



THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

By Susan Zeloznicki, Susan Z Communications

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WE ALL THINK WE'RE GRATEFUL FOR WHAT WE HAVE, particularly those of us who have a religious overtone to our life. We may say grace and make offerings or tithes to those who are less fortunate and offer thanks on our day of worship.

But how many of us really understand what it means to give thanks? Thanks are not only reserved for the times joy and delight. When you are dealt a blow that seems too much to handle – that's when you have to be grateful.

Why? Life is a series of good and bad; naughty and nice; yin and yang. We really can't feel the good without the bad. We think we do, especially if we've done a good job of shielding ourselves from bad things. But we don't. We might be lulled into thinking everything is good, so why not be grateful? But without fully living our lives – and that includes the bad stuff – we are just walking the paces.

We use so many words without thinking, such as "I'm sorry," "please," and "thank you." Actively listen to yourself and your peers and see which phrases you hear over and over again. Which ones do you use? Those of us in service (and I consider our professions the pinnacle of service) overuse phrases because the client is always right (mostly) or we're trying to get someone else to perform under pressure. How many times have you started a conversation with a vendor or staff member that started, "I'm sorry we have to ask you for..." Be honest. More than you care for. Now, ask yourself how many times you were sorry and why?

Words like these lose their meaning because they are stripped of their power. We use them because they are appropriate for the situation, but we really don't mean them. We're all guilty. After all, what did you say last month when you opened that present you hated? There's a fine line between honesty, rudeness, and gratitude.

Let's get back to gratitude, the overall view of being thankful. Even the worst of times offer great opportunities to be grateful. We just have to look at the picture differently. Sometimes we can't see the good at the time and it's hard to be grateful. I'm often reminded of my partner Paul's experience when his first mountain bike was stolen from our front porch. At the time, it was a big financial hit – our insurance deductible was \$2,500 and getting it replaced was out of pocket. I remember he was upset for just a moment, and then he made a calm statement that whoever took it, needed it more than he did. This was difficult but without this action, he would

not have bought a better mountain bike or gone on to write the state's most comprehensive mountain biking guide book on the market. His attitude made all the difference.

We must strive for the same level of belief. Each of us has challenges that make the days hard. Believe me, there are days when I just want to give up – long-term nerve damage from cancer treatments 26 years ago have caused major struggles. I'd tried most everything Western medicine has to offer with poor results. Last Fall, I started an Oriental medicine treatment course and after months of nothing, my numb nerve endings woke up – to incredible pain. Worse than what I experiencing in the pain areas, it took every ounce of energy to find the gratitude. But, it paid off. There were days I couldn't even dial the phone or use a computer, but I believed the pain was for good and was grateful for feeling where there had been none.

Each day, write down the top three things you are grateful for. If you have more, write more. Reflect on the things you didn't appreciate to this point in your life: the divorce, the demotion, the broken bone, whatever. And, see how that helped change the course of your life. Sometimes, an obvious new door opens; sometimes, the results are more subtle. But, there are always ways to give thanks – to find the good even in the bad.

And, that's what sets us apart and allows us to appreciate our lives as a rich mosaic of experiences. Thank you for sharing in mine.