

Letter from the Editor: **Gratitude** by Dr. Mary Ferrill



I struggle each time a C & P issue comes around to provide a few words of wisdom to the readers. Most of the time the message is something that I personally need to hear. I often wonder if they are even read, let alone, remembered by those who do. Every once in a while I receive an email stating that something about my editorial touched them. I'm not looking for praise, I just want to make sure my messages are helpful.

So I thought that I would try something different. To focus on one word so that it would spark your memory to share this message with someone if you found it meaningful. The word I would like to focus on for this editorial is **GRATITUDE**. I know that I often take for granted all of the blessings that the Lord provides me on a minute-by-minute basis. Do I show gratitude for the friends and family who support me in an overwhelming variety of ways? Gratitude for the food I so easily receive (and often too much of it), consistent and reliable electricity, my car, air conditioning/heat and one of my favorites, ice, to name a few. Am I also grateful for the pharmacists who've gone before me to build pharmacy into the respected profession that it is today? And lastly, am I grateful to the Lord who has gifted me with the ability and the opportunity to have achieved all that I have in my career so far. I once heard it said that we would not be happy if we only received things each day that we thanked God for the day before.

My area of expertise in pharmacy is drug information. Which means I know a lot about a little but not a lot about any one thing. The one thing I do well is finding interesting tidbits in the literature. I don't normally come across medical literature that specifically addresses a subject like gratitude, so I was a bit surprised to discover a study published in 2013 in the *Journal of Gerontology* that explored the link between gratitude and wisdom in subjects of varying age. Without getting into a detailed journal club analysis of the article (one of the things I love to do), otherwise this would be an incredibly long editorial, but let me share with you a brief synopsis of the authors'

findings. Thirty one percent (31%) of people in the study expressed gratitude to God, other people, or experiences when asked about their most **DIFFICULT** experiences. And interestingly, fewer individuals, only 21% expressed feelings of gratitude when asked about their **BEST** life events. Such sentiments of gratitude were more frequently expressed by the people who had been considered by others to possess wisdom. Thirty eight percent (38%) of adults designated as "wise" mentioned gratitude when describing their best life events, compared to only 4% of the control group. The researches summarized the results as follows: wise people are more apt to feel grateful for what they experience, even when it happens to be a negative event, because they are able to integrate difficult experiences into their life story so as to learn and grow from those experiences.

I don't think we needed a study to tell us that it is wise to maintain a thankful perspective toward life, but it's nice to have empiric evidence to back up what is written in the Bible. The Bible makes reference to gratitude or thankfulness more than 100 times. So, I would think that God considers gratitude an important character trait. John 16:33 states: In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." And in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Paul tells us how to face life: "Be joyful always; pray continually; give **THANKS** in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." So, how do we maintain an attitude of gratitude in **ALL** situations knowing that in this world, Jesus has guaranteed us we will have problems?

I think a perfect illustration can be found in the 1991 movie "Regarding Henry." Henry, played by Harrison Ford suffers a gunshot to the head and has to learn how to do everything and I mean everything again, from walking, to talking to reading. Bradley, Henry's physical therapist, tires to console Henry when he is having a particularly bad day. Bradley prompts Henry to ask him why he is thankful that he has bad knees. He then explains how his football career ended tragically in college when he sustained a serious knee injury. During his rehabilitation, he met a physical therapist whose care inspired him to pursue that as his own career. Bradley asks Henry, "Do you think I mind having bad knees?" And before Henry can respond, Bradley states emphatically, "no, no way. If it wasn't for my knees I never would

have met you and have been able to be a part of your miraculous recovery. So, no, I don't mind having bad knees."

The apostle Paul knew how to maintain a joyful attitude amid a multitude of difficulties. In his letter to the Colossians, chapter 3 verse 16: Paul writes, "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all **WISDOM** through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing with **GRATITUDE** in your hearts."

My prayer for myself and each of you is that your personal and professional lives are and will continue to be marked with unceasing gratitude — gratitude born of wisdom, humility and faith. You see, the product of gratitude is joy. It's all part of a simple formula that God provides to those who walk with Him and seek His will, in all circumstances, good or bad. When we let God guide us in the practice of pharmacy with a thankful heart, the gifts that He's given us, the plans that He's designed for us, and the needs of the people that He places around us, will blend together in perfect harmony. The result will be a rewarding, meaningful career and a life well-lived with abundant gratitude. May God bless each of you every step of the way.

Dr. Ferrill completed her Pharm.D. at the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Pharmacy and then two ASHP accredited residencies in Drug Information and Clinical Pharmacy at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She spent 10 years in California as a professor at the University of the Pacific School of Pharmacy. The Lord called her and her husband to Palm Beach Atlantic University School of Pharmacy in 2001, to Wingate University School of Pharmacy in 2003 and back to Palm Beach Atlantic in late 2005, early 2006. They feel blessed to be able to work jointly to help with the spiritual growth of pharmacy students. Dr. Ferrill was on the Board of Directors of CPFI for 6 years and was the Editor for the CPFI publications, Christianity and Pharmacy Journal and the Faith Script newsletter for five years and is the current Editor for the Journal.