

Hooked On Recovery

June 25, 2004

Attitude of Gratitude

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others” –Cicero (106 BC – 43 BC)

“Gratitude is born in hearts that take time to count up past mercies” –Charles E. Jefferson (1860-1937)

I wish I was grateful all the time, but I’m not. I have my visits to the pity pot, just like a lot of people I know. But those visits aren’t as long as they used to be. But I have to work at it. Early in my recovery when I was feeling particularly down, I was told that I needed to work on my gratitude. Work on my gratitude? How the heck was that possible? I thought you either had gratitude or you didn’t. It wasn’t something you could work on.

Well, I learned differently. Several years ago, after I whined for an unusually long time at a recovery meeting, my sponsor yanked me aside and stuck his big ol’ finger in my face and said “Phillip (and I thought only my father called me Phillip when he was mad), you can get bitter or you can get better!” Then he walked away before I could start whining again. How dare he! But then it began to sink in; bitter or better, the choice was mine. The next day with my tail between my legs I asked him how I could get better. “Well, you can work on your gratitude.”

“How?”

“Get up in the morning and write a (don’t just think about it, write it) gratitude list. Write down everything you’re grateful for like sobriety, having a roof over your head, something to eat for breakfast, a daughter, etc.”

“Oh”, I said clueless. I actually had stuff to be grateful for. The lists I wrote in those days are different than the ones I write today, yet some of the elements are still exactly the same. When I work on my attitude of gratitude, my life flows better. Things roll off me. I enjoy life, one day at a time, one moment at a time.

Today, my gratitude list has evolved into a prayer. Here’s what I’m grateful for today.

“Heavenly Father, thank you for my life today. Thank you for loving me so much that you rescued me from the pit of addiction and set my feet firmly upon the rock. Thank you for another day to make good choices. Thank you for my wife and our marriage. May you always bless us and may you always strengthen our love. Thank you for my children, each one is a precious gift from you. Where would I be without them? Thank you for another day to work at a job that has meaning and purpose. Thank you for setting challenges before me that I may grow. May I become a better husband, father and servant of yours. You have blessed me beyond my imagination, you have taught me about love and for that I am grateful.”

Hooked on Recovery is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, father of four and just another surf

fisherman. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him phillip@ccar.us. Or visit the website at www.ccar.us to see previous articles.