

The Power Of 'Thank You'

by Ted E. Bowling

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What is the most powerful two-word phrase in the English language? If a poll were taken, it would result in many different answers. Possibly “Love you.” Or “I’m sorry.” Both of those are quite significant and important to tell others frequently. But, in the opinion of many, the most potent two-word phrase that one can say is “Thank you.”

It is a phrase

- » that can be utilized in almost every interaction, both personal and impersonal.
- » that is advantageous to both parties most of the time.
- » that can strengthen and uplift the recipient, especially one who is struggling.
- » that can disarm the angry and calm a fraught situation. An earnest, heartfelt “Thank you” can melt the hardest of hearts.

Researchers have found that saying “Thank you” can yield big rewards for our spiritual and physical health. The words have the power to transform our well-being, increase happiness, raise performance, and boost success. Mental health experts say that a grateful person is happier and more likely to maintain good friendships. Gratitude reduces stress, improves sleep, and floods the body with endorphins that uplift, energize, and promote well-being, countering the effects of hormones like cortisol that leave us drained, depleted, and depressed.

We older folks were likely taught from a very young age to say “Thank you.” But oftentimes, today’s children do not understand the significance of this phrase because it has not been drilled into them as it was a generation or

two ago. In addition, today's fast-paced world has witnessed a rise in ingratitude, which, whether passive or active, is a tool that Satan uses to divide us.

The lack of gratitude may be passively fueling the heightened anger and grief in our society. People do not feel appreciated, affirmed, or praised, and those two simple words, "Thank you," could do so much to change that outlook.

How many cases of road rage could be prevented with simple politeness? If a driver lets another into his lane and receives a grateful wave in return, it has an impact. Without a doubt, it makes his drive home a lot more peaceful.

The Gratitude Gap

During this study of thankfulness, a new term kept popping up: the gratitude gap. A gratitude gap occurs when a person fails to express gratitude as much as he should, diminishing the powerful effect that thanking others has on both the giver and the receiver.

In one study, researchers learned that at the workplace, employees consistently said that they wished they were more appreciated and that it was disheartening to realize how seldom they heard the words "Thank you." Gratitude is too uncommon in the American workplace. Hearing "Thank you" is special because it makes the employee or co-worker feel valued, both for himself and for his contributions to the company.

Employers and managers who remember to say "Thank you" to those they supervise often find they get greater productivity out of their employees. Successful leaders know that saying "Thank you" is not a sign of weakness or insecurity but an expression of personal confidence and motivation.

The Bible is clear that gratitude must stand at the core of a converted disciple of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul implies the centrality of gratitude in Colossians 3:12-15:

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with

one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called into one body; and be thankful.

In these verses, Paul is describing the character of the new man, the traits of an individual who is being sanctified and transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. These scriptures should reflect the Christian's spiritual state and the goal that God is assisting us to achieve. They form a blueprint for the way of life we should be developing as Christians, to be like our Savior, Jesus Christ. The passage describes how He and the Father live and respond at all times. A genuine "Thank you" can reflect godly kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering, depending on the circumstances.

Gratitude for the Brethren and God

In I Thessalonians 5:11, Paul admonishes that congregation, "Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." Expressing thanks can comfort someone feeling down or unappreciated. The other verb here, *edify*, means "to build up; uplift; improve." Sometimes this can be done simply by engaging in an act of gratitude—by saying, "Thank you."

In II Thessalonians 2:13, the apostle writes:

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth . . .

The apostle Paul's wording emphasizes that it is our duty to be thankful for each other constantly: "we are *bound* to give thanks . . . *always* for you" (emphasis added). It is difficult for a person to be upset with another at the same time he is thanking God for his brother in Christ. It is an excellent directive, letting the good and beneficial attribute of gratitude crowd out the negative, sinful attitude toward others in the congregation. Thankfulness is more powerful than we may think!

Notice also that Paul refers to giving thanks for others as a duty, an obligation that we are bound to fulfill. This duty motivates us to look out for each other, which manifests in comforting the faint-hearted, upholding the weak, practicing patience with everyone, and appreciating them with words of gratitude. Most importantly, we can express it by giving thanks to Almighty God for them and asking Him to bless and uphold them.

Paul commands God's people in Colossians 3:17, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Our gratitude must begin by giving thanks to God, for He is the Giver of everything. This fact means we should never, ever take anything we have received for granted. We must thank God and thank Him all the time. Gratitude for His extensive, unending providence should never be far from our thoughts.

We should be thanking God that He is God. We need to be thankful for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We must thank Him for our calling into the Body of Christ, into His Family. We ought to thank Him for His love for us, for faith, for hope, for knowledge—for every spiritual blessing He has so graciously given us.

And we should not think that our thanks rise no farther than the ceiling. There is no doubt that thankfulness, appreciation, and gratitude mean a great deal to God the Father and Jesus Christ. We know how we feel when someone gives us a sincere "Thank you." They feel the same!

"Thank yous" are extra-special when they are given, not only from the heart, but unexpectedly, when expressed without any particular gift or occasion demanding it. Such words of gratitude are especially appreciated. We need to thank our God, even when we have no specific blessing in mind, at any time of day or night. God always appreciates it when His children raise prayers of thankfulness to Him.

An Unthankful World

We live in an unthankful world. We live in a nation that takes most of God's blessings for granted. Most people never consider all the sacrifices that have

been made to produce them, their wealth, and their privileges. How important is being thankful?

Paul's statement in Romans 1:21 homes in on how important gratitude is in understanding the true God and remaining faithful to Him: “. . . because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” We can conclude that this present evil world came to be this way because of human disregard and ingratitude toward God. On the other hand, praise and thankfulness toward God help to maintain the proper relationship between God and us.

The apostle Paul includes “unthankful” in his list of evil attributes of people living in the last days (II Timothy 3:2). A quick look around is enough to convince us that those days are upon us and that ingratitude is a societal flaw from which we must turn away. An unthankful person is flawed because ingratitude is essentially self-centered, which in turn leads to idolatry, trusting the self more than God.

When we are ungrateful, we dishonor God. When we neglect being thankful, we will begin to change—and not for the better. Our hearts will harden, and we will become increasingly selfish. We will fail to appreciate others and our physical and spiritual blessings given so freely, and sadly, the resulting selfishness will be borne by those that we are closest to: our spouses, children, and brethren. We will soon alienate ourselves from God.

We must keep our hearts on guard against ingratitude. Many years ago, John Reid gave a sermon titled “[Be You Thankful](#),” in which he said:

We can be working to obey God, we can be blessed by God, and we can approve of God's laws and actions, but if we are not praising and thanking Him, an important aspect of our development in becoming part of the God Family is missing. Gratitude is the glue, in a sense, that cements our relationship with God!

Being thankful to and for God and each other acts like glue that binds us together. The apostle Paul in Colossians 3:14 urges us to “put on love, which is the bond of perfection,” and done properly, gratitude is an expression of

love, love for God and love for fellow man. It is one way—a vital way—we can show godly love for our God and each other.

Paul also says that love is the greatest of godly virtues (I Corinthians 13:13), which makes expressing gratitude a powerful tool indeed. We should never pass up the opportunity to give thanks.