Gratitude – Your Gateway to Success

A Special Report

By Bob Burg

Excerpted from *Master Your Traits – Master Yourself*

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The Sages of the Talmud asked, "Who is a mighty person?" and answered, "He who can control his inclinations/character traits." And what a profound saying that is.

Each of us is born with - and develops over time - a set of traits that make up our character. Some of these traits make us more effective in life (and in different areas of life); while others cause us to be not so effective. The good news is that, as human beings, we can work on ourselves in order to master these inclinations, thus becoming more effective in all aspects of life both business and personal.

In my program, "Master Your Traits – Master Yourself", based on the wisdom of perhaps America's most famous Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin and featuring the wisdom of other Sages, we focus on 13 character traits. These traits are of critical importance in reaching one's full potential and accomplishing their goals.

We use Dr. Franklin's method* of focusing intently on one particular trait per week before moving on to the next. That way, we begin the process of mastering this trait before turning our intention elsewhere. Since there are 13 different weekly traits we work on and 52 weeks in a year (and 52 divided by 13 are 4) we get the opportunity to dedicate total focus on this trait for an entire week four times during the year. It's been proven again and again that this method will help one master any traits they so desire.

I can tell you firsthand that Dr. Franklin's system worked for me . . . big-time!

In this "Special Report" we'll look, in detail, at the first trait we discuss in the program.. Mastering this one trait alone – the trait of Gratitude (or Appreciation) – will make a huge difference in your life and how effective you can be. So, let's begin.

Week/Trait Number One is "**Appreciation**." You could also call it **Gratitude** and, in fact, I'll use the two words interchangeably. Whichever one you want to use as your **Key Word** (this is the word you'll keep in front of you all week in order to remind you of what you're to focus on), simply write it on a sticky note, notecard or something similar. Then, place it everywhere you will be this week; at work, near every telephone, on your desk, on your computer, on your dresser, in various rooms in your home, every path you will cross.

* You might also be familiar with the famous *Mesillas Yesharim* or P*ath of the Just* by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto. That is another book from which I derived great pleasure and wisdom. Since I first learned the system from studying Dr. Franklin (and don't really know who came up with it first), I am referencing it as Dr. Franklin's method.

Under appreciation I have the following written:

> *"Notice the blessing in everything, big and small. Dwell on the beauty in all I see, hear, touch, taste, smell. Realize that everything is a gift from the Almighty and is put there by G-d in order to enjoy and learn from."*

That is what I have written on my first index card. Now, I'd like to share a few thoughts with you regarding appreciation.

I have appreciation first for two reasons: One is that it was a genuine weak-point of mine for far too long. I would often focus on what I didn't have instead of all the incredible things I have. I'm not sure why I did that, but I did . . . and it became habit-forming.

The Sages of the Talmud ask, "Who is rich?" And, they answer, "The person who rejoices in their lot." In other words, what makes one rich, in a sense, is not necessarily getting what they want, but wanting what they get. Being grateful for their family, friends, opportunity to be in business and to make a living. Being grateful for their health, for having a dwelling in which to sleep, and food to eat.

This should not be confused with being "satisfied" with a little. No, it's perfectly within our right to desire more and more. As human beings we are built for increase. That's why we've had so many inventions over the years; there's a market for "things" that bring us more convenience, joy, pleasure, opportunities for wealth, and so forth.

Nothing necessarily wrong with that at all. When it's . . . bad, or non-serving to us, is when that desire for more controls us; when we become emotionally attached to "having" to have something. Only then is it harmful and stressful.

Meanwhile, when you appreciate, you're connecting with the Source of everything. And, when you do that, more, and better things tend to come to you. Then, of course, you have even more for which to be grateful, and when you're grateful for that, more things continue to come to you for which you can be grateful. You might say, it's a delightful cycle of success.

In his book, "The Science of Getting Rich", written in1910, author Wallace D. Wattles writes the following regarding how gratitude elicits wealth:

> *"The nearer we live to the source of wealth, the more wealth we shall receive. It is also easy to understand that a soul that is always grateful lives in closer touch with G-d than one who never looks to Him in thankful acknowledgment.*
>
> *"When good things come to us, the more gratefully we fix our minds on the Supreme Power, the more good things we receive – and the more rapidly they will come. The reason for this is simply that the mental attitude of gratitude draws the mind into closer touch with the Source from which the blessings come."*

Further down, he continues:

> *"The law of gratitude is the natural principle that action and reaction are always equal and in opposite directions. The grateful outreaching of your mind in thankful praise to the Supreme Power is a liberation or expenditure of force; it cannot fail to reach that to which it is addressed. And, as a result, G-d responds with an instantaneous movement toward you."*

A bit later, he writes:

> *"You cannot exercise much power without gratitude, because it is gratitude that keeps you connected with power."*

As the late night infomercials tells us, however, "Wait, there's more!"

Mr. Wattles writes:

> *"But the value of gratitude does not consist solely in getting more blessings in the future. Without gratitude you cannot keep from being dissatisfied with things as they are.*
>
> *"The moment you permit your mind to dwell with dissatisfaction upon things as they are, you begin to lose ground. You fix attention upon the common, the poor, the squalid, and the mean – and your mind takes the form of these things. You will then transmit these forms or mental images to the formless. Thus the common, the poor, the squalid and the mean will come to you.*
>
> *"To permit your mind to dwell upon the inferior is to become inferior and to surround yourself with inferior things. On the other hand, to fix your attention on the best is to surround yourself with the best to become the best.*
>
> *"The creative power within us makes us into the image of that to which we give our attention. We are thinking substance, and thinking substance always takes the form of that which it thinks about.*
>
> *"The grateful mind is constantly fixed upon the best. Therefore, it tends to become the best; it takes the form or character of the best and will receive the best.*
>
> *"Also, faith is born of gratitude. The grateful mind continually expects good things, and expectation becomes faith. The reaction of gratitude upon one's own mind produces faith. Every outgoing wave of grateful thanksgiving increases faith. The person who has no feeling of gratitude cannot long retain a living faith. And, as we will see in the following chapters (of his book), without a living faith you cannot get rich by the creative method (which is the method Wattles discusses in his book. He calls it the creative method as opposed to the competitive method)."*

He concludes:

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

So, for one entire week, focus on gratitude and appreciation for everything. By the way, to help you do this, I again urge you to write yourself reminders. Write your "key word" — appreciation or gratitude — on several different sticky notes and put them in many of the places you'll find yourself throughout the typical day; on every telephone, in your bedroom, on your bathroom mirror. On your computer. On your car's steering wheel. On the phone and desk at your office. Wherever you know you're going to be and wherever you'll see it.

As you see the note, think of what you have to be grateful for right now. For instance, as I type at the computer key board for which I'm grateful, I appreciate that some human being with a lot more intelligence than I have was able to figure out how to take a bunch of zeros and ones and somehow make a computer and, with that, so many things possible that until now were not even imagined.

For example, that we can send an email to friends or business associates in Japan and it will take just seconds . . . often less, to arrive. And we can receive one back just as quickly. I'm grateful that the keys of the keyboard are so wonderfully crafted. That the screen is big enough to easily display the characters, and that I have eyesight with which to see those characters.

For one solid week totally focus on appreciating everything! You'll be amazed at the feeling you have at the end of that week.

According to Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, "Every single day we experience many hundreds of minor pleasures in both the material and spiritual aspects of our lives. We can learn to focus on these common occurrences and recognize the kindness of the Almighty."

In his book, Happiness, he suggests the following as an exercise in appreciation:

> *"Try for just one hour to feel grateful for every single thing you find yourself doing. When you read, be grateful you can see and read. When you walk, be grateful for the use of your feet. When you talk, be grateful for the ability to communicate with others. For a full hour do not take even the smallest action for granted. Be aware of every detail of what you can do. Anyone who does this daily for even a short time will have a much greater appreciation for everything he does."*

And, if you can do it for an hour, you can do it for a day. If you can do it for a day, you can do it for a week.

By the way, the Sages taught another exercise for having gratitude. And, that is to, first, imagine yourself *not* having some of the above. For example, imagine you lost your eyesight, your

hearing, your ability to speak, to feel with your hands, to smell or taste food. Imagine you lost your home, etc.

Now, one by one, imagine yourself getting all of these back, and just consider how grateful you would be for each and every one. Try this; it's quite powerful. This exercise brings with it a new appreciation for those things that we tend to naturally take for granted!

Here's another method of building your appreciation/gratitude muscles: Have Gratitude to the Source.

Rabbi Noson Tzvi Finkel wrote;

> *"The pleasure we feel with what we have does not come only from the thing itself, but also from Whom we received it. That is the lessons of the blessings we make. They help us appreciate that the Almighty is the One who has bestowed us with the pleasures of this world. This awareness greatly enhances the value of these pleasures."*

Here's one lesson in gratitude (please pardon the very long paragraph, but I believe it helps make the point): When you drink a cup of coffee, think about what it took to bring that coffee to you. For example, if it's Columbian coffee, first, someone in Columbia had to grow the coffee. For that to happen, equipment — all different kinds of equipment — had to be manufactured, sold to a wholesaler, then a retailer, then bought and used. The grower had to do the work of harvesting it, which probably took the efforts of many people. Then it was sold to a middleman who shipped it to the states. That took a bunch of work, and a bunch of people to do the processing and arranging. The airplane or ship that transported the beans had to be built by many, many people, and for that to happen, first the parts had to be designed, built, put together and sold through their own channels of distribution. Once the beans arrived in the states, they were sent to a wholesaler. He or she had to make sure they were properly blended and cared for, then they were sent to a coffee broker/food broker, and from there, dispersed to the various stores. Those stores had to be built one by one with lots of equipment manufactured and sold, involving still lots more people. Finally, the store sold you the coffee. Let's say you didn't buy it to take home and make, but bought a fresh cup of it right at the store. First, the store had to brew the coffee which took a coffee machine. Repeat the entire process about the machine, with all its various parts and elements being independently designed and manufactured, put together, and sold through various channels until it finally arrived at the store where you bought the coffee. Of course, it's being poured into a cup. Repeat the whole long process in making and distributing the cups. You also put some milk in it. Well, let's see, first the cows had to be bought or birthed, fed, then milked. The milk is put into a crate where it is processed, pasteurized, contained, and then shipped to a wholesaler, and it goes on and on. And, if you put other elements in your coffee such as sugar, just imagine all the people in the fields growing and harvesting the cane and so forth. And, the spoon you need to stir it? Well, let's see, first the material…and so forth and so on, repeating the process above once again, and all this — and much more that we didn't even mention — just so YOU could have your darned cup of coffee in the morning. ☺ And for relatively little money when you think of everything that went into it.

Think about that. The whole world is at work so YOU can have a cup of coffee. I think that is something for which you and I can have EXTREEEEME gratitude.

My second reason for having "appreciation" first on this list is that, to me, it's a bedrock for all the other traits on the list. This is just my personal opinion. When you're grateful, then everything else is acceptable to you, it's easy to embrace.

To recap, for this particular week:

Appreciation/Gratitude

> *"Notice the blessing in everything, big and small. Dwell on the beauty in all I see, hear, touch, taste, smell. Realize that everything is a gift from the Almighty and is put there by G-d in order to enjoy and learn from."*

Bob Burg is coauthor of the *Wall Street Journal* Business Bestseller, *The Go-Giver*, a business parable that has sold well over 250,000 copies in 22 languages. A presenter at company conferences on relationship marketing and business development, *The Go-Giver* is his fourth book to sell over 250,000 copies.

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