

11-2013

## 2013 November Newsletter

Nancy Rockey

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It's True!  
Life & Relationships  
Are Fixable!

## Early Gratitude



There's a holiday just around the corner, and this morning – very early and before the rooster crows - I am in my favorite chair and thinking about this, my favorite time of year. Memories of childhood in New England, when Gail and I would rake leaves into a big pile, and then would jump into the pile, listen to the rustle, and look up into the brightest blue sky, make me grateful for such a good friend, and wish that we hadn't lost touch. Through the years, many beautiful memories were made, and now recalled at this time of the year. So looking back, what am I thankful for?

**My Parents**, who did the best they could to raise a daughter who would always love them. For Grandparents also, who were nurturers, supporters and snuggly comforters.



**Wallstone Orchard and my Dad**, where we would go for crisp MacIntosh Apples

and a glass of their fresh cider. Now that's a very pleasant mem-

ory made with my Dad – that once a year trip to the local orchard. He was sure to bring home big, juicy apples so that my Grandma or Mother would make a big apple pie, that he would claim as “mine!”

**Thanksgiving Day!** My Mother always had to work (such is the fate of nurses) and Dad would take me to the Stonington High School Football game. Our own high school didn't play on Thanksgiving, but my father was the captain of “our” football team, so we just had to go to a game! I remember sitting in the bleachers, freezing and drinking Hot Chocolate in our attempt to keep warm, while cheering for the Stonington Bears. I've liked football ever since.

**My First Career** - Nursing. Before graduation from nurse's training, our class took a trip for several days to New Hampshire. It was in the fall and the leaves were at their prime. We took a tram up Cannon Mountain and saw the glorious frost line. We took a cruise of Lane Winnepesaukee, and ate a picnic lunch on the boat. We lit a fire in the fireplace of the doctor's home that we had been

given to stay at during our get-away, and wrapped in blankets while we sang and played games. That was 50 years ago, this fall!

**My Beloved Ron.** I'll never forget his reaction the first time he saw New England blossom into vivid autumn colors. “We had color in Wisconsin,” he said, “but nothing like this!” Each year we would take a trip to New Hampshire, stopping along the way for apples and a hunk of cheddar cheese. Nothing like a bite of apple and a bite of cheese with the One you love!



**Our Children.** It was a repeat performance to watch them roll in the leaves and have such a good time on our apple and cheddar cheese run to New Hampshire. And speaking of our girls . . . we are so blessed! Both love the Lord, both have great husbands and children, both remain close to us and are such a joy and



blessing. We'll all be together this Thanksgiving, here in the New Mexico Mountains! Apples and Cheese? Well, that's a good idea!

**Our Ministry.** Ron and I have been a team since 1965. To be sure, we were called to work for the Lord, and all along the way, He has sent us mentors and encouragers for the often arduous but fulfilling task of helping people to unload their burdens and discover the freedom and comfort found in a relationship with the Lord.

**Our Friends.** Don and Priscilla who were in our wedding party and have remained priceless friends throughout the years. Ken and Donna, who we met in our 2nd pastoral district. We've had all kinds of crazy and irreplaceable times together. Deb and Doug with whom we have shared sadness and hysterical laughter, and who were our "bus" convertors. And through the years and ministry, God has brought us many other friends and acquaintances, and we are grateful.

**Our "Golden Years"** – the autumn of our lives. Oh sure, we have our creaks and groans, our step is not so lively, but oh do we have the memories! And that man of mine, his brain is ever sharper, thinking up more ideas than we could ever accomplish, but it's OK! Dreams and goals and a purpose for living outside of ourselves, keeps us going.

**Our Savior.** So often we need Him – more than ever before! Older age is like that! But not only that, in the turmoil of the world, He is our hope and comfort. The promise of eternity together and with our Lord is just what we need, and so does everyone else!

**Our home. Our hearts.** It's where we keep mementoes of family, friends, joys, sadness, and abundant blessings. It's where we feel totally loved and accepted by God and by each other. It's where we make new memories and reminisce about the older ones.

You know, this 3:30 AM exercise – writing this article and list of things that we are thankful for – is

an excellent thing to do – for my physical, psychological and spiritual health.

The foremost expert on gratitude, Robert Emmons says this in an article he writes entitled "Why Gratitude is Good"

*"For more than a decade, I've been studying the effects of gratitude on physical health, on psychological well-being, and on our relationships with others.*

*In a series of studies, my colleagues and I have helped people systematically cultivate gratitude, usually by keeping a "gratitude journal" in which they regularly record the things for which they're grateful. Gratitude journals and other gratitude practices often seem so simple and basic; in our studies, we often have people keep gratitude journals for just three weeks. And yet the results have been overwhelming. We've studied more than one thousand people, from ages eight to 80, and found that people who practice gratitude consistently report a host of benefits:*

#### **Physical**

- Stronger immune systems
- Less bothered by aches and pains
- Lower blood pressure
- Exercise more and take better care of their health
- Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking

#### **Psychological**

- Higher levels of positive emotions
- More alert, alive, and awake
- More joy and pleasure
- More optimism and happiness

#### **Social**

- More helpful, generous, and compassionate
- More forgiving
- More outgoing
- Feel less lonely and isolated.

The social benefits are especially significant here because, after all, gratitude is a social emotion. I see it as a relationship-strengthening emotion because it requires us to see how we've been supported and affirmed by other people.

Indeed, this cuts to very heart of my definition of gratitude, which has two components. First, it's an affirmation of goodness. We affirm that there are good things in the world, gifts and benefits we've received. This doesn't mean that life is perfect; it doesn't ignore complaints, burdens, and hassles. But when we look at life as a whole, gratitude encourages us to identify some amount of goodness in our life.

The second part of gratitude is figuring out where that goodness comes from. We recognize the sources of this goodness as being outside of ourselves. It didn't stem from anything we necessarily did ourselves in which we might take pride. We can appreciate positive traits in ourselves, but I think true gratitude involves a humble dependence on others: We acknowledge that other people—or even higher powers, if you're of a spiritual mindset—gave us many gifts, big and small, to help us achieve the goodness in our lives.

### **What good is gratitude?**

So what's really behind our research results—why might gratitude have these transformative effects on people's lives?

I think there are several important reasons, but I want to highlight four in particular.

#### **1. Gratitude allows us to celebrate the present. It magnifies positive emotions.**

Research on emotion shows that positive emotions wear off quickly. Our emotional systems like newness. They like novelty. They like change. We adapt to positive life circumstances so that before too long, the new car, the new spouse, the new house—they don't feel so new and exciting anymore.

But gratitude makes us appreciate the value of something, and when we appreciate the value of something, we extract more benefits from it; we're less likely to take it for granted.

In effect, I think gratitude allows us to participate more in life. We notice the positives more, and that magnifies the pleasures you get from life. Instead of adapting to goodness, we celebrate goodness. We spend so much time watching things—movies, computer screens, sports—but with gratitude we become greater participants in our lives as opposed to spectators.

**2. Gratitude blocks toxic, negative emotions, such as envy, resentment, regret—emotions that can destroy our happiness.** There's even recent evidence, including a 2008 study by psychologist Alex Wood in the *Journal of Research in Personality*, showing that gratitude can reduce the frequency and duration of episodes of depression.

This makes sense: You cannot feel envious and grateful at the same time. They're incompatible feelings. If you're grateful, you can't resent someone for having something that you don't. Those are very different ways of relating to the world, and sure enough, research I've done with colleagues Michael McCullough and Jo-Ann Tsang has suggested that people who have high levels of gratitude have low levels of resentment and envy.

**3. Grateful people are more stress resistant.** There's a number of studies showing that in the face of serious trauma, adversity, and suffering, if people have a grateful disposition, they'll recover more quickly. I believe gratitude gives people a perspective from which they can interpret negative life events and help them guard against post-traumatic stress and lasting anxiety.

**4. Grateful people have a higher sense of self-worth.** I think that's because when you're grateful, you have the sense that someone else is looking out for you—someone else has provided for your well-being, or you notice a network of relationships, past and present, of people who are responsible for helping you get to where you are right now.

Once you start to recognize the contributions that other people have made to your life—once you realize that other people have seen the value in you—you can transform the way you see yourself.



## **Challenges to gratitude**

Just because gratitude is good doesn't mean it's always easy. Practicing gratitude can be at odds with some deeply ingrained psychological tendencies.

One is the "self-serving bias." That means that when good things happen to us, we say it's because of something we did, but when bad things happen, we blame other people or circumstances.

Gratitude really goes against the self-serving bias because when we're grateful, we give credit to other people for our success. We accomplished some of it ourselves, yes, but we widen our range of attribution to also say, "Well, my parents gave me this opportunity." Or, "I had teachers. I had mentors. I had siblings, peers—other people assisted me along the way." That's very different from a self-serving bias.

Gratitude also goes against our need to feel in control of our environment. Sometimes with gratitude you just have to accept life as it is and be grateful for what you have.

Finally, gratitude contradicts the "just-world" hypothesis, which says that we get what we deserve in life. Good things happen to good people, bad things happen to bad people. But it doesn't always work out that way, does it? Bad things happen to good people and vice versa.

With gratitude comes the realization that we get more than we deserve. I'll never forget the comment by a man at a talk I gave on gratitude. "It's a good thing we don't get what we deserve," he said. "I'm grateful because I get far more than I deserve."

This goes against a message we get a lot in our contemporary culture: that we deserve the good fortune that comes our way, that we're entitled to it. If you deserve everything, if you're entitled to everything, it makes it a lot harder to be grateful for anything.

## **Cultivating gratitude**

Partly because these challenges to gratitude can be so difficult to overcome, I get asked a lot about how we can go beyond just occasionally feeling more grateful to actually becoming a more grateful person.

I detail many steps for cultivating gratitude in my book "Thanks!", and summarize many of them in this "Greater Good" article. I should add, though, that despite the fact that I've been studying gratitude for 11 years and know all about it, I still find that I have to put a lot of conscious effort into practicing gratitude. In fact, my wife says, "How is it that you're supposed to be this huge expert on gratitude? You're the least grateful person I know!" Well, she has a point because it's easy to lapse into the negativity mindset. But these are some of the specific steps I like to recommend for overcoming the challenges to gratitude.

First is to keep a gratitude journal, as I've had people do in my experiments. This can mean listing just five things for which you're grateful every week. This practice works, I think, because it consciously, intentionally focuses our attention on developing more grateful thinking and on eliminating ungrateful thoughts. It helps guard against taking things for granted; instead, we see gifts in life as new and exciting. I do believe that people who live a life of pervasive thankfulness really do experience life differently than people who cheat themselves out of life by not feeling grateful.

Similarly, another gratitude exercise is to practice counting your blessings on a regular basis, maybe first thing in the morning, maybe in the evening. What are you grateful for today? You don't have to write them down on paper.

You can also use concrete reminders to practice gratitude, which can be particularly effective in working with children, who aren't abstract thinkers like adults are. For instance, I read about a woman in Vancouver whose family developed this practice of putting money in "gratitude jars." At the end of the day, they emptied their pockets and put spare change in those jars. They had a regular reminder, a routine, to get them to focus on gratitude. Then, when the jar became full, they gave the money in it to a needy person or a good cause within their community.

Practices like this can not only teach children the importance of gratitude but can show that gratitude impels people to "pay it forward"—to give to others in some measure like they themselves have received.

Finally, I think it's important to think outside of the box when it comes to gratitude. Mother Theresa talked about how grateful she was to the people she

was helping, the sick and dying in the slums of Calcutta, because they enabled her to grow and deepen her spirituality. That's a very different way of thinking about gratitude—gratitude for what we can give as opposed to what we receive. But that can be a very powerful way, I think, of cultivating a sense of gratitude.

**Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D.**, is the world's leading scientific expert on gratitude. He is a professor of psychology at the University of California, Davis, and the founding editor-in-chief of The Journal of Positive Psychology. He is also the author of the book "*Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*"

Well, this has been a long article, hasn't it, but we are not sorry. Hopefully it has been and will continue to be a blessing to you, encouraging you to keep that gratitude journal, speak often about the things for which you are thankful. Perhaps you'll make a copy to give to your Thanksgiving Dinner guests, with less calories than your wonderful Pumpkin Pie. I'm sure you'll want to give them the pie as well!



We are thankful for and to you – our readers and supporters, for all you have meant to us and done for us throughout the years of our ministry! God Bless you this holiday season!!

# HAPPY THANKSGIVING



**Great News!!!!**

**We're Taking a Trip**

**Thanks to the efforts of Dr. and Mrs Guillermo Gow-Lee, The Gow-Lees and the Rockeyes will be meeting with Dr. Vincent Feletti on Nov. 15th. They will present their books and *The Journey* program to Dr. Feletti, for use with patients who need recovery in order to improve their physical health.**

**Please pray for this meeting!**

## **FACILITATORS!!!!**

**PLEASE . . .** If you have a group of *Binding the Wounds*, *The Journey*, *Journey to Nai*, *Heart Connection* or *Created for Success* in progress, please e-mail us with your name, place of classes, and when you started. If we have the information, we can post it on the website and in our newsletters.





## **Recovery Groups in Progress**

**El Paso, Texas** – Anglican Church

**Nanaimo, Vancouver**

- **Where:** Prison

**Denver Area, Colorado**

**Longmont, Colorado** (30 miles N of Denver)

- **Leaders:** Matt & Amy Miller
- **Class:** The Mode, The Route, The Destination
- **Contact:** [mattman@integrity.com](mailto:mattman@integrity.com)  
[amymiller@integrity.com](mailto:amymiller@integrity.com)

**Ruidoso, New Mexico** Beginning Nov

**Cheyenne, Wyoming**

**Portland, Oregon**

- **Leaders:** Audrey Woods, Paul Luchsinger
- **Class:** The Passenger
- **Contact:** [Audrey@yourlri.com](mailto:Audrey@yourlri.com)
- **Where:** Healing Hope Seventh-day Adventist Fellowship

**El Paso, TX**

- **Class:** Binding the Wounds
- **Where:** St. Clements Church

**Fairbanks, Alaska**

- **Leaders:** Adrienne Lee
- **Class:** The Journey

## **Schedule**

### **November 2013**

Local Women's Group - TH evenings  
Local Men's Group - TH evenings  
Writing Book #2 in Shadow Series  
15th - Meet with Dr. Vincent Feletti

### **December 2013**

Men's & Women's Groups - TH  
Writing Book #3 in Shadow Series  
Video Taping



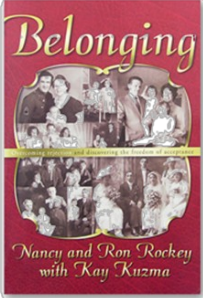
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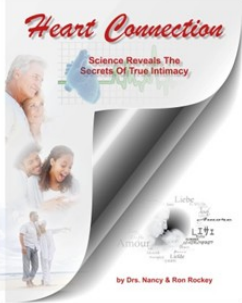
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# Additional Holiday Sepcials!



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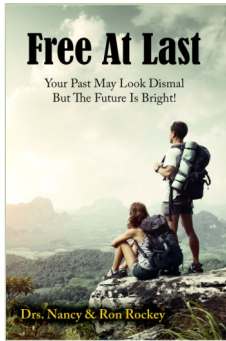


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