really are, and would help us not take our lives so much for granted.

One final perspective in regard to being thankful... What if you woke up today with only the things you thanked God for yesterday? The first time I read this question, it hit me pretty hard. Although I make a

real effort to pray each day, and I do try to thank God for the blessings in my life, when I put it in this perspective, I am certainly not thankful enough! At this stage of my life, I do realize I am happiest when I am thoughtful of the many gifts with which God has blessed me. When I make a real effort to be more cognizant of these countless blessings, I am more inclined to express my thanks to God. As I pray and give thanks, the more I realize how blessed I truly am, which leads to deeper appreciation and happiness. In this context, I really do become responsible for my own contentment, and maintaining an **attitude of gratitude** is key to making happiness perpetual! In a very real sense, this becomes our choice each day!!

During this month of November, the month of Thanksgiving, may we all strive each day to thank God for our many blessings. Even more important, may we maintain an attitude of gratitude throughout the year and live our lives in such a way that this demeanor passes on to others! Consequently, the world around us will become a much better place in which to live!

**May God bless you and those you love with an Attitude of Gratitude this Thanksgiving and always!!**