

WHAT IF THANKSGIVING WAS EVERY DAY?

PASTOR NATHAN ELMS

Thanksgiving Day is possibly one of the most remarkable days of the year. It's remarkable because for one day of the year we decide that it's okay to be happy. And that happiness, of course, comes through the appreciation we give to others, to life, and to living.

Thanksgiving Day is certainly a great reminder of the value of gratitude and the incredible happiness that it can bring to our lives. However, it's just one day... just one single day. What happens the next day, the next week and the next month? Do we just forget about all these things? Do we typically just start taking them for granted? For most people, the answer is probably YES! But what if things weren't this way? What if Thanksgiving Day was every day? What if today, tomorrow, next week, and next month you chose to live with more gratitude and appreciation? What then?

WHAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT?

First, you would continually count your blessings

Sure, life may still have struggles and disappointments, but you would think: "there is just so much less I have going for me!"

As such, to live with gratitude means recognizing everything you have that is good. All these things are blessings that bring incredible joy and happiness to your life.

Secondly, you would find joy in the smallest of things.

Finding joy in the food you eat, finding joy in the company you keep, finding joy in a nature walk, finding joy in the music you listen to, etc. These are small and relatively insignificant things that we typically take for granted, and yet they are the things that truly make life worth living. You might become like a child.

Thirdly, you would live life as though you were surrounded by miracles. That is essentially what true gratitude is all about. It's seeing the miracles that surround each of us.

When you spend your days seeing miracles manifesting all around you, you naturally start feeling grateful and appreciative of everything that life brings your way.

Now, this isn't easy.

In order to begin seeing the world in this way, we would essentially have to interpret our life, events, and circumstances. And this, of course, will take time and effort on our part. It won't be easy, however, it is bound to be of incredible value.

What would happen to us if we could do this?

- 1.) Our stress would go down substantially!
- 2.) Our ability to both receive and give love would go up substantially!
- 3.) Our struggle with negative emotions would go down substantially!
- 4.) Our sense of optimism would go up substantially!
- 5.) Our creative energy would go up substantially!
- 6.) Our capacity for kindness would go up substantially!
- 7.) People might begin to refer to us as Christians!

Our life is the greatest testimony we have.

Retired U.S. Marine Corps General Charles Krulak tells of the time when he as a nonbeliever was first confronted with the testimony of a person committed to Christ:

Thirty-five years ago I was a young second lieutenant just graduated from the Naval Academy, married 14 days after I graduated. My wife and I went down to Quantico, Virginia, home of the basic school where officers learn about honor, courage, and commitment. At that time in my life I thought I was a cross between John Wayne and Tom Cruise. Because I was married, I shared a room with another married officer named John Listerman. John was a wonderful human. He exuded goodness. If I asked him for his arm, he would have said, "Where do you want me to cut it off? At the wrist? The elbow?" John was a Christian. That meant nothing to me other than Gee, what a nice guy. I guess this Christian stuff must be pretty good.

Upon graduating from basic school, John and I went to Camp Pendleton, California, where we joined the same battalion preparing to go to Vietnam. And I saw another side of John Listerman: he was a tremendous leader; aggressive and technically proficient. People loved him. He was committed to his troops; his troops were committed to him. He was a Marine's Marine. On a December morning in 1965 John and I went to war. John Listerman's war lasted one day.

We were on patrol moving down a trail through the jungle. We came around a corner in that trail, and we ran into an ambush. John took the first round, a 50-caliber round right in his kneecap. As his kneecap burst, the crack was so loud it sounded like a mortar exploding. It threw him up in the air. As he was dropping, the second round hit him right below the heart and exited out his side. I was wounded also but nowhere near as badly. I saw John about 30 meters away on his back, his leg blown off.



I crawled up to him, and I wanted to say, "Are you okay? Can I do anything?" but before I could do that, his head turned to me and he said, "How are you doing, Chucker? Are you okay?"

I said, "Yes, John. I'm okay." He said, "Are my men safe?" I said, "John, your people are okay." At that point he turned his head and looked to the sky and repeated over and over, "Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Thank you for caring for my people. Thank you for caring for me."

I was dumbfounded.

(John Listerman and Charles Krulak were evacuated. Krulak later became a Christian.)

Source: General Charles Krulak, from a message given at the Wheaton, Illinois, Leadership Prayer Breakfast (October 2000)