

An Attitude of Gratitude  
By Paul Clayton

One time I was in a class, I had to write down a list of all that things that had happened in my life that had caused me pain. Well I started to write, I got right into it. My list was long. (All the things that had happened in school, when I was a kid, the unfairness of this and that in my life.) Then the teacher told us to go back and write down how those things had affected our lives for the positive. I was not as excited about that part, but I did it and I was surprised how much all those negative things had helped me become the person that I am today. I would not change any of it. The only scary part is that it looks like I need more negative things in my life to help me even more. :-)

I have a lady friend of mine who had cancer sixteen years ago, she is now in recovery. She told me once that she was grateful for the cancer because when she thought she was going to die, it turned her life around. (She also says she wishes she did not have to go through what she went through). Today she is a new person. She is active in the community and sees life in an entirely new way, little things don't bother her the way they did before. I know many recovering alcoholics who always put the word grateful in front of recovering. They are grateful because they see life in a different way.

You can't have the spring flowers without the winter cold. In the faith that I was raised in, you can not have a resurrection without a death. In every negative thing that happens to us, we have a choice, we can choose to be a victim of the issue or we can choose to look at it as a lesson and gain some growth. Even with the horror of September 11, there are positive things that have come out of it. I have never seen America come together in spirit as much as it has in the last few months. People are talking to one another, even our elected officials. We have become much more aware of our own vulnerability and how important our family and love ones are in life. We have all realized how important our police and firefighters are and the heroes that came out of the WTC. I usually have all of my classes with clients have a gratitude list at the end of each day about what happened that went right. This week at the end of each day write down at least five things that you are grateful for. Remember what ever we focus on expands. Count your blessings not your disasters. What are you grateful for? By Paul Clayton

I received from last weeks article "An Attitude of Gratitude." They are very moving. I am home this week and without rubbing it in the weather here has been perfect. Have a wonderful week and remember as you go to work this week your most difficult client / worker might be your best learning. Ask yourself what have I learned that makes me stronger. What is my lesson this week?

Paul

As a recovered cancer patient I do agree with your friend in that a persons outlook on life changes after recovery, (I also agree that I would not want to go through it again). There is a greater gratitude for living, and what may have bothered you in the past may be considered trivial now. Every person in the United States, as well as many others throughout the world, had a very traumatic experience on September 11. More traumatic for some than others, but it did affect us all. Whether we realize it or not this has made us look at things with a little different attitude. We feel the pressure, and the pain, but we also feel the pride. This is the United States. We are a group of people who are standing up, putting out our flags, and letting the world know how proud and united we are. I also feel that we are showing the gratitude we have for being part of this great country. Kevin MA

Several years ago I left a very abusive, alcoholic spouse, after 25 years of marriage. I have begun a new life - with many blessings - including a new love who has rarely said an unkind word to me. Two of my three children do not speak to me (their father convinced them I was the "crazy" one, and that's why he drank). With the holidays approaching I struggle with the pain of loving and losing brings. I am glad you reminded me to count my blessings. We are truly fortunate for the "resurrection times" because through them we gain new life perspectives, and ultimately new life. AK

Sometimes I forget to be thankful for those small blessings. Like this morning.....it's Monday, rainy and turning colder here. All of a sudden I was thankful for the past weekend of warmth and sunshine...and, of course, wishing I had it back today. There are so many things I have to be grateful for every day...but sometimes I just forget to look for the positive. I think my personal theory of life is my best "grateful thankful"....."I can take all the crap in my life and wallow around in it or I can accept it as just a 'life experience' and move on. I choose to move forward and forget the self-pity." I have little patience for those folks who choose to wallow around in it. Ginger AR

The sun went down here yesterday, not to rise again until January 23. I am grateful for your warm and cheerful messages of encouragement for our work. Anne AK

We really do have much to be thankful about. I personally am glad to have another day to do better, in the way I treat others and thanking my Maker for the beautiful things around me. I am overwhelmed with work and have volunteered to assist in filing unemployment claims for another Branch in our Department because of the increase in claims. We went from receiving hundreds of claims a week to over 2000 a week due to the economy and the September 11 tragedy. I am very happy to help and thankful not to be, as they say, "on the other side of the counter". I have a wonderful family, a great job, many friends, and no matter what, if we can accept the good times why not the bad so I try to remember that always. Here are words of courage to be shared that I just received from a friend who is trying find full time work; COURAGE Doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying "I will try again tomorrow." May you have a blessed and wonderful Thanksgiving Holiday. Thanks again for your most encouraging messages! Anita CA

Your article on "An Attitude of Gratitude" really hits home for me. I have had a year of a life changing events and now see things differently than I ever did before. I have lost my grandmother, and 1 year old nephew, two of my son's friends we recently killed in a car accident which has been hard for my son, and the hardest thing I ever faced, losing my Dad. He just has always been there and I thought (for some crazy reason), that he would always be. It has been just a few months and I miss him dearly. I will always remember that he taught me no one is better than any one else and everyone will be judged by only one person, and that one is the only one that matters. I now try to not take advantage of the ideal that I have tomorrow because I do not know that I do. The things that I once thought mattered really do not at all. It is to bad that it does take a negative event to make people realize life is to short and sometimes there is not a tomorrow. To many times the material things are the most important to some people, but just like you or I they will not take them with them when they leave this world either.

Your right about the bad things, sometimes are a lesson. Some of my co-workers were upset that I was taking off so much to be with my Dad when things got bad. At that moment I realized, I can get another job, I will not have another Dad. The job was last on my list. If I died tomorrow I am sure they would replace me and the work would still get done with or without me.

I am thankful for the time I had with my father and the things he has taught me, I am a good person because of him and hope to teach my sons the values I learned. I am grateful that God has given me 3 great boys which are a gift, and the time I will have to spend with them. Sometimes in this business people forget that children truly are a gift, I have friends who would love to have a child and cannot and they are the ones who really see them as a gift from above. Counting my Blessing Every Day!! OH

.I'm grateful for my strength. And you're right, that only comes with "surviving" something, being a fighter, not giving in or up! I have also learned a lot from the painful stuff. What's that saying? "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger"! Here's to all of us "stronger" folks! Kathryn NY

I have so much to be thankful for that if it were to be measured monetarily Bill Gates would look like a pauper by comparison. What comes immediately to mind, however, is that 25 and 1/2 years ago, God gave me the opportunity to be a responsible person, 1st to myself then to my "loved ones" then to the people, places and things around me every day. It's a roller Coaster ride, Paul, but I wouldn't change it for anything. At least not Today. Have a very happy and peaceful Holiday. Ray ME

There are so many things to be grateful for this particular Thanksgiving. As always I am reminded that one of our greatest freedoms is to choose empowerment over victimization. As a person who has had my share of struggles I know there is no greater joy than that of moving from the position of asking the question, as Harold Kushner puts it, from "Why me?" to "What do I do now that this has happened to me?" Susanne CA

The friend you have who had the cancer could have been me. You may recall that five years ago, just before Christmas, I found out that I had a tumor on my Thymus (right behind the Sternum). When it was removed, it was found to be malignant and I underwent 31 radiation treatments. Strange thing is, I never thought I was going to die from it, but it certainly did help me get things in perspective. I feel extremely blessed and thankful for every day that I have now. I heard Dr. Robert Shuler pray this prayer recently and I've sort of adopted it as my mantra, "Lord, lead me to the person you want to speak to through my life today." Elly GA

I find your message timely, as I have been doing a lot of reflecting as of late. I have found that I have been discovering what is really important in life in just the last year or so. I used to be consumed with success and appearances. I am at a place now where none of that matters. I am not sure what brought me to these revelations, except maybe it's an age thing. By that I mean the experience that comes from aging. I have come to a place where I have come to look at all the beautiful things that I have collected over the years as what they really are, just things, my attachment to them is a futile attempt to claim immortality. For the first time since I turned 50, I am beginning to rejoice in my age. My new found insight is setting me free. My partner and I have been together for 31 years, I used to resent him for keeping me from experiencing life to its fullest. Now, I realize how full my life has been because I was granted the privilege of sharing our lives for so long, and to have had him there to share the pain and the joy my life has seen. We are now at a place where we are looking forward to ridding ourselves of all the possessions of our lifetime together, and living a much simpler and freer lifestyle. We are still a few years away from this goal, but we are sure that when we reach it, it will because we are in it together. Terry ME

I am grateful that we are healthy and happy. We had a hard year; layoff, cancer treatment, heart attack and then my family, including my 4 year old godson (more like a son to me), moving away so his grandfather could find work. I went from a ½ time father to only seeing him once a month. I try to take my own advise (its easier to give) and accept things as "one door closes, and another one opens". In the meantime, I keep my objectives in life simple. I say that there are only 2 important things in life; the people around you and the quality of relationships/reputations that you keep with them. Follow that and you will never get lost and always have something to be thankful for, even in the hard times. Richard CA

I am going to use the thankful material in my Work Net today. I think they need to hear it after the plant closure they went through. Tamara CA

I am grateful to have a job and to work with such nice people. I am grateful for my wonderful husband and my children and all the joy they bring to my life. I am grateful for Jesus who died on the cross for my sins so that I may one day come to be with God I am grateful for my clients who help me put things in perspective. They teach me so much. I am grateful for our wonderful President Bush who has shown the world that average people can do important things. Is he terrific or what!!! I am grateful for all the

firefighters, policemen/women, emt's, who place their lives on the line daily so that we can be safe. I am grateful for our Splendid military, present and former, who have chosen to risk their lives so that we may be free. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to express my appreciation and have a wonderful Thanksgiving. Susan GA

Have a great Thanksgiving, we all, each of us have a lot to be thankful for, we just never take the time to think about it and count those blessings. Art CA

I have changed my prayer-time to thank-you-time. Instead of giving my grocery list of wants/needs, I have been giving thanks for trials, tribulations, lessons learned, friendships, loved ones, the beauty of nature, vision, etc. As my focus is turning to the blessings in my life, the things I am not so thankful for seem easier to handle. The difficulties of life haven't gone away, they just don't matter as much. I am finding I have many, many blessings. Patricia GA