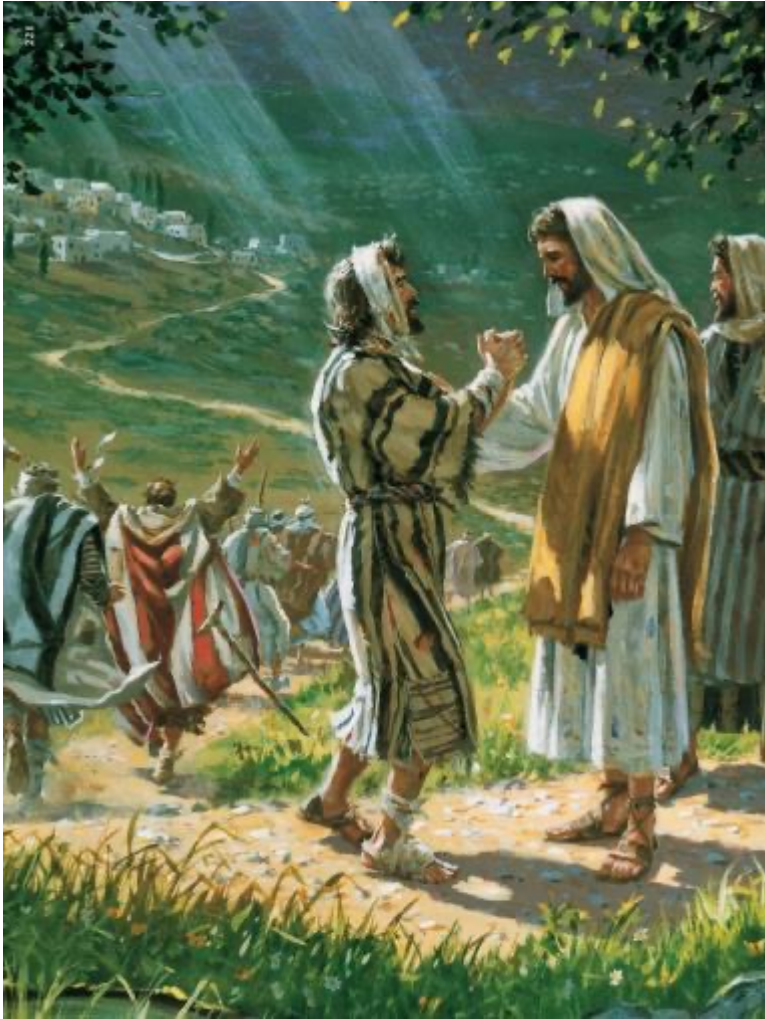


GRATITUDE

You Are What You Thank: Gratitude to God and the Shaping of Identity

Fuller Integration Lectures, Day 2

Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D.



¹⁵One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him--and he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?"

¹⁸Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

Gratitude directs our minds
to the vast oceans of reality
that are invisible

GRATITUDE TO GOD

Psychological, Philosophical and Theological Investigations

[ABOUT](#) [RESEARCH](#) [TEAM](#) [RESOURCES](#) [EVENTS](#)

[SUBMIT FULL PROPOSAL](#)

SUPPORTING AND CATALYZING INNOVATIVE
IDEAS
IN THE STUDY OF GRATITUDE TO GOD
IN PSYCHOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, AND
THEOLOGY

John Wesley



John Wesley

“True religion is right tempers towards God and man. It is, in two words, gratitude and benevolence; gratitude to our Creator and supreme Benefactor, and benevolence to our fellow creatures”

GRATITUDE

What is gratitude?

“A loosely coherent spectrum of responsive attitudes manifest by humans in their dealings with one another and the cosmos...a response more than a preemptive attitude... (gratitude) is one of the more durable feature of human existence.”

Mathewes, 2020

G R A T I T U D E

Queen of the Virtues?

- “The greatest of the virtues”
- “The secret to life”
- “The key that opens all doors”
- “A virtue as vast as life itself”

GRATITUDE

Whereas ingratitude is an accusation:

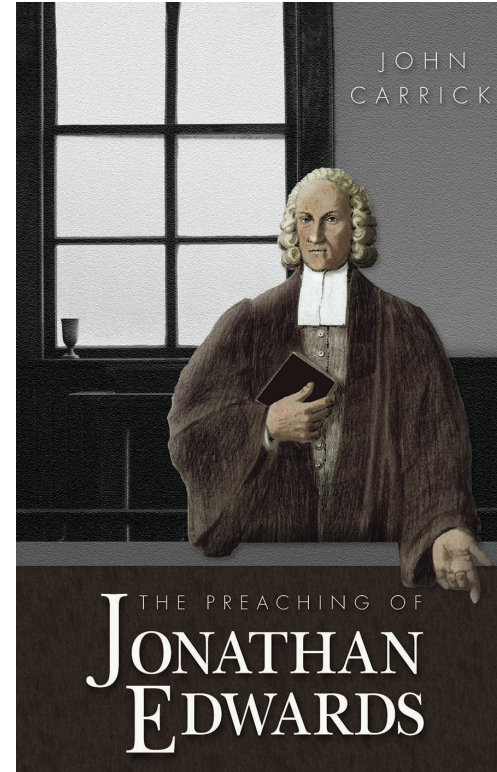
“The essence of vileness”

“A most horrible and unnatural crime”

“A malignancy of the soul”

“Monstrous and hideous”

- “Call me ungrateful and call me all that is bad, it is impossible there should be a more odious character given a man than that he is ungrateful”



GRATITUDE

The recognitions of gratitude

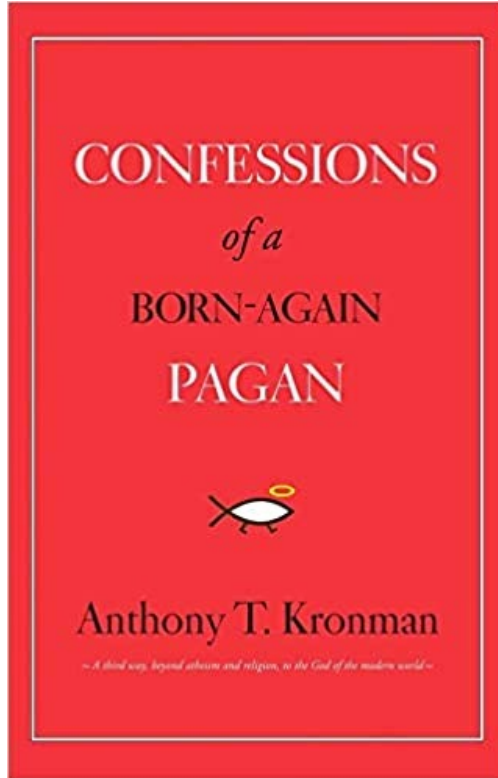
1. Recognize the good (benefit)
2. Recognize the giver (external agency)
3. Recognize it is undeserved (unearned)
4. Intentionality (usually, not always)
5. The need to give back

GRATITUDE

But gratitude is complicated:

- Dependency
- Obligation
- Indebtedness
- Inability to pay back the gift
- Burdensome?

“Desperate Debtors”



- Christianity: The religion of “unrequited gratitude”
- Gratitude owed to God is overwhelming

Gratitude as Virtue

- “The disposition to form and sustain a properly grateful response to the right people at the right times and to the right degree”

Manela, 2018



Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.

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The Grateful Disposition: A Conceptual and Empirical Topography

Michael E. McCullough
Southern Methodist University

Robert A. Emmons
University of California, Davis

Jo-Ann Tsang
Southern Methodist University

- Frequency: how often
- Intensity: how much
- Span: how broad
- Density: how deep

The Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6)

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Slightly Disagree 4=Neutral
5=Slightly Agree 6=Agree 7=Strongly Agree

1. I have so much in life to be thankful for
2. If I had to list everything I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list
3. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for
4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people
5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been a part of my life history
6. Long amounts of time can go before I feel grateful to someone or something

Add up your scores for items 1, 2, 4, and 5: _____

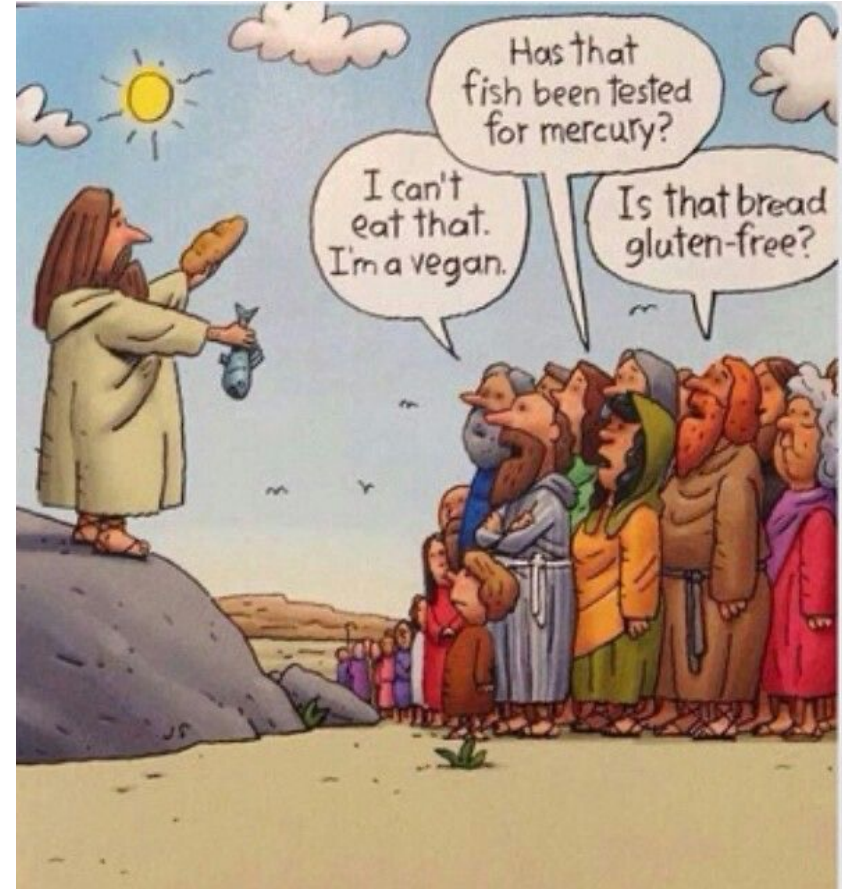
Reverse your scores for items 3 and 6: _____

Your GQ-6 Score: _____

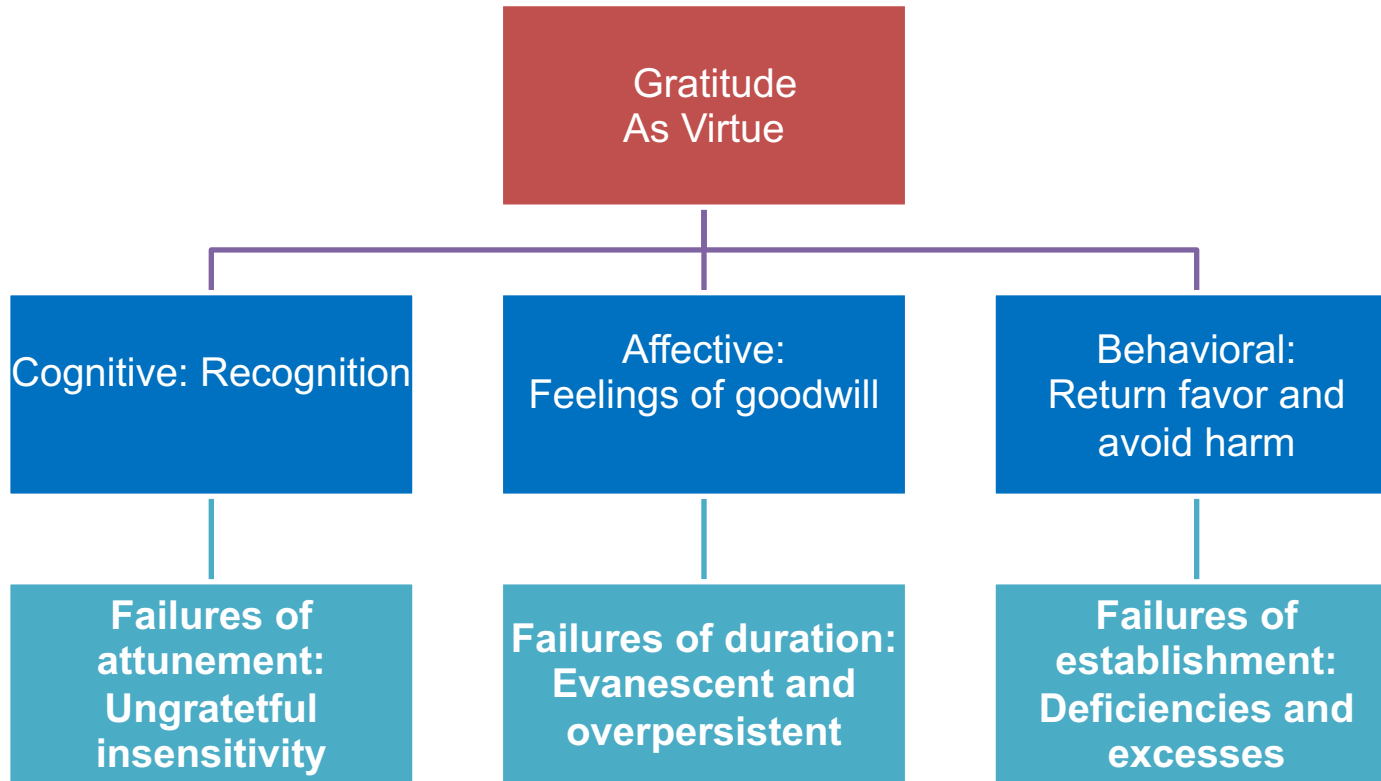
The varieties of ingratitude: Failures to be grateful

- a. Failures of attunement
(insensitivity)
- b. Failures of establishment
(anti- or non-)
- c. Failures of duration
(evanescence)

Source: Manela, 2018



The Varieties of Ingratitude (Manela)



GRATITUDE

Intriguing Questions:

1. Why are public expressions of GTG so controversial?
2. Is Christian gratitude burdensome (Kronman)?
3. How does GTG shape suffering?
4. In what ways do individual and collective religious practices amplify GTP/GTG?



Religion

WHAT IT IS,
HOW IT WORKS,
AND WHY
IT MATTERS

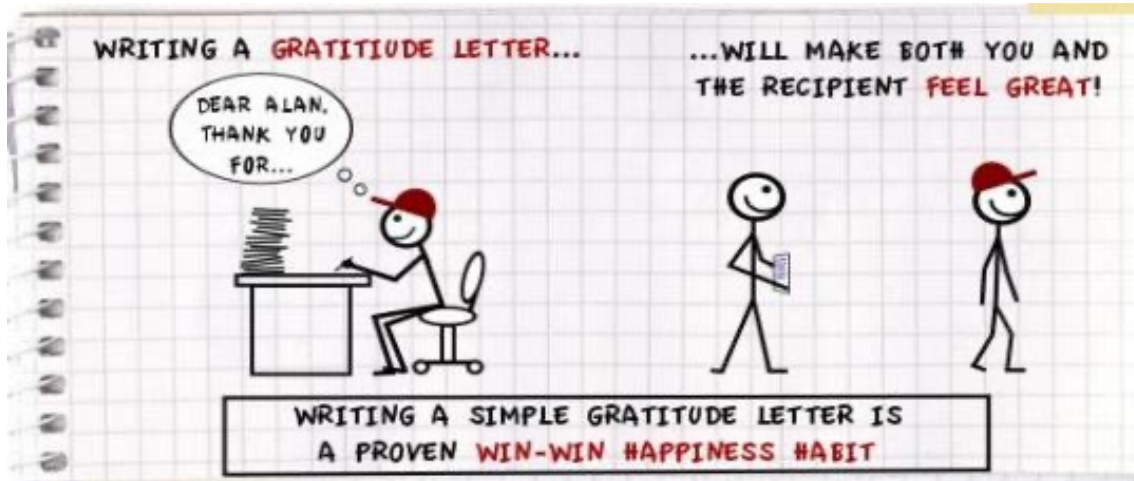
Christian Smith

TABLE 11. The Variety of Religious Practices

Animal sacrifice	Observing holy days	Hanging images on walls
Scripture reading	Processions	Self-flagellation
Communal fellowship	Conducting crusades	Consecrating objects
Observing sacred laws	Requesting prayer support	Coming forward down an aisle
Human sacrifice	Practicing pacifism	Using prayer beads
Sharing sacred meals	Visiting shrines	Memorizing scripture
Hospitality	Praying to ancestors	Divination
Wearing amulets or talismans	Venerating sacred objects	Observing dietary restrictions
Plant harvest sacrifice	Constructing monuments	Conducting funerals
Reciting mantras	Kneeling	Making sacred art
Sacred dancing	Keeping silence	Walking labyrinths
Observing rites of passage	Receiving visions or apparitions	Preserving bodies of the dead
Spoken prayers		Reciting oral histories
Giving alms	Giving public testimony	Venerating animals
Lighting candles	Laying on hands	Using hallucinogens
Observing sacred calendrical times	Closing one's eyes	Retelling sacred narratives
Spirit possession	Folding hands	Offering food to priests
Fasting from food	Raising arms	Ritual sexual acts
Burning incense	Trusting a divinity	Feeding spirits
Making offerings	Waving plant branches	Observing dietary restrictions
Meditation	Obeying divine commands	Covering body parts
Sexual abstinence	Holy kisses	Revering names of deities
Blessings of fields	Political blessings	Ritual breathing exercises
Consulting oracles	Housing divine statues	Abstaining from unclean words
Pilgrimages	Contemplating icons	Ritual physical exercises
Ritual water on skin	Spiritual journaling	Avoiding taking any life
Blessings of houses	Phallus worship	Renunciation of clothing
Conducting exorcisms	Spiritual direction	Reenacting cosmic mythologies
Singing worship songs	Ordination for office	Pastoral discipline
Studying sacred texts	Spinning prayer wheels	Water purification rites
Blessings of marriages	Reciting the Rosary	Casting of spells
Celebrating festivals	Penance	Refusal of professional medicine
Water baptism	Attending religious services	Pronouncing of curses
Proselytizing	Confession of sin	Positioning talismans
Genuflecting	Believing the gospel	Coloring bodies
Wearing prescribed clothing	Ashes on forehead	Burning dedicated objects
Prostration	Endowing religious houses	Keeping vigils
Religious conversion	Praying to patron saints	Pouring libations
Taking oaths	Buying indulgences	Eucharistic adoration
Celebrating worship liturgies	Teaching religion	Family visits with ancestors
	Performing sacred dramas	present

Gratitude Practices and the Practicing of Gratitude

1. Journaling
2. Letters/Visits
3. Broadcasting



Optimizing gratitude journaling: The 3 S's

- Specificity
- Scarcity
- Surprise



The Gratitude Letter

Select one important person from your past who has made a major positive difference in your life and to whom you have never fully expressed your thanks. Choose someone who is still alive.

Write a testimonial just long enough to cover one laminated page. Take your time composing this - several weeks if required. Invite that person to your home or travel to that person's home. It is important that you do this face to face, not just in writing or on the phone. Do not tell the person the purpose of the visit in advance.

Bring a laminated version of your testimonial with you as a gift. Read your testimonial aloud slowly, with expression and eye contact. Then let the other person react unhurriedly. Reminisce together about the concrete events that make this person so important to you.

Virtual Gratitude Visit (VGV)



Testing the Effectiveness of Gratitude Apps vs. Web-based Intervention

- 414 students given choice of using a gratitude app or a writing gratitude letter
- 7 days of app or 3 letters
- Following the practice they answered questions related to ease, enjoyment, effect

The app was rated higher on the following:

- I was able to complete it
- The assignment was enjoyable
- The assignment was not difficult
- Allowed me to find many things to be grateful for



The letter was rated higher on the following:

- Made me feel dependent on others
 - **Caused me to want to give back to others**
 - **Made me think more about others**
 - Made me feel thankful for what I have received
- Gratitude is not an app, it's an operating system

Received, not achieved

- The perils of self-improvement projects
- Trying too hard to become more “grateful” can backfire
- Focusing on our performance can undermine our performance

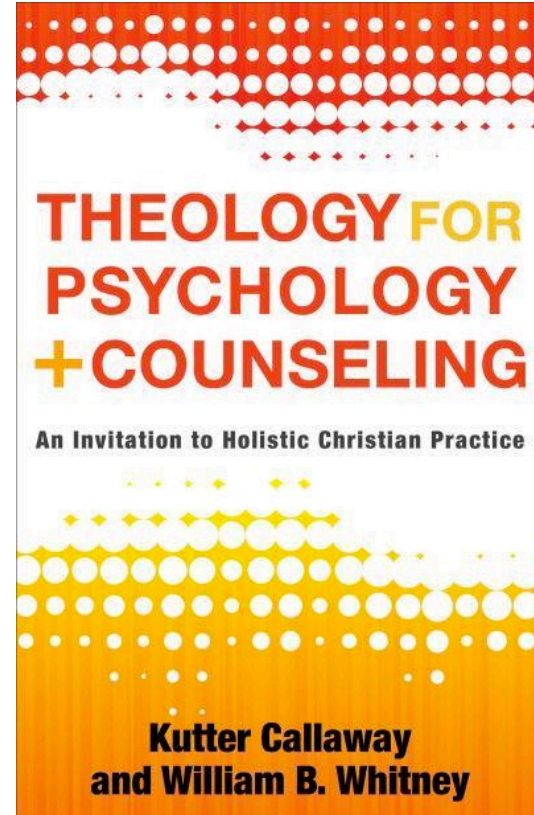



What do these people have in
common?



Gratitude Shapes Identity

- “The Spirit perpetually calls, invites, and even persuades us to locate the center of our personal identity not “within” ourselves but “outside” ourselves—to receive it as a gift from God.” (p. 88)





Christianity is not the move
from vice to virtue, but rather
the move from virtue to grace.

-Gerhard Forde