

November 29, 2021

Giving Thanks vs. Living Thanks

One year ago, I contracted Covid and it knocked me on my backside rather good. This year, I'm not sure one day of thanks was enough. What a ride the past 365 days have been.

In his book, *Discovering the Laws of Life*, famed money manager and philanthropist Sir John Templeton recommended a different approach to this time of year. He called it **thanksLIVING**.

Thanksgiving means practicing an attitude of perpetual gratitude. Of course, that's not hard when times are good. But many Americans are dealing with financial, personal, and health issues that every family encounters from time to time. These can make an attitude of continual thankfulness a tall order.

Yet Templeton offers a radical perspective. Don't just give thanks for your blessings. Be grateful for your problems, too.

This seems wildly counterintuitive at first blush. But facing our challenges makes us stronger, smarter, tougher, and more valuable as parents, mates, employers ... human beings. Solving problems is what we're made for. It's what makes life worth living.

Says Templeton:

Adversity, when overcome, strengthens us. So, we are giving thanks not for the problem itself but for the strength and knowledge that will come from it. Giving thanks for this growth ahead of time will help you to grow through — not just go through — your challenges.

Circumstances alone never decide our fate. We have the ability to shape our destiny. And it starts with believing we can.

Worries, regrets, and complaints solve nothing. They change nothing. Rather, they undermine your health, your social environment, and your quality of life.

Difficult situations are rarely resolved with positive thoughts or gratitude alone. It takes another crucial ingredient: sustained action.

Even then, some problems are intractable. Others — like the death of a loved one — are insoluble. In certain circumstances, only an attitude of acceptance moves us forward.

Most of our day-to-day problems, however, are created by the person in the mirror. We made them. And we can fix them. A wise pastor once said...

The world has a way of giving what is demanded of it. If you are frightened and look for failure and poverty, you will get them, no matter how hard you may try to succeed. Lack of faith in yourself, in what life will do for you, cuts you off from the good things of the world. Expect victory and you make victory. Nowhere is this truer than in business life, where bravery and faith bring both material and spiritual rewards.

The lesson is best learned at an early age. When I was in grammar school my dad put his hand on my shoulder and said, “Remember Johnny, if you ever need a helping hand, you’ll find one at the end of your arm.” (Those of you who had the opportunity to meet my dad over the years at various Bodnar Financial events can stop smiling now.)

It’s not wrong to ask for help, and in certain conditions, you won’t succeed without it. We could all use a boost from time to time. I sure did, and would never have succeeded without the help of my parents.

But it’s much more satisfying — and dignifying — when we solve our problems ourselves. Along with demonstrating what we’re made of, working through our own setbacks can make us more sensitive and compassionate toward the problems of our fellow man.

Look around and you’ll see plenty of people with more troubles than you. And this is the season to remember them. Although the true spirit of thanksLIVING means remembering and giving all year-round.

Whatever problems you’re grappling with, the best course is always to face them with courage, patience, and equanimity. And, if possible, be grateful. Opportunity often shows up disguised as hard work. (Another dad-ism.)

On occasion, of course, our problems are simply bigger than we are. In 1859, Abraham Lincoln recounted the tale of King Solomon:

It is said an Eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence, to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him the words: “And this, too, shall pass away.” How much it expresses! How chastening in the hour of pride! How consoling in the depths of affliction!

Whatever your problems, few of them can withstand the onslaught of persistence and a genuine spirit of gratitude. So, get moving.

As the poet Robert Frost put it, “The best way out is always through.”

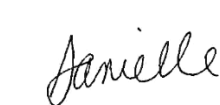
All of us at Bodnar Financial wish you a happy and safe holiday season.



John Bodnar



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