



Unstoppable Gratitude

If you look up the word “gratitude” you’ll find this definition: “the quality of being thankful, readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.” But this definition doesn’t come close to describing the essence of the word, because gratitude is much more than just saying “thank you.”

Gratitude is a deliberate attitude that shapes your outlook and changes the way you engage with others. And most importantly, gratitude is a way of worshipping God. As John Ortberg puts it, “Gratitude is the ability to experience life as a gift.”

Gratitude is powerful.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to Jesus followers in Thessalonica, said: *“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you.”* And in his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul said, *“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”* – Philippians 4:6-7

It’s important to purposefully cultivate feelings of gratitude. When you are consistently on the lookout for God’s blessings, you begin to develop deeper faith in the God who is both extravagantly generous and entirely faithful. And faith plays a huge role in shaping your emotions and your outlook. After a while, a habit of acknowledging God’s blessings leads you to an awareness of God’s goodness regardless of your current circumstances. You begin to feel grateful in times of plenty and in times of challenge.

As you cultivate an attitude of gratitude, you become more positive in your outlook on life, and positivity makes you a better leader, a better family member, and a better friend.

But a grateful outlook has even more benefits. Many studies have shown that the regular practice of gratitude can reduce stress, increase physical health, and provide an expanded perspective that can lift you above your circumstances. As Dr. Bill Malarkey in his book “Take Control of Your Aging” says, “Stress is the greatest determinant of aging, and the antidote to stress is gratitude.”

Gratitude transforms relationships.

It is all too easy to move through life unaware of God’s goodness and blessings, but the truth is that every good thing comes from God - including the breath we breathe and



even the kindnesses we experience from other people. A deep awareness of your blessings enables you to find joy and intimacy in your relationship with God and with others.

Expressing gratitude, even to strangers, has a positive effect on both the giver and the receiver. And noticing and acknowledging kindness from family members and co-workers is a catalyst for healthy relationships.

Think for a moment....

- *Are you ever frustrated when someone thanks you?*
- *Are you ever frustrated when someone DOESN'T thank you?*
- *Have you ever made a situation worse by being grateful?*

Feeling and expressing gratitude creates a warmth that can soften tense situations, draw others closer to you, and build trust that will elevate your relationships. In interactions with other people, being grateful will always yield a better outcome.

So take time to notice every person who touches your life in a positive way, and be intentional about finding and thanking those who leave positive fingerprints on your life. God has blessed us so we can be a blessing to others, and grateful people make God shine.

Gratitude can transform entire organizations.

Positive organizational change happens when trust is high, and gratitude builds a foundation of trust. Whether you are the leader of an organization or part of the team, you can set the tone for a culture of gratitude.

Most companies have a recognition system that allows managers to reward and thank individuals or teams and provides a way for employees to acknowledge each other's work and achievements. These programs are great formal ways to show gratitude, but organizational transformation begins at a much more basic level.

It starts with recognizing the basic blessing of engaging with co-workers and saying simple things like "Thank you so much for your partnership." When you express gratitude this way you are basically saying "thank you for showing up"to a meeting, for a task, etc. And though expressing gratitude this way is relatively easy, those simple words build trust and set the tone for teamwork, mutual problem solving, and even effective conflict resolution.

A culture of gratitude in an organization happens when individuals are routinely expressing appreciation about all the little things - time shared in meetings, progress toward goals, and so on. Organizations are complex, but in organizations where people

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appreciate each other there is less in-fighting, and more transparent communication. And when organizations operate like that, co-workers trust each other and are more likely to align their efforts and accomplish incredible things.

Practice gratitude.

Mark Batterson wrote, that *“we don’t see the world as it is, we see the world as we are. If you are looking for something to complain about - you will always find it. If you are looking for something to give thanks for, you will always find it.”* This idea can be illustrated in a simple equation: Circumstance + Response = Outcome.

Think about it. You can’t control your circumstances, but you can control how you respond. When you practice gratitude on a regular basis, you become more adept at finding things to be grateful for regardless of your circumstances. And when you habitually respond to circumstances by giving thanks, outcomes tend to be better for you and for those around you.

One practice that can help cultivate a habit of gratitude is journaling. Writing things down brings clarity about thoughts and emotions, and journaling gratitude is a great way to see and remember all the ways God is working in your life. When times of struggle come, you can look back at the faithfulness of God, and because you have developed a habit of recognizing and acknowledging God’s goodness, you are better able have faith and maintain a positive outlook.

Another practice that can help you develop an attitude of gratitude is beginning your prayers by thanking God for everything you can think of. You can simply complete the sentence, “thank you God for...” over and over.

It doesn’t matter how you practice gratitude, but it does matter that you practice it. Gratitude can transform your outlook, your relationships with other people, and even your relationship with God. So, aspire to develop sincere, consistent, moment-by-moment gratitude. The blessings of God are everywhere if you look for them.

*“I will thank the Lord with all my heart
as I meet with his godly people.
How amazing are the deeds of the Lord!
All who delight in him should ponder them.
Everything he does reveals his glory and majesty.
His righteousness never fails.
He causes us to remember his wonderful works.
How gracious and merciful is our Lord!”* – Psalm 111:1-4



Discussion Questions

1. What are the ways that you are seeking to regularly express gratitude to God?
2. Have you had an experience in which the practice of gratitude helped you in some way? What did “gratitude” look like in that situation and what happened as a result?
3. What are some specific ways you are being intentional about showing gratitude to other people? Have you experienced a difference in someone’s reaction or attitude toward you after you expressed gratitude to them?
4. Are there systems in your workplace for expressing gratitude to others? What are you doing personally to make sure the people you work with know you are grateful to them?
5. What could you begin doing this month to be more consistent in expressing gratitude to God and to others?



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Marisa has a 20+ year career in the Life Sciences space leading global portfolios for large drug and device companies such as Baxter, Edwards Lifesciences, and Medtronic as well as identifying and implementing growth strategies for smaller privately held organizations. Her passion is aligning unmet needs with strategic choices and motivating cross functional teams to implement. Prior to her career in Life Sciences, Marisa also worked for Ford Motor company in manufacturing and marketing roles.

Marisa holds an MBA from the University of Michigan, and a BS Degree from Purdue University. She lives in Southern California with her husband and two boys. In her free time, she can be found outside rock climbing, kayaking, skiing, or cheering her sons on at a baseball game.

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Marion served in pastoral ministry for 17 years at three local churches including, most recently, Willow Creek Community Church. During her church ministry, she incorporated her organizational development skills with her practical knowledge of effective discipleship to create growth strategies that focused on the equipping and mobilization of congregations on the mission of Jesus. She holds degrees from Trinity International University and Wheaton College in Organizational Leadership and Missional Church Movement.



***4word** is a global community of Christian women in the workplace. Our mission is to help women in the workplace reach their God-given potential with confidence.*

Why 4word?

At 4word, we know you want to reach your God-given potential so you can have a Kingdom impact on your workplace and the world. To do that, you need resources for professional and spiritual growth - and a community of like-minded women to cheer you on!

The problem is your time is limited and meaningful connections are hard to find. This can leave you feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and isolated on your life's journey.

We believe you shouldn't have to navigate work, life and faith on your own because God designed you for community. You are worthy to be surrounded by loving and supportive women who "get you."

We understand you face unique challenges as a Christian woman in the workplace, which is why we create easy-access opportunities for leadership development, spiritual growth, and connections to influential women around the globe.

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- Connect to a community – We offer virtual and in-person Community Groups specifically designed for working women – and we also have special groups for executive women.
- Access relevant content – 4word's podcast, blog, and our Community Group Discussion Guides are specifically geared to women in the workplace to help thrive on your journey.
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