Have you ever noticed that people who have an attitude of gratitude are generally happy people? They are full of life, they're bouncing with energy and they seem to be optimistic about everything.

Some might say, "well, it's no wonder they are grateful. They have so many things to be grateful for; their health, their wealth and their success." It's true, many grateful people do seem to have it all, but if you get to know them, most will say they had a grateful heart long before they had material wealth. In fact many will tell you that it was their grateful, happy optimistic attitude that opened doors and provided the opportunities to meet influential people, fly through job interviews and get the positions and promotions that led to their success.

Growing up I remember my mother repeatedly saying "laugh and the world laughs with you; cry and you cry alone." She didn't make it up, of course, but it was certainly a philosophy she decided to live by. Nothing opens the door to laughter and joy, faster or easier than a sense of gratitude. Grateful people smile and laugh easily and often, and other people love to be around them. If you were having a dinner party would you invite a grouch or a happy story teller to liven up the conversation?

We grew up in a strictly blue collar neighborhood where anything beyond a high school education
was considered being snooty. But my sister and I were infused with the knowing that we would go to college . . . and we did. It was our expectation. My parents had plenty of tough times, but they also had grateful hearts and always expressed their appreciation for whatever good came their way, and for the good they could pass on to others.

Being thankful is a quality that has been revered for centuries, long before the time of Jesus. But it was Jesus who demonstrated, repeatedly, the power of giving thanks. One of the most surprising places was at the tomb of Lazarus, his old friend who had died four days before Jesus to get to his village in Bethany.

Jesus stood at the entrance to the tomb, along with Lazarus's family and a small band of mourners, where he wept along with the others. How surprised they must have been when Jesus began his prayer with thanksgiving. "Father, I thank thee that thou has heard me. I knew that thou hearest me always" (John 11:41-42).

Giving thanks to God for being heard was the thing that filled Jesus with the inner knowing, the strengthened belief, and the expectation that His command to Lazarus to 'come out' would be fulfilled. And so it was! Lazarus, still wrapped in his burial cloth, came out and stood before them. By giving thanks before His request, Jesus set the life giving miracle in motion and provided a great lesson for us all.

If Jesus had gone directly to the tomb and called for Lazarus to come out, his words might easily have failed for they would have been without the energy of His heart. But centering himself in God's presence, and trusting fully in God's power to restore life, activated Jesus heart to feel and believe in the possibility of Lazarus's resurrection. "In thanking God, He was acknowledging that God's desire for Him and for Lazarus was only good." ¹

Giving thanks in advance is central to our use of prayer and comes from this example set by Jesus. In Unity we believe our prayers should be positive, affirmative and spoken with confidence. Giving thanks is essential. A typical prayer is very

¹. The Quest by Richard and Mary-Alice Jafolla.
much like this: "Thank You, God, for restoring the natural health in every cell, organ and function of my body. Amen"

The healing power of gratitude was demonstrated by Myrtle Fillmore in her dramatic restoration of health from a terminal diagnosis of tuberculosis back in 1887. Her healing was the catalyst that gave birth to a healing prayer circle. One circle grew into several, then many, and before long her healing prayer circles were all around the country. Teaching Myrtle’s healing prayer process finally led to the establishment of Unity.

Myrtle began by blessing and thanking each organ of her body, praising the intelligence within it, and encouraging it to come forth into new life. She demonstrated that "even the cells of our bodies respond and regenerate when they are told that they are appreciated and loved. 'thank you for bringing me health and strength. Thank you for your intelligence which knows what to do and how to do it. I love you and I bless you as you radiate new life throughout my body."

A loving and grateful heart will accomplish more for you than almost any other virtue. It will open doors and smooth the way, and even heal many of your ills. For Jesus it fed the 5000 and even restored life in his friend Lazarus.

Thinking of gratitude as a personal state of consciousness that affects our individual lives and circumstances, reminds us there is also the greater view; gratitude on a global scale.

What do you see when you look into the eyes of another person? A sparkle of gratitude perhaps? A friendly smile returned, the hint of an emotion hidden away, or a story waiting to be told? I'm convinced that everyone has a story tucked away, perhaps waiting for the right moment to be revealed, or the right person and the right time to share it with.

Last week we had an annual neighborhood gathering for dinner and over 100 people turned out for cocktails, conversation and the early-bird special. Let's face it. We're all 55 plus, and
early-bird is what we do.

We may live next door, but we don't know each other all that well. The six at our table have come from all over the United States with backgrounds as varied as our cultures. We began with all the standard cocktail talk; 'how you doin,' 'where have you been,' and 'where you going,'? Then the conversation hit a lull and we just kind of sat there. All the superficial stuff had been covered, and we didn't actually know anyone any better than when we started.

I don't remember what sparked the subject, but suddenly we were involved in sharing meaningful life experiences. The men began describing some of their military experiences that had impacted their lives and that had influenced when and how they had married, etcetera. The women shared their concern for his safe return, or coping with preparing to give birth while their husband was half way around the world. We had reached a point of sharing that was revealing each of us to each other. We were telling our stories and getting to know each other for the first time.

All the stories were different, but they all connected us with similarities of circumstances, the kind we all faced and overcame. Our stories are as different as we are, but that is what makes us interesting to each other and interested in each other.

Reflecting on our dinner experience, I began to give thanks that we are all different from one another. Can you imagine how boring it would be if everyone told exactly the same story, if everyone had exactly the same experiences in life? Or worse yet, what if we all looked exactly alike as well? One gigantic set of identical twins, global doppelgangers? What if you couldn't tell anyone apart, if you couldn't tell who was you brother or sister or the guy who bullied you in the school yard 50 years ago?

What if we all had the same shape nose, the same color eyes and hair and skin, the same height and weight? What if we all had the same disposition - whether it was angry, sad, forlorn, comedic, sweet, helpful, or intolerant? Eight or nine billion people who all looked alike, sounded alike, acted the same and all wanting the
same thing out of life—to be a doctor or an auto mechanic or just plain rich? Egad! Who would do the work? Farm the land? Pick the fruit? Build the cars? Cut the lawn? Save the elephants?

Heaven help us! Suddenly I realized the importance of diversity, of variety, of all the differences we have in all the people, all over the world. Viva la difference! I give thanks from the bottom of my heart for all our individual differences.

Giving thanks for diversity includes diversity of opinion as well as appearance. It is really a good thing that we don't all think exactly alike, even though there are some who believe that their opinion is the only one that counts.

The truth is that if everyone lived with only one agreeing opinion we would be pretty much like robots and little if anything would develop or progress. It takes a great variety of thinking to look ahead to a new future and dream of ways to make it possible. If the one mass opinion was fixed on using fossil fuels for running vehicles we would never develop electric cars. And I wonder if we ever would have made it to the moon or developed all the computer technology we can't seem to live without. The simple truth is that one opinion is not enough. Diversity here is as important as it is everywhere else. Win some, lose some, compromise a lot.

God is the creator of life in every form imaginable from dinosaurs to dingbats; animals, plants, sea creatures, microorganisms, giant trees and you and me. Every size and shape, every color of the rainbow, every variation there ever has been or will be. And every single one has reason and purpose and value!

This Thanksgiving I focused my attention on all the global variations and gave thanks, not only for the whole crazy collection, but for my being able to be one simple and single part of the entire diversity. All of life has meaning and purpose. Every person matters as much as every other person. There are no exceptions. It is out of the many that we are one.

I tried to imagine the evolution of flowering plants going
through their developmental process and resulting in a white rose. A white rose is beautiful, but what if a white rose was the only blossoming flower in existence? A planet full of white roses. Not a single petal of color of any kind, anywhere. No orchids, or gardenias, or sun flowers, or even petunias. What if grass and trees and leaves of every kind were all gray. Monochrome was the worldly pallet. Imagine what that would look like from space.

What if the rainbow was just one color. What if every sunrise was drizzling rain or every night sky was starless, or the alligator was the only animal on the planet. We would go stark raving mad.

Thank God all these weird what if's are just a figment of a warped imagination and that reality is what it is, the most wonderfully diverse collection of life forms, colorful flowers and sunsets and people and puppy dogs and kittens and scenery in the universe. Thank God we are all a part of it and have the ability to understand and appreciate it. I thank God that I am me and you are you and all the rest are, well, all the wonderful rest.

We live on a small blue planet, just the right distance from the sun to get the heat and cooling we need to survive. We're floating in space so vast it's beyond all of our imaginations to conceive even the one galaxy of which we are a part, much less the billions of other galaxies that make up the infinite universe. Either we are totally insignificant, or the singular most wonderful place in the universe. I like to think we really do matter and that we have only God, our creator, to thank for the gift we have been given.

And with all its seeming imperfection, what we have is perfect. The only thing that may be missing is the level of our appreciation. In Unity we have a simple declaration, "There is only one presence and one power in the universe and in my life, God the good, omnipotent."

To which I can only add, "Thank You, God."
Most people would agree that there is something about a flower blossom that is beautiful, some more so than others. But what is it that makes them beautiful, or are they really beautiful at all?

As early as the 3rd century BC, the statement was made that ‘Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.’ We, each of us, determine (for ourselves only) whether something is beautiful or not - flowers, birds, feminine qualities, even panoramic scenes like sunsets and snow capped mountains.

What is important, however, is not whether this flower or that person is beautiful, but that this quality we call beauty exists at all. Did God create beauty to inspire us or because observable life is not worth living without it?

Whatever the answer, I thank God I have the awareness to observe beauty almost everywhere I look.
My Affirmation:

I Am In the Flow

Whatever is unfolding in my life today is the result of my thoughts, words and deeds from yesterday. Life is simply flowing from cause to effect; I am the cause - Life is the effect. While I cannot control what tomorrow will bring, I can control what I am about for today.

Therefore, I affirm that I will take this day to be my best self, to do what is mine to do to the best of my ability and to trust fully that God’s omnipresence is with me, guiding me and blessing my life, and every life that touches mine.

And so I simply say: “Thank You, God.”
My Affirmation continued:

MATTHEW 5:16 - “Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”
“I have made what seems to me a discovery. . . I was thinking about life. Life is everywhere - in animals and in people. Then why doesn’t the life in the animal make a body like a human’s, I asked? Then I thought, Ah, Intelligence as well as life is needed to make a body. Life has to be guided by intelligence in making all forms. Life is simply a form of energy, and it has to be guided and directed in a person’s body by his or her intelligence.

“How do we communicate intelligence? By thinking and talking, of course. Then it flashed upon me that I might talk to the life in every part of my body and have it do just what I wanted. I began to teach my body and got marvelous results.

“I went to all the life centers in my body and spoke words of Truth to them - words of strength and power. I asked their forgiveness for the foolish, ignorant course that I had pursued in the past, when I had condemned them and called them weak, inefficient and diseased. Both silently and aloud I declared words of Truth until the organs responded. I told them they were free, unlimited Spirit. I told them that they were no longer in bondage to the carnal mind; that they were not corruptible flesh, but centers of life and energy, omnipresent.

“Then I asked the Father to forgive me for taking His life into my body and using it so wastefully. Later, using the life of the Father in thinking thoughts and speaking words, I became very watchful as to what I said.

“I let a little prayer go up every hour, giving thanks that Jesus Christ would be with me and help me to think and speak only kind, loving, true words; and I am sure that He is with me because I am so peaceful and happy now.”

Myrtle Fillmore (1845-1931), author, editor, teacher and cofounder of Unity School of Christianity, with her husband Charles Fillmore. The above is an excerpt from her article “How I Found Health,” first published in 1897.
Leave it at the door - prepare now for going within.

What is the first thing you do when you arrive home from the grocery store? You unpack and put the groceries away.

Likewise, what do you do when you come in after getting caught in a drenching rain? You remove and sopping clothes and leave them in the garage or mud room so you don’t carry the mess into a clean and orderly house.

Metaphorically, the same idea applies to entering a place of silence for meditation; you set aside all the stuff that gets in the way of achieving a peaceful state of mind.

So, let’s go there now, stopping first to unload the burdensome thoughts; the sadness, disappointment, angers, frustrations or even election results. In your imagination place them, one at a time, in a large plastic garbage bag. Draw the string tight so they can’t get out, and put the bag outside and close the door. They aren’t necessarily gone forever, but they are out of the way for the time being. You can retrieve any or all of them later if you want, or let them be hauled away for good if that’s what you decide.

Now Breathe. Stand straight and tall and Breathe. Slowly, deeply, repeatedly, refreshingly. There is nothing left that can disturb the calm, peace of your soul. Quietly go to that place where you can be undisturbed and sit back, relaxed. Let go, breathe. . . Let go some more, breathe. . . And let it all go.

As you find yourself peacefully relaxed, quietly welcome the
gentle thoughts of any of the things that bring a smile to your face or warmth to your heart. Being in the silence doesn’t mean you have to shut everything out, it just means you have reached a place where only good exists, only beauty, only love, only peace, only calm exist. So welcome the thoughts, the memories, the images of good, of beauty, of love, of peace and calm.

Linger here as long as you like. In this peaceful state even the images and thoughts of good will begin to blur and fade until only the peaceful quiet remains. It’s okay to get lost in this level of consciousness; you will find your way back soon enough and without any effort.

While you are immersed in this place between silence and thought, simply observe and let it be. Everything is as it should be. Divine order is the state of your being.

Deep in this silence is where you may hear the Still Small voice, and if you do, simply be aware of it, for you are being guided and loved as perfectly as you can be. If you do hear a message it will be one of reassurance, gently offering you the inner knowing that whatever may have disturbed you has a Divine solution, and when it is time you will know what is yours to do, and what is simply to be let go. Observe and become aware.

If you start to think about your breath again, it is a sign that it’s time for you to return to the here and now. So re-focus on your breathing, and slowly begin to awaken to an awareness of everything around you. Breathe. Awaken. And give thanks.

Thank You, Lord. All is well.

Amen.
Our thoughts and words are very important. Words impact our lives in meaningful ways. This time our word is: **Homeostasis**

Homeostasis, now there’s a word I probably haven’t heard since high school science class, and I’ve long since forgotten what it means exactly. But, reminded of it recently, I became excited by its definition. It means the natural tendency of a cell or organism to self regulate and balance itself regardless of the conditions of the external world. Very simply it means that we have built into us something that keeps our bodies healthy, even when the world around us is falling apart.

It may be called homeostasis, but it might better be described as the Divine part inside of us that looks out for our well being and maintains balance in body, mind and spirit even when the outside is exhibiting doom and gloom. Homeostasis is why doctors and nurses can work with very sick people and not get sick themselves.

It’s also that Divine part of us that helps us maintain a positive attitude in times of stress; that helps us stay prayed up and retain a Pollyanna optimism, when we’d prefer to run away and hide.

Literally, homeo-stasis translates to life-staying the same. Technically, it’s like having a bunch of interconnected thermostats, the kind that automatically turn on and off your furnace and air-conditioning as the weather warms and cools; cruise control that maintains the speed of your car whether going up or down a hilly terrain; and the auto-pilot that steers the ship and flies the plane. Uber’s self driving car is run much like our homeostasis, balancing all kinds of outer conditions with one purpose in mind, to get the car safely from point A to point B.

You’re right, we’re not a machine and we’re not run by computers; they are being programmed to be more like us rather than the other way around. But the secret is that our homeostasis is Divine, not mechanical. It’s God’s way of being with us always and in all ways, providing us with the best life we can live. Our role is to acknowledge and give thanks for this wonderful and beautiful gift, realizing it is just one more way that God’s omnipresence is manifested in our lives.
Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays To Everyone, Everywhere

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Upward Bound Journal is © of Upward Bound of Unity, Inc. and is published six times a year and available on a love offering basis.

Member: Worldwide Unity Ministries, SunCoast Unity Ministers Association.
Affiliation: Unity Institute and Silent Unity, publishers of Daily Word.

Upward Bound of Unity, Inc. is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3), charitable corporation supported entirely by your gifts and tithes. Your gifts are fully tax deductible.

UBJ Issue # 86

Upward Bound of Unity, Inc.
10870 SW 71st Circle
Ocala, FL  34476-5702