

VISIONS OF  
CHARACTER  
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Prattville-Autauga Character Coalition

*Building Communities of Character*

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GRATEFULNESS vs. Unthankfulness...

Letting others know by my words and actions how they have benefitted my life.

Thanksgiving is a wonderful time! In addition to enjoying special food and the gathering of family and friends, we are encouraged to stop and think about the blessings and good things we have.

But are we really grateful? Do we show our gratefulness for the benefits we have in our life and for those that have provided those benefits?

Do you remember to be thankful for who prepared your Thanksgiving food? If it is a relative, do you take for granted the food and effort in preparing it? Or, is it a quick "enjoyed it", and then finding a reason not to help with cleaning up? If you eat in a restaurant, do you leave a tip or a complimentary note on the table, or are you hard to please and make unnecessary demands?

As the holiday season approaches, many have their minds set on what they hope to purchase during Black Friday, the biggest shopping day of the year. There are gifts to be purchased and bargains to be found. How you approach this day of shopping may be a good indicator of how grateful you are to others.

As you drive to the shopping center, are you courteous to others who are bound in the same direction, or do you grumble and blow your horn in an effort to get the cars in front of you to speed up? Are you grateful for the speed limits posted to save lives and for the policeman working in traffic to enforce them? In the parking lot, do you turn in front of a car to grab the parking place that the other had been waiting for?

When shopping, did you break into line, or behave badly when a clerk announced that there were no more of the items you wanted? *Rudeness and discourtesy are indicators of unthankfulness.*

"It is necessary then, to cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you and to give thanks continuously, and because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude."

Wallace D., Author (1860-1911)

There are hundreds of people in our lives that do good or helpful things for us. They benefit us! You may never think of some, while others may be obvious. There is the mailman who carefully places your mail in the correct box, or the cleaners who make an effort to have your clothing ready by a certain day or time. Others are those that clean our offices, school rooms and public restrooms. Some answer phones or organize files for your ease in getting information. There are Sunday school teachers and Scout leaders, volunteers, and parents who give extra time to help all young people, not just their own. The person who delivers the daily newspaper during the dark hours of pre-dawn, and the garbage collectors who work in heat, cold, rain or snow, or the lineman who works all hours to restore your cable or electricity are just a few of the hundreds who deserve our thanks.

Maybe you know some of these, while others are nameless and faceless to you. We can never “repay” them. *The essence of gratefulness is to honor the other person.* A simple “thank you” or note of gratitude to them personally or to their supervisor or company in their behalf is a sign of honor. Not only will it encourage that person to do an even better job, it will help you begin to understand how many people benefit you daily. *Gratefulness means looking beyond ourselves to appreciate those that contribute benefits to our lives.*

Negative thoughts and actions come easy, but they only intensify problems. Learn to look at situations and people in a positive manner. Learn to look for the benefits in each experience you have with others, even if the relationship or experience disappointed you. Simplify your expectations of others. None of us are perfect. Expectations that are too high hinder gratefulness because the other person must exceed or come up to your expectations before you can show gratefulness. This view can have a negative effect on the other person and keep that individual from developing their full potential.

Southerners have always been noted for their warmth and politeness. Let’s all work hard to keep that reputation. Remember to always be thankful for your blessings and for those that have benefitted your life in some way. It is easier to smile at someone rather than frown. A simple “thank you”, or “I really appreciate it”, costs you nothing, and a note or card can make a huge difference in someone’s life.




*“In daily life, we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy.”*

Brother David Steind-Rast (1826 -)  
Austrian-American Benedictine Monk

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