

THREE **GREAT** REASONS TO GIVE THANKS

By John Hilton III and Anthony Sweat

Doctrine and Covenants 59:21 says, “And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments.”

The two things that “offend God” the most are ingratitude (confessing not His hand) and disobedience. Let’s learn why we should be grateful so that we don’t offend God.

Reason #1: Being Grateful Makes You Happier and Healthier

You’ve heard the hymn “Count Your Blessings” (*Hymns*, no. 241). But did you know that literally counting your blessings increases your emotional health? Researchers had one group of students write for 20 minutes each day about things they were grateful for, a second about things they were angry about, and a third about random topics like the color of their shoes. Guess which group was happiest at the end of the



experiment? The ones who wrote about things they were grateful for of course!

Even more interesting is that those who wrote about the things they were grateful for were less likely to be sick throughout the semester.¹

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1917–2008) said gratitude “is a quality I have found in every happy person I know” (“Live in Thanksgiving Daily,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2001, 8). Do you know any happy person who is not grateful?

Reason #2: Being Grateful Helps You See More Blessings

There are many blessings that come from being grateful for the good things we enjoy. *For the Strength of Youth* says, “Live with a spirit of thanksgiving and you will have greater happiness and satisfaction in life” ([2001], 6). For example, what do you see in the picture at the right?

Chances are you probably noticed the black flowers. As

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin said, “The more often we see the things around us—even the beautiful and wonderful things—the more they become invisible to us. That is why we often take for granted the beauty of this world: the flowers, the trees, the birds, the



I'D BE HAPPY IF . . .

Some people have a hard time being grateful for what they have. They say, “I’d be happy if only I had [fill in the blank—a new car, an iPod, good hair, etc.]”



Like the girl who says, “If I were 16 then I’d be happy.” Then she turns 16 and says, “If guys start asking me out, then I’ll be happy.” And then guys start asking her out, and when she’s older she says, “If I get a boyfriend then I’ll be happy.” Then she gets a boyfriend and says, “If I can break up with my boyfriend, then I’ll be happy.” And so it goes. If we say, “I’ll be happy if . . .,” the happiness may never come. But when we are grateful, we invite happiness to come immediately.



TAKE A GRATITUDE CHALLENGE

We always talk about counting our blessings—let’s do it! Write a list of 100 things you are thankful for. Some might think that is too many. If that is the case, try this:

- Write 10 living people you are grateful for.
- Write 10 people who have died you are grateful for.
- Write 10 physical abilities you are grateful for.
- Write 10 material possessions you are grateful for.
- Write 10 things about nature you are grateful for.
- Write 10 things about today you are grateful for.
- Write 10 places on earth you are grateful for.
- Write 10 modern-day inventions you are grateful for.
- Write 10 foods you are grateful for.
- Write 10 things about the gospel you are grateful for.

When we make a list like this, we discover that a list of 100 doesn’t even begin to scratch the surface of all the things God has given us.

clouds—even those we love. Because we see things so often, we see them less and less” (“Live in Thanksgiving Daily,” 11).

Did you notice the blue sky? The beautiful clouds? The mountains in the background? The many flowers that weren’t discolored? There are so many beautiful things to be grateful for, and as we practice being grateful we will notice them more and more.

Reason #3: There Are Sad Consequences of Ingratitude

When people are not grateful they tend to complain, and that isn’t good for anyone. For example, even though the Lord had delivered the Israelites from slavery and given them manna to eat, they were not grateful. Notice what happens: “And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it” (Numbers 11:1). So the Lord hears when we complain, and He does not like it.

Something amazing about being grateful is that it’s in our control. We

might not be able to make the varsity team or be elected student body president. We might not get asked out on dates or have the biggest muscles (we speak from personal experience). But we can control whether we have a grateful attitude.

Great blessings are promised to those who are grateful. The Lord said, “He who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more” (D&C 78:19). Let us follow the counsel of Paul who said, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). **NE**

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NOTE

1. See Chad M. Burton and Laura A. King, “The health benefits of writing about intensely positive experiences,” *Journal of Research in Personality* 38, no. 2 (2004): 150–63.

