

Cultivating an Attitude of Gratitude

by Peter Hammond

Cultivating an attitude of gratitude is essential to living a joyful, prayerful, and thankful life, as demonstrated by the examples of Nicolae Moldoveanu, Fanny Crosby, and Helen Keller.

Scripture: Psalm 92:1, Psalm 107:8, Proverbs 11:24, Luke 17:7, Romans 1:18, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 1:12, Colossians 3:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, Hebrews 13:15

Topics: "Christian Gratitude", "Spiritual Maturity"

Description

Peter Hammond preaches on the importance of being joyful, prayerful, and thankful, as exemplified by individuals like Nicolae Moldoveanu, Fanny Crosby, Helen Keller, and persecuted Christians. He emphasizes the need to express gratitude to God for His blessings, highlighting that ingratitude is a root sin that leads to futile thinking and darkened hearts. Through various examples, he illustrates how a lack of gratitude is ungodly, immature, and a sign of pride, entitlement, and unteachability.

Transcript

Joyful, Prayerful and Thankful

"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Plainly, it is God's will for us to be joyful, prayerful and thankful.

Nicolae Moldoveanu - Composing Hymns in Prison

During one of our missions to Eastern Europe, Rev. Bill Bathman introduced me to an extraordinary Christian Hymn writer, who composed many hundreds of Hymns while being tortured by the communists in Romania. Nicolae Moldoveanu was called "The Bach of Romania." In his lifetime, he composed more than 6,000 Hymns, hundreds of those while suffering excruciating torture in the communist prison system of Romania.

Extraordinary Creativity and Mental Discipline Under Torture

Without access to the Bible, or any books, without any musical instruments, without pen or paper, Moldoveanu determined to compose Hymns of praise to God and commit them to his memory, to later be

put down on paper, when finally released from prison.

The Testimony of Richard Wurmbrand

Richard Wurmbrand testified that Moldoveanu was "one of the greatest saints I met in my 14 years of prison. He came smiling from the torture room. His approach was that of a lamb. While I was protesting against the guard's abuses, against others, or myself, he never protested."

Picture

Resistance Through Singing

Indeed, the steadfast faith of Nicolae Moldoveanu and his resistance to atheist indoctrination and communist torture came through composing and singing great Hymns of the Faith. Most of the hymns sung in Evangelical Churches in Romania today are Nicolae Moldoveanu's compositions.

From Poverty to the Military

Nicolae Moldoveanu was born 3 February 1922, to a very poor family. He lost his father by the age of 3 and his only opportunity for education came through enlisting in the military programme, called The Army's Children, at age 12. These destitute children lived on military bases to serve the soldiers. Due to his love for music, Nicolae Moldoveanu was soon enrolled in the Military Brass Ensemble. The band director recognised his extraordinary talents and helped him develop his musical abilities.

The Lord's Army

Nicolae wrote: "I am now seeing God's hand in everything that has happened in my life..." He soon joined "The Lord's Army," a Reformed branch of the Greek Orthodox Church that emphasised the need for being born again, Repentance and having a personal relationship with Christ.

Conversion to Christ

Soon after joining The Lord's Army, Moldoveanu experienced a conversion to Christ and began to publish musical compositions called Village's Light. Nicolae Moldoveanu survived the Second World War, enriching the lives of fellow soldiers with great Hymns of the Faith.

Fasting for a Bible

During the war, for a whole month, he sold his daily rations of milk and bread, in order to afford to buy his first Bible.

Communist Persecution

In 1948, the communist regime of Romania, declared The Lord's Army illegal and arrested all its leaders. Nicolae Moldoveanu continued to worship in secret, but in 1959, he was arrested and sentenced to twelve years in prison.

Look to the Sky

On the day of his arrest, Nicolae whispered to his wife, Lena: "Look at the skies. It will be the only thing we can share while separated." For many months, Nicolae was not able to see the sky as he was

incarcerated in an underground cell. When he was later moved into a cell that was above ground, it had a broken window, but in spite of the bitter winter cold, he rejoiced that he could share the view of the same sky with his wife, Lena, far away.

Picture

Fellowship of Prisoners

In prison, Nicolae Moldoveanu's best friends were Traian Dorz, a prolific Romanian Christian poet from The Lord's Army and Richard Wurmbrand, who would become the Author of Tortured for Christ and the Founder of the Voice of the Martyrs ministry. Both Richard Wurmbrand and Nicolae Moldoveanu praised each other for how their encouragement and ministry helped sustain them through excruciating torture.

Steadfast Perseverance Under Persecution

For more than 62 years, God enriched the faith of Romanian Christians through the uncompromising Christian testimony, courage and steadfastness of Nicolae Moldoveanu and the rich treasury of over 6,000 Hymns he gave to the Church. He stood fast during 45 years of Romania's darkest years under communist persecution. Even when the communists broke the bones in his fingers, Nicolae Moldoveanu re-learned to play the piano later, despite his fingers being mangled.

Triumph Despite Torture

One of Nicolae's compositions was entitled: Break my Will, Even with Heavy Blows. Other titles of Moldoveanu's Hymns include: Only Grace; If We Gather Together in the Lord; Don't Doubt, But Believe!; Teach Me to Do Your Will; I Sing to You My God and Break My Plans. Christians in Romania are still singing the hymns God gave Nicolae Moldoveanu while in prison, sixty years ago.

A Sacrifice of Praise

"Therefore, by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name." Hebrews 13:15.

Picture

Fanny Crosby - The Queen of Gospel Songwriters

Born in 1820, of Puritan ancestry, a descendant of Mayflower Settlers, Mustard treatment on an inflammation of her eyes led to damage of the optic nerves and life-long blindness for Fanny. Despite her blindness, Fanny Crosby became one of the most prolific Hymn writers in history, composing more than 8,000 Hymns and Gospel songs. More than 100 Million copies were printed in her lifetime. She was described as "The Mother of Modern Congregational Singing in America."

Inspiring and Convicting

Ira Sankey attributed the success of D.L. Moody and Sankey's Evangelistic campaigns, largely to Crosby's Hymns, including: Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour; Blessed Assurance; To God Be the Glory; Praise Him, Praise Him; Rescue the Perishing and many others.

Thankful for Her Blindness

She wrote: "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life and I thank Him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow, I would not accept it. I might not have sung Hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me. When I get to Heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of My Saviour."

Picture

Phenomenal Memory

According to her biographer, Annie Willis: "Had it not been for her affliction, she might not have had so good an education, or so great an influence and certainly not so fine a memory." Fanny Crosby memorised five chapters of the Bible each week from age 10. By age 15, she had memorised the four Gospels, the first five Books of the Old Testament, the Book of Proverbs and many of the Psalms.

An Accomplished Musician, Public Speaker and Activist

She learned to play the piano, organ, harp and guitar and became a good soprano singer. In 1943, Fanny Crosby became the first woman to speak to the United States Senate where she read a poem.

Inner City Missionary

She was a vigorous campaigner for the Temperance Society's Campaign Against Alcohol Abuse and supported The American Female Guardian Society and Home for the Friendless. While Fanny Crosby is best known for her hymns, she was primarily a Rescue Mission worker in the inner city. For decades, Fanny Crosby lived in slum areas of Manhattan, such as Hells' Kitchen, the Bowery and the Tenderloin. As soon as she received payment for contributions for publication or concerts, she donated all proceeds to Missions, to reach the poorest and most needy people in society. "It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to Your Name, O Most High; to declare Your loving kindness in the morning and Your faithfulness every night." Psalm 92:1-2.

Imagine Living in Darkness and Silence

When I lead tour groups to the Castle of Good Hope, it is most telling when I shut the door to the dungeon and switch off the light. Immediately there are gasps, shouts and screams from people being exposed to complete darkness for not even a minute. Imagine living your entire life in complete darkness and silence. That was how life was for Helen Keller.

Picture

Helen Keller - A Light in Darkness

Born, 27 June 1880, in Tuscumbia, Alabama, an illness took away Helen Keller's hearing and sight when she was only 19 months old. With her family not being able to communicate with her, they viewed her as wild and uncontrollable. However, in 1887, Anne Sullivan became Helen Keller's teacher and through finger spelling w-a-t-e-r into Helen's hand while pumping water over Helen's hand for her to feel, had a breakthrough, which led Helen to learn how to communicate and read with her fingers. At age 24, she graduated from Red Cliff College in 1904 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Helen became a tireless advocate for people with disabilities. She travelled to over 40 countries and famously stated that deafness

was a greater affliction than blindness.

You Should Experience Blindness for a Few Days

Helen Keller said: "I have often thought that it would be a blessing if each human being were stricken blind and deaf for a few days for some time during his early adult life. It would make him more appreciative of sight and of the joys of sound." "Give thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the Kingdom of light." Colossians 1:12.

Picture

Do You Recognise the Many Blessings God Has Granted You?

Do you appreciate the incredible blessings of sight and sound? Surrounded by such wonderful nature, able to see sights like Table Mountain and to have the legs and health to climb these mountains. When did you last thank God for your hands, legs, eyes, ears, sense, sound, taste, for music, for sunshine, for nature, for the birds that sing, for the wild animals, the sea life, the whales and the dolphins, the eagles and the lions?

Have You Thanked God?

Have you ever thanked God for His mercy, grace and undeserved favour?

Have you thanked God for His matchless blessings through regeneration, repentance, faith and adoption as a child of God?

Have you thanked God for His forgiveness and for the privilege of being His servant and His soldier?

Sin is a Result of a Lack of Gratitude

People would not steal if they were grateful to God for His provision. People would not commit adultery if they were grateful for the spouse God has given them.

Appreciation for Our Parents

Civilisation is built upon gratitude to God and recognition of our debts to previous generations. My appreciation for my parents has only grown in leaps and bounds as I became a parent and for the first time came to understand something of what my parents had sacrificed for me. As Professor Martin Luther declared: "There is no love so sacrificial and unselfish as that of a parent."

Picture

Reformation Heritage

We have a great debt to great Reformers such as Professor Martin Luther for championing the great principles of freedom of conscience, freedom of worship, freedom of thought and calling us back to the Bible as the sole foundation for all truth and education. Scripture alone is the ultimate authority.

Back to the Bible

We have so much to be grateful to Reformer Ulrich Zwingli for dispensing with the Latin mass and initiating Biblical Exposition, preaching through every verse, chapter and book of the Bible, applying the Lordship of Christ to all areas of life.

The Bible in Our Own Language

Everyone who has an English Bible should be grateful to William Tyndale, who gave his life, burned at the stake, that we could have the Bible available in our own language.

Life and Liberty

The people of India have a tremendous debt of gratitude to Missionary William Carey, who ended widow-burning, the burning of lepers and the sacrifice of infants; and for pioneering the first schools for girls, the first Christian college in Asia, for translating the Bible and New Testament Gospels into 35 languages!

Faith and Freedom

All of us are deeply indebted to Missionary explorer, David Livingstone, for opening up Africa for the Gospel and for exposing and campaigning to end the rampant Islamic slave trade.

Love in Action

All Nigerians should be grateful to Missionary Mary Slessor, for campaigning tirelessly to end the killing of twins, campaigning against the slave trade, cannibalism and drunkenness, for pioneering Christian schools and planting churches in remote regions of Nigeria.

Setting the Captives Free

We have much to be grateful for, to Member of Parliament, William Wilberforce for his life-long crusade to end the slave trade and to set the captives free.

Picture

Enriched and Empowered

All of our lives have been enriched by the Devotional writings of Andrew Murray and the Biblical preaching of Charles Spurgeon. There are so many inventors and innovators whose life's work have made our lives richer and healthier.

Francis Grim of Hospital Christian Fellowship

As an author, I have the opportunity to dedicate books to people who have been a blessing to me. One of my first books, *In the Killing Fields of Mozambique* was dedicated to Francis Grim, the Founder and President of Hospital Christian Fellowship (now Healthcare Christian Fellowship International). It was my great privilege to receive my initial missionary apprenticeship under this great missionary pioneer, who proclaimed the Gospel and established missions in over 110 countries. It was Francis Grim who taught me to pray for world Evangelism - in days of prayer and nights of prayer. I am further grateful for his demanding high standards of excellence from all his staff. Francis Grim's unwillingness to tolerate less than our best and his determination not to accept excuses has continued to inspire me to overcome all

obstacles and achieve what others said was impossible.

Professor Fritz Haus

I dedicated the Old Testament Survey to Dr. Fritz Haus, who taught me to see Christ in every Book of the Old Testament. Dr. Fritz Haus was a God-fearing, dedicated Christian Missionary, a veteran of the Second World War, he led Bible studies and prayer meetings on the Eastern Front and in North Africa. For over 60 years, he planted churches throughout South Africa. As Professor of the Old Testament at Baptist Theological College, in Cape Town, Dr. Fritz Haus introduced me to the doctrines of the Reformation and the Christology of the Old Testament.

Brent Noebel and His Vision for Sudan

I dedicated the third edition of Faith Under Fire in Sudan to Brent Noebel, who was a good friend and great inspiration. Brent was a living testimony of perseverance and endurance under terribly adverse circumstances. Although blind for the last 21 years of his life, Brent's vision for the suffering Christians in Sudan mobilised thousands of Summit students to become the greatest single sponsor of Bibles for Sudan and film Evangelism in Sudan. By God's grace, there are today, many tens-of-thousands of South Sudanese and Nubans, who have seen and heard the Gospel graphically portrayed through the Jesus film and/or through the God Story VCD presentations and many tens-of-thousands who received copies of the Scriptures, because of the vision of Brent Noebel and the sacrificial love and generosity of the students and staff of Summit ministries, who Brent inspired and mobilised to do without a few luxuries and donate the money that they would have spent on Starbucks coffee, etc. for Bibles, for Frontline Fellowship to deliver to Sudan.

"I Once Was Blind, But Now I See!"

Brent Noebel went to be with the Lord 18 July 2002, but the impact of his missionary vision and sacrificial generosity continue to echo throughout eternity. Brent did not allow his blindness to prevent him from reaching and blessing hundreds-of-thousands of Christians in faraway Sudan. As his favourite hymn, Amazing Grace, declares: "I once was blind, but now I see!"

Picture

The Nuba Evangelist Who Had No Feet

I think of the Nuba Evangelist in Sudan, who I met. Despite having had both his feet axed off at the ankles by malicious Muslims, he continued to walk on his knees, or ride on a donkey, to evangelise his neighbours. The Bible declares: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring Good News." This brother had no feet and yet he did not allow that to prevent him from reaching, blessing and benefiting his neighbours and even his enemies with the Gospel of Christ. What excuse do we have?

Persecuted Christians Provide Perspective on our Problems

For many people their problems consist of: What shall I prepare for supper? Many of the people that I have ministered amongst have no such problems as they have no food.

For many people the dilemma that consumes them is: What shall I wear? Many thousands of the people that I have ministered amongst have only one tattered garment to wear.

What Bible translation should I use? Well, for most of the people in the world, there is only one translation available and many millions do not even have access to that.

In Africa there are over 100 million churchgoers who do not yet have a Bible or New Testament.

"This is the Greatest Gift!"

On numerous occasions, I have heard persecuted Christians in Africa, declare: "This is the greatest gift anyone could ever receive! The Bible in my own language!" I have seen Christians in Angola, Mozambique and Sudan fall on their knees and weep to receive a copy of the Word of God. I have seen people dance, raising the copy of the Bible that I had just given them, high above their heads, while shouting out their thanksgiving and praises to God that their prayers have been answered now they have their own copy of the Word of God, in their own language!

Greedy, Demanding and Ungrateful

All too many people are consumed of the obnoxious habit of demanding! "Give me!" "You must give me!" Often I have heard "What Christmas do you have for me?" As though Christmas was all about what others can give me, rather than what can I give, first and foremost to the Lord, Whose birthday we are celebrating and then to others, in honour of His great gift. All too many are greedy, demanding, ungrateful, entitled, self-centred and miserable.

Picture

Joyful Gratitude in War and Peace

In Leo Tolstoy's classic War and Peace novel, one of the prominent characters, Platon Karataev, is a joyful Russian peasant who is always giving thanks to God, praying and sharing what little he has with a stray dog and with fellow prisoners around him. Leo Tolstoy stated that he had actually based this character on a poor, but joyful peasant he had met and it occurred to him that this man, who had so little, was far happier, more joyful and at peace, than all the rich men he knew. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Taught Thanksgiving Through Trials and Tribulations

I praise God for my times under fire, under aerial and artillery bombardments, in prison and under intense interrogation, in communist prisons. There is not a day that goes by that I am not grateful for freedom, for health, for clean water, for clean sheets, for soap, for the freedom to move and to see God's magnificent creation. To climb Table Mountain and so many other blessings, which I was deprived of and prayed for when in chains and in prison cells. What does God have to do get your attention?

Blasphemous Lack of Gratitude

In typical blasphemous Hollywood fashion, a TV series scripted a line where after the wife had given Thanks for the food, the husband declared: "Why give thanks to God? I'm the one who worked and paid for the food and you are the one who cooked it. So thanks for nothing, God!" Such foolish, blasphemous and shortsighted wilful blindness is sadly fairly common today. Behind the retailer is the wholesaler and the transporter, whether by vehicle or train, the farmer, the soil, the sun and the rain. Behind all of this is the Hand of God. We should also give thanks to God for our life and health that enables us to work and

contribute to the needs of others, while also been able to meet our own family's needs. "Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" Psalm 107:8.

Our Duty

"No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks." Ambrose

A Good Habit

"It ought to be as habitual for us to thank as to ask." C. H. Spurgeon

The Parent of All Virtues

It has been said that a thankful heart is the parent of all virtues.

The Root Sin

It is also true that a lack of gratitude is a root sin: "The wrath of God is being revealed from Heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness... for although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." Romans 1:18-21. Here, failure to give thanks to God is the root sin that leads to futile thinking and foolish, darkened hearts.

The Sin of Ingratitude

In Luke 17:7-19, we read of the ten lepers that were healed by the Lord Jesus. When one of them, a Samaritan, threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him, the Lord Jesus asked: "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" In our missions' experience we have also found that barely 10% of those we help, or sponsor, will bother to express their gratitude either verbally, or in a letter, or card. Evidently gratitude is something of a rarity.

One of the Worst Sins

In 1 Timothy 3:1-5 the apostle Paul gives a list of some of the most terrible sins including: "People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, traitorous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - having a form of godliness but denying its power." Here ungratefulness is listed in the middle of a litany of horrible sins.

Picture

A Fruit of Character

One of the first lessons good parents seek to teach their children is to say "Thank You". It takes character and courage to admit being in debt to others. It is humbling. However, those who cannot admit their indebtedness to others cannot learn, nor can they seek forgiveness.

Maturity

Failure to express gratitude is more than immaturity and rudeness, it is ungodly. We are commanded to honour our parents, our elders and our leaders. It is a sign of maturity to acknowledge indebtedness. Anyone who has learned anything is in debt to somebody else. We are all in debt, firstly and mostly, to God Himself, for our life, health, food, talents, family, friends, opportunities and for our salvation itself. We are also in debt to past generations who have sacrificed for the freedoms we now enjoy: Reformers, martyrs, pioneers, missionaries, soldiers, parents, teachers, pastors and so many others have sacrificed for our benefit.

Pride, Ingratitude and Unteachability

Those who do not take advice do not think they have anything to learn. They are often the same people who have a problem expressing a genuine heartfelt gratitude to others. It is a sign of pride to be ungrateful - it reveals an unwillingness to acknowledge a debt to others.

An Attitude of Entitlement

Instead of the Christian character of gratitude, our present culture prefers to promote an attitude of entitlement. This is the very opposite of gratitude. It builds on pride and covetousness. It is fuelled by bitterness, greed and envy. All too many in the present humanistic society take things for granted, demand to get, rather than seeking to give. "One man gives freely, yet gains even more, another withholds unduly but comes to poverty." Proverbs 11:24.

Picture

Taking God's Blessings for Granted

Dr. Martin Luther observed that we exhibit a degree of thankfulness in life in reverse proportion to the amount of blessing we have received. In *Tabletalk*, Dr. Martin Luther wrote: "The greater God's gifts and works, the less they are regarded." The blessings of life, health, freedom and food are not really appreciated unless they are lost, or threatened. Because sunrises and sunsets occur daily, they are taken for granted.

Consider the Stars

Ralph Waldo Emerson observed that "If the constellations appeared only once in a thousand years, imagine what an exciting event it would be. But because they are there every night, we barely give them a look."

The Hungry and Lonely are More Grateful

Similarly, the blessings of rain are barely appreciated unless one has been through a drought. A hungry man is more thankful for his morsel than a rich man for his heavily laden table. A lonely woman in a nursing home will appreciate a visit more than a popular person who has a party thrown in their honour. A Christian who has suffered under persecution for decades and receives his first copy of the Holy Scriptures will be more thankful for this one book than we are for all the Christian books, Bible translations and magazines that overflow our shelves.

A Biblical Command

There are at least 138 passages of Scripture that deal with the subject of thanksgiving. We are commanded: "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His Name." Psalm 100:4.

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." Colossians 3:15.

"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." Philippians 4:6-7.

An Attitude of Gratitude

A grateful mind is a great mind. "Be thankful, therefore, for the least benefit and thou shalt be worthy to receive greater." Thomas a Kempis.

"Give thanks to the Lord, call on His Name; make known among the nations what He has done... Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endures forever." 1 Chronicles 16:8,34.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/peter-hammond/cultivating-an-attitude-of-gratitude/>

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