

An Attitude of Gratitude



By Rob Pue

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There are so many sad, depressed and lonely people in our world today. They're not just pessimistic about the future, they're frightened of the present and overwhelmed with deep depression that they live with every day. For some, it's the loneliness from the loss of a loved one or a fractured family. For others, it's fear of their financial situation or future. Many have lost their motivation and find no purpose in their lives as they drift, day by day, without direction or aspiration of any goals for the future. Some search in vain, trying to find that elusive happiness, and still, they live in constant discontent.

They feel an intense void in their lives and try to fill it in any number of ways. One of the most popular now is prescription medications that supposedly alleviate the depression and anxiety. The television commercials promise happiness and joy, showing people frolicking in the park on a sun-shiny day. But those drugs only numb the brain, treating the symptom, but never curing the problem because they never get to the heart of the matter. The side effects are shocking. And they all have long lists of side effects. Every one that I've seen includes increased anxiety and depression, as well as an increased level of suicidal thoughts. Obviously, these pills will never kill their ills.

But the use of prescription drugs has increased dramatically over the past few years. One study shows that one in three

Americans are on some type of anti-anxiety or antidepressant drug. Most who are, are taking more than one type. Another study shows that 67% of college students are now taking these drugs and expect to use them for their entire lives. And still, another report shows a 130% increase in use of drugs like this just in the past five years.

We have a society of mind-numbed zombies. They take the drugs to alleviate their depression, anxiety and discontent, but more often than not, they just leave the person feeling nothing, except intense sadness.

Depression is real, don't get me wrong. I understand that. But clearly the medical solution of drugs-for-life is not the answer. These so-called "medications" are helping no one except the pharmaceutical companies. Add to that the number of states that now allow "recreational" use of marijuana, along with so many who have been life-long heavy drinkers of alcohol and you can see why there are so many today with no ambition, no joy of living, no interest in working or building a career, being productive, marrying and raising a family, buying a home, or using their time and talents to help and care for others.

Another addiction of concern is that of "screens" – people are addicted to a virtual world (that is not real), which they access on their computers, tablets or phones. Interesting, they call those medium size screens "tablets." Yes, another kind of "tablet," but just as addictive as any drug. People have become so immersed in their electronic devices, they can no longer hold a conversation with another living person. They'd rather text than make a phone call. They'd rather post something on social media than maintain a relationship in real life. They avoid truly living because they fear it. An artificial "virtual" world is more appealing than reality.

Others try to obtain happiness through things. When I was a young person, just out of high school, I had a friend who used

to say, “he who dies with the most toys wins!” He was referring to his affection for “fun” things, like cars, trucks, snowmobiles, motorcycles, boats, jet skis, campers. It’s been many years since high school and I don’t see him around anymore, but I’ve heard he’s had a failed marriage, problems with alcohol and a broken family. Obviously, the “toys” never brought him any real joy.

Then there are those who live lives of envy as they perceive social media to be real life. It’s not real life, folks. It’s fake. Don’t envy the guy who’s showing off his new million-dollar car on social media. Chances are, he’s just posting a “selfie” as he’s standing in front of one. Or it’s rented. Or – (and this is something new in the last few years) – he may be a partial owner of this million-dollar car. People are buying them in groups now – sometimes as many as twenty people own that single vehicle, and once every 20 days they get their turn to drive it. They’ll take a lady out to dinner in this car to falsely impress her and then spend the rest of the time lying about it, telling her he only drives a fifteen-year-old Ford Focus because the million-dollar car is in the shop.

Women also get caught up in envy as they indulge their addiction to social media. They see other women (fake women) living lives of opulence and luxury. Women who appear beautiful, but they don’t realize it’s all “virtual.” It’s not real. The “beauty” is obtained through the use of photo editing software, photo and video “filters,” and now even AI-generated images. Not only are these women deceiving themselves, but they’re also causing others to envy them for something that doesn’t even exist.

Friends, we need to understand that envy and discontent are the results of “wanting.” People want what they don’t have, don’t have the motivation to achieve, or realistically know it’s very unlikely they’ll ever be able to get. And understand that “wanting” is purely a mental state of “lack.” You believe you lack what you want but cannot get. This is a common cause

of low self-esteem, anxiety, depression and sadness. Few appreciate the fact that in reality, they already have everything they need to be happy, yet they still covet unnecessary and vain things. The accumulation of things will never satisfy the soul. There are plenty of hoarders out there, and plenty of wealthy individuals that lack for nothing, yet they're hopelessly lost in depression and sorrow. "Enough" is never enough.

Don't fall for the fakeness found in the virtual world of the internet. Don't covet anything that is your neighbor's. Because the opposite of "lack" – and the cure for "wanting" – is abundance, and those who live in the Spirit of the Lord enjoy abundance, even though in the eyes of the world they may be considered "poor." More on this later, but first, let's read together Psalm 23 because it applies very well here:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

And while I'm at it, Hebrews 13:5 should not be left out... "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'"

Those who are deeply troubled and distressed; those who are filled with anxiety, fear, depression and sadness all have one thing in common – a distinct distance from God or no knowledge

or fear of the Lord. They have no hope for their future – only the vanity of the here and now, apart from God, and when youth and beauty fade, they're often left with only themselves...and then they come to the sad realization that they really don't enjoy their own company.

Certainly, deep sadness and depression can fall upon Christ followers as well. The enemy loves to discourage us. But those who diligently seek the Lord have something others don't: a genuine relationship with the Creator of all Heaven and Earth, with a Heavenly Father Who loves and guides us, a Lord and Savior that sticks closer than a brother and a Holy Spirit that comforts our souls in times of trouble.

My advice is to draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Instead of focusing on what you want and lack, fix your hearts on things above and intentionally determine to be thankful. Have an attitude of gratitude. Because gratitude and lack cannot exist in the same place at the same time. It can't happen. You can't be grateful for the blessings you've been given and feel you're lacking anything at the same time. Don't self-medicate by numbing your brain with drugs. Set your hearts and minds on Christ Jesus. Thank God for all the blessings He's provided, and your whole countenance will change.

I'm reminded of the old hymn by John Oatman, written in 1897, titled "Count Your Blessings." It goes like this:

"When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed, when you are discouraged, thinking all is lost; Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

"Are you ever burdened with a load of care? Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear? Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly, and you will keep singing as the days go by.

“So, amid the conflict whether great or small, do not be discouraged, God is over all; Count your many blessings, angels will attend, Help and comfort give you, to your journey’s end.”

Oftentimes, when I find myself loaded down with burdens and cares, I’m not able to sleep at night, or to quiet my troubled mind. So, I spend time in prayer and then I begin to count my many blessings. A word of caution here: if you do this – (begin to count your blessings) – instead of helping you fall into peaceful sleep, oftentimes I find myself unable to name all the many blessings God has so graciously given me – (the list is so long) – and I find I’m actually so filled with thankfulness, wonder and awe at what God has done for me, I’m too excited to sleep!

You see how that changes things? “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face. And the things of Earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.”

I’m convinced that most of the suffering and sadness in this world, most of the anxiety and depression so many suffer chronically from today, can be quickly and easily lifted. That heavy burden of discouragement and sorrow just vanishes, simply by turning to Christ, giving all that heavy yoke to God. He’ll lift you up, mend your wounded heart and you can rejoice in an everlasting life of joy with Him, the moment you seek Him, turn to Him and simply ask in humble repentance and faith.

Why don’t we do that? Why do we think we can live lives of illusion, preferring the fake counterfeit over the only One who can mend our broken hearts? The unrepentant, worldly, lost sinner turns to a bottle, or a smoke or a pill and they just become sicker. They turn to worldly enticements that will never satisfy the soul, but instead, only bring about a sense of wanting and lack. I will tell you, the wanting and lack is real. But it’s not a wanting or lack of things, recognition,

validation or affirmation from the world.

It's much more serious than that. It's a wanting and lack of the greatest love ever available to mankind – the love that comes when you know your Father God in Heaven, and His Son, Jesus Christ, and having our very soul filled with the Holy Spirit. You're homesick for heaven, where you're meant to be. And that heavenly life begins here in this world, in this life, when you turn to Christ. Are you ready for real healing? Are you sick and tired of being sick, tired, sad, discouraged, depressed and empty? "Ye, who are weary, come home." The very hand of God Himself is extended to you. Jesus waits for you, now, today, with open arms, to embrace you and wipe away every tear. Now you know what you lack. So, go to Him today, with an attitude of gratitude.

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