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Jim Tressel, head football coach at the Ohio State University wrote in his book, *The Winners Manual*, “We constantly talk to our players about having an ‘attitude of gratitude.’ I think life is a lot more fun if we take stock of our blessings and live in the light of them. We all have things we’re not excited about and things that don’t go the way we want them to but, when we really step back and count our blessings, we find they far outweigh the hardships that seem for the moment to be so earthshaking.”

When you go to your local bar, barbershop or beauty shop, do you encounter people who complain about the inadequacies of their spouse or the lack of achievement of their children or the problems on their job or the flaws in their home or shortcomings of their friends or even the failings at their church?

Well, they are probably like most Americans who are media conditioned to feel inadequate. According to the media, we all should be skinnier, sexier, prettier, healthier, wealthier and wiser. Our kids should be like Rudy and Theo and our home life like the Huxtables of the Cosby Show.

We are disappointed when the media’s projection of the “good life” conflicts with the truth of our “real life” and we perceive ourselves as coming up short. Even with all of their supposed inadequacies, our spouses, children, jobs, homes, friends and even our churches are in most cases a blessing in our lives and we are a complimentary blessing to them. So given all of the conflicting signals in our everyday life, how do you develop an attitude of gratitude?

Developing an Attitude of Gratitude

The first step in developing an attitude of gratitude is to put our lives and goals in perspective. A friend told me he recently ran in the Boston Marathon and my first question was how high he finished in the race. His response was, “I finished in first place.” He could tell that I seemed a

little perplexed and so he continued. “Yes, I finished first in my class for a 55 year old Black male with a PHD, from the east side of Cleveland, Ohio. He ran and won his race. His goals and performance were in line with his perceived skills and abilities. He was grateful that he was able to run and finish the race. Our challenge is not to outrun the “Jones” but to be the best that we can be. A healthy perspective is a key to developing a winning attitude.

The next step is to count your blessing. To be able to see is a blessing to the blind, to be able to walk is a blessing to the crippled, to have a home and family is a blessing to the homeless, and to live in freedom is a blessing to those under persecution.

Start counting your blessing right now. If you are reading this column you are more fortunate than the almost two billion people in the world who cannot read. Get a piece of paper and start your list. First, look at yourself, next look at your relationships and finally look at your family’s outlook for the future. For most people, their blessings far outweigh their hardships.

Finally, give thanks to God and then share your blessings with others. Follow your charitable passions. Are you naturally drawn to social service agencies such as the Salvation Army or Goodwill? Has your family had some medical issues that would make you favor organizations such as the American Heart Association or the Cancer Society? Do you fund your local church or religious missionary organizations? Sit down with your family and develop a list of organizations you are passionate about? Then share your time, talents, and treasury with those organizations.

Having an attitude of gratitude will bring fulfillment and joy to your life. When you go to bed tonight, count your blessing and, when you wake up tomorrow, be a blessing to those around you.

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