

Start the New Year with gratitude

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

The gifts are given. The dinner is done. Family and friends have probably come and gone. Perhaps you attended church and pondered deeply the birth of Jesus and its significance to the world.

Now that Christmas is past, is that all there is? No. It is time for gratitude. Gratitude is recognizing and acknowledging good. We may have received much or little on Christmas, but without gratitude on our part, an essential element is missing.

Gratitude is like those special glasses in a 3-D movie. Without the special glasses, the picture looks ordinary and flat. With the glasses, the action in the movie literally appears to jump out at you. The glasses turn an ordinary film into an incredibly memorable and delightful experience. You can be in the same theatre watching the same picture, but if you don't wear the special glasses you won't see why others are having such a good time.

Gratitude has this effect. Looking through the lens of gratitude, or appreciation of another's efforts, a child's crudely made card becomes a cherished treasure. The lens of gratitude helps children to recognize the love and hours of work, sacrifice and saving behind those Power Rangers, train sets, clothes, or car.

What do we see with a grateful heart? When life is hard or we feel sad, gratitude opens a window and lets the light shine into our heart. Gratitude magnifies the good that is going on.

One of the Biblical words for gratitude is praise. How often we are advised to praise the Lord, to be grateful to God for his love toward us even when we don't see it!

A favorite Old Testament story illustrates the tremendous importance of gratitude in unleashing the power of God in our lives. (II Chronicles 20) Three armies joined forces to annihilate the army of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. The king gathered the people together to pray to God for help.

His prayer began with praising God. Jehoshaphat acknowledged that God is mighty and certainly more powerful than the enemy. His gratitude was rewarded.

The message from God was, “Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s.” Then the people were instructed to go out early in the morning to meet the combined armies.

Jehoshaphat’s gratitude or praise of God did not end with his prayer. In the morning, the Bible recounts, “he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah...”

It was genuine gratitude which unleashed the power of God’s protection against envy, greed and malicious violence. Gratitude gave courage to Jehoshaphat and his outnumbered followers. Gratitude enabled them to go forward. Gratitude brought victory.

Gratitude does not come once a year on Christmas. Learning to maintain an attitude of gratitude will sweeten life’s experiences, renew our enthusiasm, reveal God’s power over our lives. Starting our prayers with gratitude, acknowledging God’s present goodness, brings blessings. Putting gratitude first, instead of waiting to be grateful, opens the window of opportunity and grace. “Gratitude and love should abide in every heart each day of all the years,” writes Mrs. Eddy. What a wonderful way to start the New Year, looking at life through the lens of gratitude!

Published in: *Nashville Metropolitan Times January 9, 1996*
Gallatin News Examiner January 12, 1996