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Being Thankful Makes Us Happier

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Being Thankful Makes Us Happier

The sign in front of a small country church caught my eye: “It’s not happy people who are the most thankful. Rather it’s thankful people who are the most happy.”

The power of giving thanks to transform any situation is still something of a mystery. When someone gave thanks in the Bible, a miracle often followed. Jesus gave thanks before He broke the five loaves and two fish to feed the five thousand (Mat 18:19-21). He lifted His eyes to heaven and gave thanks to His Father before calling the four-day-dead Lazarus to come forth from his tomb (John 11:38-44).

But gratitude doesn’t always come naturally. Just ask any parent. We have to teach our children to be thankful. In much the same way, God trains His children. We see in the Old Testament that He created rituals and celebrations to teach thankfulness.

When we give thanks to God, we experience something even more powerful—His grace. Our word “grateful” comes from an old English word “grate,” which means “thanks.” “Grateful” is also related to the word *grace*.

The Greek word commonly translated “grace” in the Bible is *charis*. Grace describes God’s unmerited favor to us through Jesus Christ. *Charis*, or grace, can also mean gratitude. “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly...with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude [*charis*] in your hearts” (Col 3:16 NIV).

Charis is the very substance of our salvation. “For it is by grace [*charis*] you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God... (Ephesians 2:8 AMP). How exciting to think that as we practice gratitude, we breathe new life into our understanding of God’s amazing grace!

However, it requires something of a fight to remain thankful when life is hard. To walk in God’s grace in our broken, and sometimes hostile world. Peter reminded a church that was being heavily persecuted to hold onto “the true grace of God” and “to stand firm” in this wonderful, gratitude-infused grace (1 Peter 5:12).

I believe that as we become more and more thankful, we just might discover that we’re also becoming happier!

[by Marilyn Chadwick, founder, SEEDS of Hope, Charlotte, NC]