

# Gratitude

## The Key to Happiness

A top question for all of us:  
What is the key to happiness?

Through the years the answer to this question has slowly unraveled and dawned on me. The funniest part is that it was there all along.

The key to happiness is not the typical things we get lulled into believing. It's not money. I've met millionaires who are miserable and people in poverty who are happy. I've learned that health isn't the key. I've met people who are physically fit who constantly complain and people with terminal illnesses or in wheelchairs who are happy. The key to happiness isn't a successful career. Remember the comedic genius John Belushi? At the height of his game and fame, he committed suicide. Yet, I've met people who encounter setback after setback and still smile through it all. So what is the key to happiness?

It is simply - **GRATITUDE**.

We often meet people who say, "I'll be happy when..." I feel bad for them, because I know from personal experience that to make your happiness dependent on conditions is a quick route to frustration. I realized we need nothing in this moment to be happy except for gratitude, a deep and reflective thanksgiving for all of our gifts, both great and small. To be humbled and thankful for our very life, our breath, the people we love and who love us in return, and the countless number of things that actually went right today.

The truth is, no amount of love, money, success, health or fame will make a dent on our happiness without gratitude. If we can't treasure and enjoy what we have in the moment, a larger amount won't suffice either. Without gratitude, it's impossible to be happy! The Shawnee leader, Tecumseh, said: "When you arise in the morning, give thanks to God for the morning light, for your life and strength. Give thanks for your food and the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies in yourself."

In his book *The Art of Happiness*, the Dalai Lama said the way to gratitude and happiness is not by comparing yourself to those who seem to have more, but by comparing yourself to those who are less fortunate than you. It's easy to get wrapped up in our troubles and challenges until we are inspired by someone who keeps on fighting to become his best, in spite of adversity such as - terminal illness, or at the worst - "Genocide" as is happening in parts of Africa. Remember our friend, Kwizera, from Burundi, who spent time here with us, whose grandmother was killed?

Even through pain and loss, our sense of gratitude can be strengthened. Many of you know that a diagnosis of "ALS" was given me some fifteen+ years ago, with an expected life span of three to five years. After turning everything, including my life, over to God, only after I realized that I had no control, life changed completely, and for the better. Not a day goes by that I don't treasure, with a renewed sense of gratitude, the gifts that surround me every day. These past fifteen+ years, I've been happier in life than ever before - because I treasure those gifts like never before.

I'm most grateful in my life for ...

- God, the Creator
- My eight children and their families
- My foster son, his wife and extended family in Malaysia
- Friends, near and far including friends and extended family in Uganda
- For all of you

Thank you very much. God's Blessings on each of you, today and always.

Jim Haverlock