

## The Power of Gratitude

Gratitude and emotional intelligence (EQ) are deeply connected, as gratitude enhances key components of EQ, such as self-awareness, empathy, and relationship management. If your self-awareness is low, you will not be aware of the things for which to be grateful due to your lack of reflection. Gratitude requires reflection. **Practising gratitude shifts our focus from what we lack to what we have**, which in turn increases self-reflection and positive emotional awareness. **People who regularly reflect on gratitude tend to recognize and regulate their emotions better.** Gratitude reduces stress and negative emotions such as envy, resentment, and frustration. **Gratitude helps individuals recognize and appreciate the efforts and emotions of others, leading to stronger social connections.** Saying thank you is something we were taught when we were young. It's probably one of the most reinforced practices carried out by a parent. Think of what you say to your children; "Say thank you Mom" or "Thank you Dad." However, a deep sense of appreciation is more than just politely saying thank you. Appreciation goes beyond basic courtesy. Appreciation is something that stems from a deep sense of gratitude. **People can often tell when someone is thanking them because they have good manners and were brought up to be polite.** Research has found that one of the main reasons why people leave companies is they don't feel appreciated. **People don't leave jobs, relationships, or communities—they leave where they don't feel appreciated.** This is not to say that no one ever thanked them, or they were not paid. **You can have many people thank you, yet you still don't feel appreciated.** One of the greatest love-tank fillers in marriage is appreciation. For those who are married, appreciation is good for your spouse and it's also good for you. As you appreciate your spouse you are continuously reminded of the good things about them. Appreciation activates an attitude of gratitude. **Appreciation is the currency of strong relationships—spend it generously.** In this message I would like to share with you the technology of appreciation. How can you show appreciation and how can you make this practice impactful? As you listen to this message think of ways to fill your loved ones' emotional bank account through the practice of appreciation. We will start off by examining what the Word says about gratitude and its power. From there we will look at some research on gratitude. We will then explore why we struggle with appreciation by looking at some Appreciation Busters. Lastly, I will give you some practical tools for communicating appreciation.

### 1. Jesus expects us to communicate gratitude

*Luke 17:11-19* <sup>11</sup> Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy<sup>[a]</sup> met him. They stood at a distance <sup>13</sup> and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" <sup>14</sup> When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. <sup>15</sup> One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. <sup>16</sup> He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup> Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" <sup>18</sup> Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

Their healing took place in the context of obedience. They had to follow Jesus' instruction. Jesus was surprised by the ingratitude of the other nine. Verse 19 is the word meaning saved (*Sesōken*). (*It means, has saved, made whole, perfect active of sōzō, "to save, rescue"*). Gratitude can make you whole. He ended up with more than just physical healing. *Sesōken*, "has saved you" carries both a physical and spiritual connotation—potentially implying full restoration beyond just physical healing. It is interesting that he only returned when he saw he was healed. **Some people do not see how God has blessed them, so they never praise God.** Self-awareness is a key to gratitude. **Are you conscious of all the good things that God is doing in you and for you right now?** Think of a time where you were healed and only realised it a few days later. "Oh that headache is gone!"

### 2. A heart of gratitude is seen in how we thank God for people.

**Ephesians 1:15-16 – 16** *I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.*" Some translations read, "I do not cease to give thanks for you..."

Who do you thank God for? How regularly do you do so?

### 3. We are called to have gratitude in every and any situation

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** *16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

These are three things that are linked and should be happening ALL THE TIME in the life of a believer; rejoicing, praying and giving thanks. **Joy, prayer, and gratitude should define a Christian's life.** These are not just suggestions but are stated as God's will for believers. Gratitude as a lifestyle. It is not based on or limited to specific events. There is always something to be thankful for in any situation. We are not thanking God FOR everything, we are thanking Him IN everything. **Gratitude isn't about ignoring struggles—it's about finding purpose in the midst of them.** For example, whilst my car was being fixed, I was using uber a lot. I described to Ps Michael the experiences I had and opportunities to pray and prophesy over the uber drivers. He mentioned that a door for ministry was opened through this experience. This is an opportunity for me to thank the Lord.

Look how many times gratitude and thanksgiving are mentioned in this passage.

**Colossians 3:15-17** *15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. **And be thankful.** 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, **singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.** 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks to God** the Father through him.*

### 4. We are called to do deeds that result in thanksgiving to God

**2 Corinthians 9:11** – *"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."*

**What are you doing right now that is causing others to be thankful to God?** Does this give you fulfilment? I remember a time when someone was thanking God for something I had orchestrated but I was secretly feeling a bit sore because they hadn't thanked me. Despite my fishing for a complement, they continued to thank God.

### 5. Scientific research has established the uniqueness of gratitude

Research on gratitude has grown significantly, revealing its positive effects on various aspects of well-being. Below is a summary of 6 key studies and their findings (References and citations are at the end of my notes):

1. **Gratitude and Well-Being:** Gratitude has been linked to higher levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and reduced depression. Grateful individuals tend to cope better with stress and enjoy improved mental health.
2. **Physical Health Benefits:** Practising gratitude is associated with better sleep quality, increased physical activity, and fewer health complaints. These benefits contribute to overall physical well-being.
3. **Gratitude Interventions:** Engaging in gratitude exercises, such as journaling or writing letters of thanks, has been shown to enhance positive emotions and decrease depressive symptoms. These interventions can lead to lasting improvements in mental health.

4. **Cognitive Benefits:** Some studies suggest that gratitude may improve cognitive functions, including focus and resilience in learning environments.
5. **Altruism and Social Behaviour:** Gratitude has been found to increase prosocial behaviours, such as generosity and empathy, fostering better relationships and community bonds.
6. **Workplace Outcomes:** Expressing gratitude in professional settings can lead to higher job satisfaction, improved performance, and more respectful interactions among colleagues.

A good example of this is when receiving feedback. Say thank you first. This helps you to stall for time so that you are not defensive. It also helps you to take note of the fact that feedback is a gift.

## 6. The Appreciation Busters - Why we don't communicate gratitude.

Outlined below are 19 reasons I have identified that make us struggle to show appreciation when it's due; the appreciation busters. Go through the list below and try to identify which ones are common to you. Have a discussion with your loved ones about any emotional hurt that has been the result of lack of appreciation. We struggle to show appreciation because of the factors outlined below.

1. **We feel that our loved one is simply doing their job. It's their duty.** They are expected to do the particular task. This is similar to a situation in the workplace where some managers don't thank their subordinates saying that it's what they are paid to do. It's a mind-set that says that it's your duty as a husband, wife, Mom or Dad.
2. **We have a "tit for tat" mind-set.** You play your part, and I play my part, so I don't need to thank you. If you did your chore and I did mine, then we are "even stevens".
3. **If I thank you then you might get big headed** and think more highly of yourself than you ought.
4. **I have done what you did so many times before**, so it was about time you started doing it anyway, so why should I thank you.
5. **We are afraid of the intimacy that comes out of showing appreciation.**
6. **We have become hardened** and are not used to saying thank you anymore.
7. **We come from a tough upbringing where we are used to hard work.** We don't think they have really done much in comparison with what we grew up doing. Everything seems so easy in comparison to the tough chores we were used to.
8. **We feel that hard work and effort is good for them so why should we thank them.** They are doing themselves a favour.
9. **If they enjoyed doing it, we don't feel the need to thank them.** We only thank them for things they suffered doing. Appreciation is only shown if we perceive it to be a sacrifice for them. Taking me out on a date for a movie you like is not something I need to thank you for. You enjoyed it too, didn't you?
10. **We are unaware of the sacrifice and difficulties involved** in them making time to do the particular thing for us. I am conscious of this when people drive all the way out from another

town to visit us. We were on the receiving end of this when we were in Austin. They kept appreciating us for traveling to them for Christmas. We kept appreciating them for hosting us.

11. **We are so used to them doing it** that we have started to take it for granted.
12. **We feel we deserve their kindness.** It's pay-back time. We have kept a record of everything we have done for them. You don't have to thank someone who pays you back the money you lent them. In the same way we don't thank them if we feel that they owe us one.
13. **We are afraid that showing appreciation will make the person keep record of the task they have done and possibly expect something in return.** Avoiding expressive appreciation protects us from having them remind us continuously of what they have done as they wait for pay-back time. It's sometimes easier to act as if they didn't do anything.
14. **We subconsciously feel a loss of power when we thank them.** We feel it makes us less and gives them the upper hand. This tends to happen in debt-based relationships. If you have a tendency to control your relationships by giving gifts and doing favours, then you might also be one who struggles to show appreciation when others do things for you.
15. **We generally find it difficult to receive from others.** Showing appreciation is an acknowledgement that they did something for you. Often, we don't show appreciation because we are in denial that the deed was done. If you insist on paying for a meal when you go out with friends, it takes you a while to show appreciation after they end up paying. Why? You have not yet received the gift in your heart.
16. **We often feel too embarrassed to accept a large gift.** With large gifts or acts of service it can be difficult to just say "Thank you." We struggle to express our appreciation when we feel that just saying "Thank you" is not enough.
17. **They do the deed so often** that we feel like we are always thanking them to a point where it has lost its meaning. Sometimes we are embarrassed by the amount of times we have to keep thanking them.
18. **We think it's enough to appreciate them in our hearts.** We think about it but never communicate it. Unfortunately, the thoughts in our hearts don't have an impact on them unless they are expressed. **Unexpressed gratitude is like a gift never given—don't hold it back.**
19. **Showing appreciation sometimes exposes a weakness in us.** For example, it's not uncommon to find a spouse who does not show appreciation for being reminded of a function or appointment. This is simply because they would rather pretend they were aware of it than expose that they had forgotten. Sometimes this happens because of fear of retribution from their husband or wife; "Why do you keep forgetting about your appointments?" The appropriate response should be "Thanks so much for reminding me, it had slipped my mind." "Thanks for setting your alarm clock every morning. If it wasn't for that I would definitely have been late for work."

## **7. How to communicate gratitude.**

It has been found that the state of appreciating is one of the highest and most fulfilling emotional states possible. It's one thing to just say thank you, it's another to communicate heartfelt

appreciation. You can show appreciation **verbally**: *“Thank you so much for taking the time out to make my favourite meal.”* You can show appreciation through an **act of service**. *“My Love let me take the kids to school today, you always do it and I think you need a break.”* You can show appreciation through a **gift**. *“I just wanted to give you this voucher for a massage; you’ve worked tirelessly this week and you need a bit of a treat.”* You can write a heart-felt note on a **card**.

**For what do you appreciate your loved ones?** You appreciate them for **their deeds**. *“Thanks for filling my car up today.”* You appreciate them for **their abilities**. *“Thanks so much for your wise counsel. I would have made a big mistake if I had not asked you. I really appreciate your wisdom.”* You appreciate them for **their personality**: *“I was so relieved when you arrived because your bubbly personality and extraverted nature was what people needed. It took the pressure of me; thanks.”*

**How should we express appreciation?** Do it with **passion**. There is a difference between: *“Thanks for the meal”*, and *“Thanks so much for the curry it was so delicious!!!”*, whilst giving them an appreciative kiss. **Be specific**. *“I really appreciated the way you hosted everyone today. Your sense of humour really kept things light-hearted.”* **Acknowledge the impact of their action** or behaviour on yourself. *“Thanks for joining me for my work function. I felt much more relaxed than usual just having you there next to me.”* **Try to be timeous about it**. Don’t thank your spouse for the lovely meal the following day. **Try to thank them three times for something**; when they promise to give it; while you are enjoying the experience; and after the experience. For example, *“My Love, please may you get some grocery items from the shops on your way back home.”* *“Yes, sure”* *“Thanks so much. Here’s the list.”* During the activity, *“Thanks for taking the time out to do this, I know you are tired.”* When the deed is done; *“Thanks for all these lovely goodies!”* **Acknowledge the sacrifice that might have been made**. You appreciate them for going the extra mile. **You appreciate them for taking initiative** when it was not their duty or responsibility. *“Thanks so much for coming to the gynae with me today. I know that you are under a lot of pressure at work.”* **Acknowledge their current pressure or physical condition**. *“I really appreciate your help with this assignment that I am struggling with, particularly as you are not feeling well yourself.”* Try to **use specific times** for appreciation such as dinner time when everyone is seated around the table. It’s important to **show others what you appreciate** about your loved ones. This deepens their sense of security. **Gratitude lists**. Each time you start to feel critical and ugly thoughts toward your loved one, write down a gratitude list that highlights 5 things you are grateful for with regards to them. You get what you appreciate.

## References for Gratitude Studies

These findings underscore the multifaceted benefits of gratitude, highlighting its role in enhancing both mental and physical health, as well as social connections.

### 1. Gratitude and Well-Being:

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### 2. Physical Health Benefits:

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### 3. Gratitude Interventions:

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### 4. Cognitive Benefits:

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Karns, C. M., Moore, W. E., & Mayr, U. (2017). The cultivation of pure altruism via gratitude: A functional MRI study of change with gratitude practice. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 11, 599.

### 6. Workplace Outcomes:

7. Kaplan, S., & Wrzesniewski, A. (2018). The role of positive affectivity in the performance of organizational citizenship behaviors: A review and extension. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39(2), 133–146.