

GRATITUDE

Author Melody Beattie wrote, *“Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”* True, indeed. That’s what gratitude *does*, but what *is* gratitude? National Medal of Arts winner, Lionel Hampton, a multi-award-winning jazz musician in the 20th century, defined it in a very practical way, *“Gratitude is when memory is stored in the heart, not the mind.”* That’s a lovely thought with which I agree. But that only works if one’s heart is in the right place.

As our nation recently celebrated Thanksgiving Day, we must not let it escape our notice that the deepest giving of thanks must be accompanied by genuine gratitude. Being grateful is actually a prerequisite for thankfulness. Once we are genuinely grateful, we must recognize the source of that for which we are grateful. We must recognize that the vast majority of what we have, life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, food, family, friends, fun, shelter and clothing and joy, God is the giver, for He has created the raw materials from which we build those things. Gratitude is the fertile soil of the soul from which true thanksgiving grows.

If we don’t recognize Jehovah God as the great creator, builder, giver of life and source of all blessings, we will most likely live in frustration, feeling under the thumb of mindless circumstance, or we will begin to credit ourselves with whatever we have and become smug, feeling superior to those who have less, and inferior to those who have more.

To the contrary, when we live in genuine gratitude which flows into thanksgiving to God, we begin to know we are loved by Him, and blessed by Him, and the attitude those two create becomes a life lived in a positive place, even if the world is falling apart. No wonder Paul commands us to let our mind dwell on positive things (Philippians 4:4-8).

In this often dark and foreboding world we must, as the famous author *Anonymous* one wrote, *“Put some gratitude in your attitude. There’s always something to be grateful for.”* He also gives us the practical process of getting there, *“Spend the day appreciating every little thing that comes your way and you’ll end the day feeling deeply grateful for your life!”*

Yes, I know the world is coming apart at the seams. But remember Jesus said in John 16:33, *“These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”*

Ray Wallace