

Gratitude, Life and Giving: Spiritual Entrepreneurship

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Gratitude is sustained kindness and gratefulness. On the other hand, ingratitude is one of the most ragged qualities. It is the profile of a person lacking a feeling of constant thankfulness, appreciation and consideration for the services, contributions and benefits received. In the world of business, you often hear the term of a gratuitous contract as an act or a gift for the benefit of others. However, there is always some kind of expectation of reciprocal acknowledgement and recognition to the maker.

One of the primary dangers of ingratitude is that it is contagious, more than the AH1N1.

In **The Culture of Complain**, Robert Hughes makes the strong point that we live in a society where some people perceive themselves to be entitled to have all desires fulfilled. These people take this to be part of their magical right. They accord themselves victims' status when it doesn't happen. Thus, this individual psychology is growing in numbers, creating an emerging culture of ingratitude that destroys mind and heart.

What are the signs that this discontent is present in the lives of some human beings?

1. People find they are dissatisfied or scared at their work. They are always engaging in conflicts, expecting to get money in a fast manner, searching for a real sense of identity or significance, and all this being crushed beneath the weight of their lack of proportional high expectations.

The formula is the following:

Lack of proportional high expectations + inadequate results =
discontent, complaint and ingratitude.

The opposite is also true: Realistic high expectations + adequate results = kindness and gratitude.

2. People are disappointed in their relationships, and are prone to say that other people don't meet all their business, technical, emotional and intimacy requirements, finding themselves resentful.
3. Rather than cultivating the psychology of letting go, they get preoccupied in whether or not they are truly happy with what they are achieving.
4. They try to escape from their discontentment by engaging in conflict, and not thinking and acting by what they can really achieve. Sometimes they seek artificial relief or distraction through watching TV, shopping, sex, alcohol or drugs.
5. They lose sustained generosity of spirit, responding to events in a suspicious, cynical or hostile manner.
6. They grow resentful of those whose circumstances are not exactly as theirs.

There is this kind of social and sometimes organizational, mysterious paradox. The main emotion of a growing number of people who have all the reasonable advantages of good income, education and culture is disappointment. Next time someone tells you that he/she is disappointed listen carefully.

If we want to learn, grow and mature in life, we have to reject the option of grumbling, waiting for others to do it for us, creating a culture of complaint and ingratitude.

We have to also overcome the tendency to keep looking for little happiness fixes that will keep us from noticing other deeper frustrations... Neil Clark Warren has instructed in his profound book, **Finding Contentment**, that this headlong pursuit of instantaneous happiness is designed to distract some people from the emptiness they feel and to numb the pain of their relationship difficulties and gnawing sense of low self-efficacy. This addiction requires daily, sometimes hourly, quick fixes...

The solution is that of practicing gratitude not as sign of obligation but as a clear manifestation of love, solidarity, mutuality and civic virtue. When the primary motive of gratitude is obligation, protocol or mere formality, obligation tends to choke the human heart. This condition can always be read in the eyes of the person...The eyes are the tunnel to the heart.

Let me get more extreme. As human beings, we have to give sincere thanks. We have to do so as a sign of civility and as an indication of a quality behavior (meaning doing the right thing all the time).

If we want to develop our character, we have to express in a sustained manner our debt of gratitude to our family, friends, colleagues, teachers and mentors. In other words, we have to work hard to become grateful people.

The ability to experience gratitude and offer heartfelt thanksgiving is one of the most fundamental attributes of a healthy character. It is also a sign of life and spiritual wholeness. True gratitude means being able to see that everything that we have is a gift, and life is the greatest gift of all. We can all count our blessings.

These days, I continuously practice strong gratitude. Every morning, I thank God and say “here comes another day in which I have health, thoughts, energy, hope and enthusiasm, and I am going to make a difference.”

I am grateful for the abundance of my life. Life is good and life is a gift.

So giving is how each of us can make a difference and can change people, families, organizations, communities, societies and the world.

Learning to show gratitude is a call to psychological action, to come together, right now, to solve problems, to transform organizations and to save lives everywhere. The call is to seek out what each of us, regardless of income, available time, position, age, and skills, can do to service and help to give people a chance to live out their promised dreams...

We can give money, time, services, knowledge, support, things, ideas, reconciliation and new beginnings... But we can also give and share

spiritual capital, peace, faith, hope, charity, compassion, forgiveness, humility and above all, love and gratitude.

Let me close with a quotation of a very beautiful book by Thomas Merton,

New Seeds of Contemplation: “The man who does not permit his spirit to be beaten down and upset by dryness and helplessness, but who lets God lead him peacefully through the wilderness, and desires no other support or guidance than the pure faith and trust in God alone will be brought to the Promised Land.” I express my full gratitude to the living God, family, friends, customers, students and colleagues. Thanks to you all.

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