

Gratitude: The Cure for Impatience

by Mike Tucker *

You've probably heard the humorous prayer of the impatient person: "Lord, please give me patience—right now!" Most of us struggle with impatience, but according to a potentially landmark research study, there's a surprising way to reduce impatience. The way is gratitude. That's the tentative conclusion from a team of researchers from three distinguished universities. You can reduce impatience with gratitude.

Their paper on the study, titled "Can gratitude reduce costly impatience?" looked at impatience in adults. Participants in the study were told they could get \$54 now or \$80 in 30 days. But before they could decide they were assigned to one of three groups. The control group was left to whatever feelings they came in with, while the other two groups were told to write a short paper about a time when they either felt happy or grateful.

The participants who felt either neutral or happy showed a strong preference for immediate payouts – as in, "Gimme that 54 bucks now!" But those who were in a grateful frame of mind showed more patience. What's more, the degree of patience exhibited was directly related to the amount of gratitude any individual felt. One of the researchers suggested, "[Displaying gratitude] opens up tremendous possibilities for reducing a wide range of societal ills from impulse buying and insufficient saving."

Perhaps curing impatience is a worthy objective for our Thanksgiving celebrations. As we lift grateful hearts to God, our patience with each other will grow.

Love,
Mike

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