

CHARACTER



Gratitude

November 2004

Gratitude: thankfulness, feeling of obligation, sense of obligation. Acknowledgment, recognition, thanksgiving, giving thanks; thankful good will.

“One can never pay in gratitude; one can only pay “in kind” somewhere else in life.”

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Several years ago I had the opportunity to travel across Europe and Northern Africa as part of a Semester Abroad group which my father, a university professor, directed. I was just a child and was exposed to different cultures, languages, and ways of doing things. On one occasion, I had an experience that left an indelible impression on me. We spent a few days in Morocco, which was like being on the set of a large and exotic adventure movie. Toward the end of our excursion, our bus stopped at a local shopping area for a few minutes and just as we were returning to the bus, one of the students paused to purchase a bag of fresh oranges from a street vendor. As the transaction concluded and the student walked away, two police officers approached the vendor. We could not know what offense the vendor had committed, but he had clearly ruffled official feathers. The man noticed the officers just as they converged on him and tried to make a run for it. I remember him straining to get free as they clung to his jacket to forestall his escape. The two officers then proceeded to subdue the man beyond consciousness with billy clubs, while his oranges spilled into the street. Eventually the officers walked away, leaving the man twitching in the gutter. Stunned and bewildered, we witnessed the impact of the local law enforcement system. Whether part of the formal system or simply an informal way of dealing with “troublemakers,” the punishment was both swift and severe and without defense or due process. I have thought often of that experience as it relates to my own community. While we have many challenges in our day-to-day world, we truly have much to be grateful for. The current election process, though admittedly a bit tiresome and bitter at times highlights the

uniqueness and profundity of our system. We have the right to express our views, to disagree and criticize. We also have the right and responsibility to participate in the process to help make things better. We can worship as we choose, work and live where we choose. And we have the guarantee of due process. Our modern life is supported by innovations and advancements not even imagined just a few years ago.

My grandmother passed away a short time ago at age 99. She was a remarkable woman who lived a remarkable life. I pondered all that she had seen and experienced. The year she was born, Henry Ford sold the first model A for \$850. Theodore Roosevelt was president, the Wright brothers’ plane first took flight at Kitty Hawk and grandma’s family had the only telephone in town. She lived through the great San Francisco earthquake, WWI, the great depression, WWII, the Korean War, Vietnam and space travel. By her 40th birthday, there was still no sign of television, penicillin, polio shots, or frozen food. There was no radar, there were no credit cards, laser beams, or ball point pens. Man had not invented pantyhose, air conditioners, dishwashers or clothes dryers. 5 & 10 cent stores were places where she could actually buy things for 5 and 10 cents.

Now juxtapose that against what our children have seen and experienced in just a few short years! We are the beneficiaries of lightning-quick advancements in technology, medicine, transportation and information. We have computers with email and internet that provide instantaneous communication and data from almost anywhere in the world. We live in a society that, though not perfect, still must be labeled as remarkable.

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“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.

Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”

–Melody Beattie

“Remember that not to be happy is not to be grateful.”

–Elizabeth Carter

“To speak gratitude is courteous and pleasant, to enact gratitude is generous and noble, but to live gratitude is to touch Heaven.”

–Johannes A. Gaertner

Book List

Hannah and the Whistling Teakettle

by Mindy Warshaw Skolsky

Thank you, Mr. Falker

by Patricia Polacco

Silver Packages

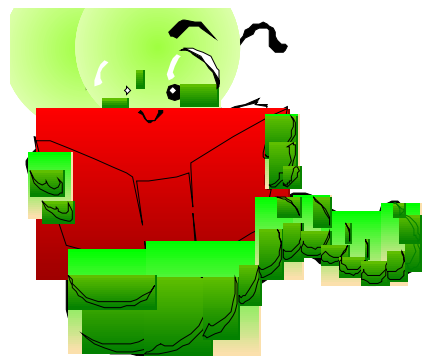
by Cynthia Gylant

Grandad's Prayers of the Earth

by Douglas Wood

Best Friends

by Loretta Krupinski



One scholar recently noted that “one change of shoes and one change of clothing puts us in the top 5 percent of human beings who walk on this planet. If one change of shoes puts us in the top 5 percent, where does a car put us? Where does the chance for a college education put us? [One individual] figured out that we had one chance in 20,400,000 of being born where we are today with all that we have (*Serving with Strength*, p. 59).

So at this season of Thanksgiving, I am filled with gratitude for the richness of our lives. Despite occasional problems and trials, each of us is a cornucopia overflowing with abundance. I am grateful to live in a society and community that possess values. I am grateful for the opportunity my children have to receive an education. I am grateful for supportive family and dear friends who help make my life rich and meaningful. And I am grateful to all who work and live in this community and make it the wonderful place it is.

By Shawn D. Moon
Lindon Resident

Family Activities

- Instead of the usual Christmas greeting**, write a Thanksgiving holiday newsletter that lists blessings for which each family member is grateful.
- Keep a daily gratitude journal** listing three different blessings each day.
- Play the “Memory Game of Thanksgiving.”** The first person tells what he is thankful for. (“I am thankful for animals.”) The second person tells what the first said, then adds another blessing. (“I am thankful for animals and balloons.”) Play continues.
- Marie Sklodowska Curie** was born in Warsaw, Poland on November 7, 1867. Madame Curie studied mathematics, physics, and chemistry in Paris and became famous for her research on radioactivity. Later, she received a Nobel Prize in physics and also one in chemistry. Said Madame Curie, “All my life through, the new sights of Nature made me rejoice like a child.” *How does the ability to be aware help in making scientific discoveries as well as in having gratitude?*

We, at Character Connection would like to focus on helping parents access character materials this year by using the web site located at www.thecharacterconnection.com. If you are interested in receiving a monthly reminder of the character traits and access to resource materials, please e-mail your address to arlainea@isquaredinc.com

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