

# The Word's Eye View

The Word's Eye View is a newspaper column written by  
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## "Building a House of Gratitude" (Article 29)

With daily newscast and papers being clouded with discussions of recession, bailouts, unemployment and taxes, predictably larger volumes of people will be marching off to their physician's offices to obtain prescriptions for stress, anxiety attacks and a general sense of depression. Is there an antidote for these symptoms that is less expensive and more powerful than a pocketful of pills? According to Dr. Neal Krause, professor for Health Behavior and Health Education at the University of Michigan, the answer is yes. Hey, Doc, what is this magic elixir—I see the possibility of phenomenal profit if it can be packaged and sold. In a recent paper on chronic financial strain the good doctor has linked economic difficulties to depression. This is no surprise, but the solution he presents may be a bit of a shocker. His study is an observation of the role gratitude plays in coping with monetary problems, and how religion shapes a sense of gratitude. Nuts! How can this be marketed? Perhaps the best things in life really are free.

A thankful spirit doesn't just offer insurance against the stress of economic uncertainty. Krause's work also suggests that "greater feelings of gratitude are associated with greater life satisfaction, greater happiness and fewer symptoms of depression." The data also shows that those who attend worship services frequently express more feelings of gratefulness. As Krause and other researchers explain, individuals who believe God's purposes are at work in their lives see difficulty as a part of His plan and understand trials as opportunities for spiritual growth and personal development. This study, as many scientific endeavors, is simply an observation of cause and effect, response and results. It does not tell us where the appreciation switch is or how to turn it on. The average American, having been so culturally programmed to a microwave instant solution, may very well try a trip or two to church; but when the desired results are not immediately forthcoming, this effort will be forfeited in favor of a pharmaceutical remedy. One of the most misquoted verses in the Bible is John 8:32. The general rendition is "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." What Jesus actually said was "make you free." This is preceded with "if you continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."

Today's society is constantly searching for the quick fix that will activate the opening of the prison door enabling one to walk from the darkness to light in a matter of moments. Hence, "set" has replaced "make" which has a 'one stick of lumber at a time connotation.' Who wants to build an entire house when a single pill may eradicate a feeling of desperation?

The acknowledging of God's benefits and mercies begins with the small incidentals of life and when that becomes a habit, it will crescendo into a life style that had captured the apostle's mind when He said, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (I Thessalonians 5:18) A Sunday School teacher asked her class what they were thankful for. One little boy said, "My glasses." When asked why he was thankful for his glasses when most little boys were bitter about wearing them, he said, "Because they keep the boys from fighting me and the girls from kissing me."

Corrie ten Boom in "The Hiding Place" relates an incident that taught her always to be thankful. She and her sister, Betsy, had just been transferred to the worst German prison camp they had seen yet, Ravensbruck. On entering the barracks, they found them extremely overcrowded and flea-infested. That morning their Scripture reading in First Thessalonians had reminded them to rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks in all circumstances. Betsy told Corrie to stop and thank the Lord for every detail of their new living quarters.

Corrie at first flatly refused to give thanks for the fleas, but Betsy persisted, and Corrie finally succumbed to her pleadings. During the months spent at the camp, they were surprised to find how openly they could hold Bible study and prayer meetings without guard interference. It was not until several months later that they learned the reason the guards would not enter the barracks was because of the fleas.

Start with the fleas and work your way up. In due season a house built on the rock of gratitude will endure the storm as opposed to the house on the sand of complaint that will fall apart when immersed by the first wave.