



Day 1:

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:21

We learned on Sunday that our gratitude and ingratitude determine the quality of our relationships. What we do with our gratitude or ingratitude will drive the direction and the health of all of our relationships.

Two psychologists, Michael McCollough of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, and Robert Emmons of the University of California at Davis, wrote an article about an experiment they conducted on gratitude and its impact on well-being. The study split several hundred people into three different groups and all of the participants were asked to keep daily diaries. The first group kept a diary of the events that occurred during the day without being told specifically to write about either good or bad things; the second group was told to record their unpleasant experiences; and the last group was instructed to make a daily list of things for which they were grateful. The results of the study indicated that daily gratitude exercises resulted in higher reported levels of alertness, enthusiasm, determination, optimism, and energy. In addition, those in the **gratitude** group experienced less depression and stress, were more likely to help others, exercised more regularly, and made greater progress toward achieving personal goals.

Dr. Emmons – who has been studying gratitude for almost ten years and is considered by many to be the world’s leading authority on gratitude – is author of the book, “Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier”. The information in this book is based on research involving thousands of people conducted by a number of different researchers around the world. One of the things these studies show is that practicing gratitude can increase happiness levels by around 25%.

Typically, if something bad happens to you during the day, your happiness can drop momentarily, but then it returns to its natural set-point. Likewise, if something positive happens to you, your level of happiness rises, and then it returns once again to your “happiness set-point”. A practice of gratitude increases your “happiness set-point” so you can remain at a higher level of happiness regardless of outside circumstances.

In addition, Dr. Emmons’ research shows that those who practice gratitude tend to be more creative, bounce back more quickly from adversity, have a stronger immune system, and have stronger social relationships than those who don’t practice gratitude. He further points out that “To say we feel grateful is not to say that everything in our lives is necessarily great. It just means we are aware of our blessings.” We can learn how to use the gratitude we feel to impact our relationships in a POSITIVE and HEALTHY way.

Paul reminds us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18:

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Reflect:

- Write a list of some of the things you are thankful for.
- Who is one person to whom you should express gratitude today?

Take Action:

- Take a step and express thanks to that person.