

## A Grateful Life

By Executive Director, Dave Reed

Let me just say, how grateful I am for each one of you reading this article. As many of you know, we just wrapped up the Ethiopia van campaign. Several years ago, I remember feeling intimidated just considering trying to raise funds for the van. That amount of money felt near impossible. Yet, that is just what happened. God's faithfulness to compel friends like you to pass on His blessings, challenged my assumptions of what we could accomplish together. God reminded me that His resources are unlimited, even if mine are not. I was honored to pass on those funds to our Ethiopia staff on behalf of all of you. Your generosity is just another item I can add to my "grateful for" list.



You might ask, what is a "grateful for" list? Let me share how mine came about.

At the beginning of this year, I felt God prompting me to do something I had not done for several years. God was challenging me to look ahead with a focus. How might I be intentional in my pursuits over the coming year, and where did He want me to grow. It was a quote I saw on Facebook that helped me put into words the theme God wanted me to focus on. *"What would you have today; if all you received from God was what you had thanked Him for yesterday?"*

Wow! Now there is a thought to consider! If you woke up tomorrow and all you had was what you thought to give thanks for today; how different life might look. I had gotten out of the habit of thanking God for all that I had, both large and small. God was challenging me to build a habit of gratitude that will culminate in a lifestyle that is not shaken by circumstances. From the moment I wake up and catch that first whiff of fresh air, I want to give thanks that I'm still breathing. Throughout the day as I go about my work, I want to give thanks that I have a job. When I lay my head on my pillow at night, on a soft bed with warm blankets; I want to give thanks. God wants me to be thankful for everything that comes my way, the rough spots, the moments of extreme joy and even the small, seemingly insignificant ways that He brings me joy.



*Simple things like a radio given by ROTOM several years ago are deeply appreciated by seniors who have so little of their own.*

Thus the need for my own "grateful for" list. It's not like I'm an unusually UN-grateful person. I wondered where along the path I'd lost my heart of thankfulness? It seemed that our cultural propensity to compare ourselves to those around us and the push to want more had crept into my heart. Not

necessarily grandiose ambitions of big houses and fine cars, but modest desires like a cure for my wife's, constant, unexplained migraines, a remedy for my adult child's depression or even my own bouts with shadows would be nice. These desires are not wrong in and of themselves, but it causes us to forget all that God has done and is doing in the present. Can I be grateful for the hard times and my current circumstances rather than always wanting more?

Recently, a quote in my devotional reading resonated with my heart.

*“Comparison sabotages two relationships at the same time: your relationship with God, and your relationship with other people. You can’t fully love others when you are jealous of them or trying to outperform them. And you can’t love God when you think maybe God has given you a bad deal.”*  
(source Theology of Work Project “Practicing Gratitude” devotional reading plan [www.thetheologyofwork.org](http://www.thetheologyofwork.org)).

As I reflected on this quote, I realized how true it is. None of us had a part in deciding how, or to whom or where we would show up on this planet. Only God knows why the particulars of our birth and the details of our subsequent years have been chosen. Some of the outcome has resulted from our own choices, but where we started was not. All of our days from beginning to end are in the hand of God. How often are we grateful only for what is good, while being angry at what is hard. How often the enemy leverages disappointments and discontent to undermine our sense of God’s goodness.

In the Scriptures we are constantly being reminded to give thanks. And it is clear that giving thanks is not just for the good things, but for the hard things as well. Philippians 4:6 tells us *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, **with thanksgiving**, present your requests to God.”* Do you see how thanksgiving brings all the issues that lead to anxiousness, fear and distraction into a proper perspective. God knows what we are thinking but He wants us to bring those issues to Him. But like any Dad, he wants us to recognize that as his children, all we have and all we are, result from His love and grace toward us.

So how about you? Do you have a “grateful for” list that you keep and refer back to it; over time adding more to it as you experience the blessings of God’s inheritance? If you don’t, why not start one? You could even make it a family affair by sharing around the table a few nights a week what each person was grateful for. Sometimes kids can lead the way in this area because they are still so full of wonder at everything around them. It can be good for us a little further along in years to be reminded that being grateful comes easy when every day is a new adventure and we look through the eyes of a child.

Let’s commit together to be grateful in all things; especially in this crazy time, we can be the light of Christ in a dark world.

Philippians 1:3 (NIV) - *I thank my God every time I remember you.*