

## an attitude of GRATITUDE

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by Florence MacKenzie

**I felt immensely thankful.** The situation that had preyed on my mind for so long had finally been resolved. I deeply appreciated the efforts of everyone who had contributed to the resolution of my problem and, above all, I poured out my gratitude to God for making it happen.

It's easy to be grateful when circumstances turn out well, but thankfulness doesn't have to be limited just to the good times. Not only is it possible to be thankful in difficulties, it's also beneficial. In stressful situations, it's reckoned that thankful people cope better than those who tend to grumble and complain. How, then, might we develop an attitude of gratitude when life is tough? The letters of 'gratitude' give us some clues.

**Give** praise to God at all times. This is a great thing to do because it takes your focus away from yourself and places it on Him. Despite our changing circumstances, He never changes, so we can always praise Him for who He is and what He is like.

**Remember** what God has done. Bringing to mind some of the things God has done in the past can be a stimulus to offer gratitude for what He is doing now and will do in the future.

**Always** be thankful. Many of us get hung up on finding God's specific will for our lives while perhaps overlooking that His general will for us involves giving thanks in all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:18). If we want our lives to be in line with God's will for us, let's be thankful – always!

**Trust** God completely. This can be one of the hardest things to do when life is difficult. Not knowing why something is happening or how long it's likely to continue can challenge even the deepest faith. However, God cautions us about depending on our own understanding of situations and invites us to trust Him wholeheartedly (Prov. 3:5).

**Intentionally** choose your attitude. There are many things in life that are beyond our control, but choosing our attitude toward people and situations is something that is well within our control. Why not exercise that choice today?

**Think** before you grumble and complain. If we're not careful, a grumbling and complaining attitude can so easily become the default response to situations that we don't like. Instead, think 'attitude of gratitude'.

**Understand** that attitudes are learned. This means it will take time to develop a consistent attitude of gratitude, so don't be discouraged when it doesn't happen immediately.



**Develop** friendships with positive, encouraging people. Attitudes are contagious and, sometimes unconsciously, we take on board how other people think and feel about a situation. It makes sense, then, to surround ourselves with people who show gratitude and will encourage us to do likewise.

**Enjoy** God's blessings. Ever tried naming specific ways that God has blessed you? It's a good idea to write these down, perhaps beginning with three, moving on to ten, twenty or even more! Make these a focus for regularly thanking God, updating your list as time goes on.

In addition to trying out these suggestions on a regular basis, we can also foster an attitude of gratitude by observing how others respond to various circumstances in their lives. One of my friends was widowed in her early thirties and had to raise three children on her own. Life was often lonely and difficult but she got into the habit of questioning negative experiences by asking "What can I learn from this? How does God want me to respond?" Despite her problems, this teachable outlook helped her face many situations with thankfulness.

Another friend is currently very ill with widespread cancer and I am continually amazed and encouraged by her attitude. She never complains that life is unfair and constantly acknowledges God's persistent goodness. Her thankful heart in the midst of a debilitating disease is truly an inspiration to all who have the privilege of knowing her.

Having an attitude of gratitude is not a denial of unpleasant circumstances, nor is it a response that only a few people can demonstrate. It is a matter of choice. We can choose to be grateful and reap the related benefits, or we can choose to gripe and give way to negativity. In both the good and bad experiences of life, I want my choice to be a consistent attitude of gratitude. How about you?

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