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## Singapore Newsletter

Dear GFI Family

*Thankfulness does not come naturally to our sinful nature. It has to be consciously cultivated. E. W. Tozer shared how he sought to cultivate this throughout his life.*

*It is not easy for a generation that has experienced abundance to learn about being thankful. Mr & Mrs Ezzo observed that perhaps a sense of entitlement may have replaced a heart of gratitude. Hear their advice on how to avoid this in our children.*

*Dorcas used "garden paths" as an analogy to highlight how we can teach our children about thankfulness and avoid the pit-falls of fruitless persuasions. Lastly, some food for thought about how to have a Thesis approach to parenting.*

*Andj & Dorcas Li*

*New Classes starting*  
*Virtuous*  
*Apr Central Christian Church*

*Infant & Toddler*  
*Apr FCBC*

*Registration from GFI web*

### **GFA National Family Camping Conference**

*Camp Wattle Grove, Perth ,  
 Western Australia  
 Apr 5 to 9, 2007  
 A\$195/person  
 Children programme avail.  
[www.gfi.org.au](http://www.gfi.org.au)*

### **GFI Singapore Conference**

*Keynote Speakers:  
 Gary & Anne Marie Ezzo  
 7-11 Nov 2007*

*Details will be available on website at later date*

### Thankfulness Song

*I thank God for this day  
 For the sun in the sky  
 For my mom and my dad  
 For my piece of apple pie*

*For our home on the ground  
 For His love that's all around  
 That's why I say thanks everyday*

*Because a thankful heart  
 is a happy heart!  
 I'm glad for what I have  
 That's an easy way to start!*

*For the love that God shares  
 'Cause He listens to my prayer  
 That's why I say thanks everyday*

*Source: "Madam Blue Berry" Vege Tales*

**Key Principle:**  
**Virtuous Way Chapter 6**  
**Character Development**

**Moral training and character development are the same thing. Our morality reflects our character, and our character reflects our morality and what is in our hearts.**

## ***Churches Running GFI Programmes in Apr 2007***

***Infant Way***  
FCBC • GFI

***Toddler Way***  
FCBC • GFI

***Innocent Way***  
City Missions Church • FCBC • GFI

***Adolescent Way***  
Church of Singapore

***Middle Years Way***  
NA

***Virtuous Way***  
Central Christian Church • City Missions Church • Covenant EFC • Church of Singapore  
• FCBC • Frankel Bethesda • GFI

*If you have a GFI group running in your church and is not listed above, do email  
[dorcas.li@gfi-singapore.org](mailto:dorcas.li@gfi-singapore.org)*

## **Were There Not Ten?**



We realize that the majority reading this letter do not suffer from want regarding the basics of life. We have so much compared to the rest of the world's population. As a result a sense of entitlement may become an illegitimate substitute for a heart of gratitude. It seems from our perspective this sense of entitlement may be one of the newest challenges facing today's parents. How can we help the next generation of families develop hearts of gratitude?

There was an incident in our Lord's life recorded only in the Gospel of Luke. It is the account of the ten lepers. The narrative begins with Jesus traveling toward Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover. What made this journey infamous was that He Himself would become the Passover Lamb. Luke 17:12 tells us that

while on route, Jesus approached a certain village in Galilee. There He encountered ten men who were lepers. Upon seeing Jesus they cried out "Master have mercy on us." Jesus said to them, "Go show yourselves to the priest." We can see the ten did not hesitate to follow Jesus' instruction as they had confidence in what His words implied: they would be cleansed! They immediately turned to go just as He commanded and just as quickly they each began to realize they were healed. But one man, a Samaritan, upon seeing he was whole, returned to Jesus and bowed down giving thanks. In response to this man's devotion, Jesus asked a piercing question fit for then and now. "Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?"

Thankfulness and gratitude! So what might that look like? Years ago a mentor encouraged us as a couple to seek the Lord together at the beginning of a new day. Our prayer time usually consist of four parts: worship, intercessory prayer, ministry focus and personal needs. There is nothing sacred about confessing this habit for we know this basic spiritual discipline is repeated daily throughout the GFI community. Yet, how many times during the course of a day do we ask the Lord to be our protector, the protector of our children, to give us wisdom and boldness, conviction and compassion? We ask the Lord for resources, healing, blessings and His patience. And the next day we start all over.

And yet those two questions asked by the Lord, "Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?," should serve as a daily reminder that we not be counted among the nine who received joyously the goodness of God, but never returned and said "Thank you Lord." Luke's account of the ten lepers is a lesson in awareness. One of the first steps in creating an attitude of 'entitlement' rather than a heart of 'thankfulness and gratitude' is forgetting to thank God for the very things we ask Him for. If there be a morning prayer, should there not also be an evening prayer — a time when as a family, each can recount and thank the Lord for God's benevolence throughout the day? This is just a little thought about thankfulness but an important concept to realize. 'Thank you Lord' closes the parenthesis that 'Please Lord' began.

Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo **Phil 1:3**

## Choose not the garden path

How many times a day do we have to attend to cries of “Not Fair! Why can’t I have it too?” Over and over again we find ourselves having to explain to yet another of our child - why he cannot get what he wants.

Often we unwisely tried to persuade the immature by reasoning with him, by rationalising the negative side of him getting his desires. We had hoped that the child could be won over by our clever persuasions and lucid arguments.

“But why would you want to go out with your class mates when you have just spent Monday to Friday with them in school? Isn’t there something else that you can do? Any way, I don’t think your friends can help you much with your project paper. You can do just as well at home. You would be able to concentrate better.”

You have just been led up the garden path! The path of discontentment. Let me explain.

Discontentment is the flip side of contentment that can come from being thankful. Children often get discontented because they feel that they are in need of something that they do not have; that they are *deprived*. “Everyone else in school have a Reebok shoe. I am the only one who does not!” (*Gate to garden path has just opened*). “You don’t need a Reebok. It is just a shoe like any other. You can run just as well with your Bata.” (*You have walked through it*).

At this stage, your child is looking at what he does not have; focusing on the garden path. “But mom...the Reebok will help me because it has this special cushion built into it to absorb the pressure.”

And you? You are also looking at the garden path with him; looking at what he does not have—the Reebok shoe. “That is just advertisement! You don’t really believe that a mere pair of shoes can help you jump higher?”

And talking with him about his Reebok shoe. “But it will make me look so cool mom...”

And discussing with him about his Reebok shoe. “That shoe is just an ordinary shoe. There is no magic in it. Anyway it cost way too much.”

And on and on and on... You are now walking hand-in-hand with your child in the garden!

Don’t enter the garden path when the gate opens. Focus on the other path—thankfulness. “Really? Does everyone have it in school? Does everyone also have a brand new computer?” Shift the child’s focus from ‘*What He Does Not Have*’ to ‘*What He Does Have*’.

“But mom, it will help me to run better.”

Teach your child to count his blessings. “Yes indeed you do run very well! Last year you won the 100 meters dash. And you won because you practiced and the Lord has blessed you with strong muscles. Practice, good diet and rest...that’s what makes a champion!”

Child might still be at the gate and still try to get you to enter. “Mom, please mom, I really want the Reebok shoes. You want me to look cool don’t you?”

We should persist. “You have a great smile. And a heart that is kind and generous. I know your friends are all attracted to you because you are a real and true friend. I thank God for these good characters in you.”

“Really...mom? Do you really think so?” You and your child is now walking hand-in-hand on the road of thankfulness and this road will lead your child to a life of contentment.

This is an important lesson in life that needs to be learnt over and over again. The more we train our children to focus on what they have, to count their blessings, to be thankful; the greater would be their ability to be content. In it lies the secret of greatness.

By Dorcas Li

## Thankfulness As a Moral Therapeutic

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*In this world of corruption there is real danger that the earnest Christian may over-react in his resistance to evil and become a victim of the religious occupational disease, cynicism. The constant need to go counter to popular trends may easily develop in him a sour habit of fault-finding and turn him into a sulky critic of other men's matters, without charity and without love.*

*What makes this cynical spirit particularly dangerous is that the cynic is usually right. His analyses are accurate, his judgement sound. He can prove he is right in his moral views; yet for all that he is wrong, frightfully, pathetically wrong. But because he is right, he never suspects how tragically wrong he is. He slides imperceptibly into a condition of chronic bitterness and comes at last to accept it as normal.*

*It would be convenient indeed if it were possible to have a spiritual experience at some altar of prayer that would cure this condition completely and for good. And some sincere persons seem to believe that it is. I do not think so. It is like trying to get an infusion of health once for all that would take care of our physical condition for the rest of our lives, obviously an impossible thing. No matter how healthy we are, unless we cultivate correct bodily habits we will not stay healthy long. And an experience of heart cleansing that is not followed by right spiritual habits will be disappointing in the end. Continued spiritual health will result from right heart habits. If these are neglected the inner life will degenerate, no matter how wonderful our past experiences may have been.*

*Now, as a cure for the sour, fault-finding attitude I recommend the cultivation of the habit of thankfulness. Thankfulness has great curative power. The heart that is constantly overflowing with gratitude will be safe from those attacks of resentfulness and gloom that bother so many religious persons. A thankful heart cannot be cynical.*

*I do not here recommend any of the applied-psychology nostrums so popular in liberal circles and among starry-eyed poets of the sweetness-and light school of religious thought. The output of the 'hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil' jockeys makes painful reading for the man or woman who has been introduced to God through the miracle of the new birth. But I do recommend the cultivation of gratitude as cure for spiritual sourness. There is good scriptural authority for this and experience teaches us that it works.*

*We should never take any blessing for granted, but accept everything as a gift from the Father of Lights. Whole days may be spent occasionally in the holy practice of being thankful. We should write on a table one by one the things for which we are grateful to God and to our fellow men. And a constant return to this thought during the day as our minds get free will serve to fix the habit in our hearts.*

*We could begin with our creation and tell God how grateful we are that He ever thought of us and brought us into being out of the empty void of nothingness. And when we had sinned, He remembered us still and sent His Son to die for us. He gave us the Bible and His blessed Spirit to teach us inwardly to understand it. We could go on to tell him how glad we are for the Church, for good spiritual teachers, for faithful pastors and hymnists who have made the services of the Church each Sunday such a helpful and precious thing.*

*In trying to count our many blessings the difficulty is not to find things to count, but to find time to enumerate them all. Personally I have derived great help from the practice of talking over with God the many kindnesses I have received from my fellow men. To my parents I owe my life and my upbringing. To my teachers I owe that patient line-upon-line instruction that took me when I was a young, ignorant pagan and enabled me to read and write. To the patriots and statesmen of the past I owe the liberties I now enjoy. To numerous and unknown soldiers who shed their blood to keep our country free I owe a debt I can never pay. And I please God and enlarge my own heart when I remind the Lord that I am grateful for them. For every man and woman of every race and nationality who may have contributed anything to my peace and welfare I am grateful, and I shall not let God forget that I am.*

*Source: "The Root of the Righteousness" by E.W. Tozer, Chapter 35, p118-120*

## *How Now Shall We Parent?*

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*This is a new segment that we will feature in our monthly newsletter. Over the past few years, the Lord has so graciously shown us how our humanist education has seep into our way of thinking and reasoning. And how these assumptions have been the basis with which we response to our children. In this way we have unknowingly been training our children. It was a shocking revelation to us. Here we will attempt to share with you our own journey through cases.*

*Each month we will quote a case and then give two responses—Humanist and Thesis. Humanist means that which is man centred, and Thesis means that which is God centred. Below is the first of our series.*

### *Case*

*“Dad, I noticed this strange thing. I will enter a shop that is quite empty. Then after I have been there for a short while, the shop will begin to have more and more customers. It’s the same for a restaurant too. I will go into a restaurant because it’s empty and I can get a table without having to wait. Once I get a table and placed my order, the restaurant will usually get very crowded. Strange don’t you think?”*

### *Humanist Response*

*“Is that so? Well, I think maybe you are a blessed person. You bring blessings wherever you go. So every shop that you visit, you will bring them business! They ought to thank you.”*

### *Thesis Response*

*“Is that so? I believe you are a very blessed person because the Lord shows his favour upon you. I believe the Lord holds back the crowd so that you can get what you want first before the shop gets crowded and you will have to queue or something. Isn’t it great to be a child of God? The Lord’s servants have favour!”*