An Essential Set of Leadership Lenses

There I was minding my own business. My task was simple. Stop by P.F. Chang's and grab some takeout for dinner.

As I waited for my order to be filled, a family of three walked in—a mom, a dad, and a child. The child, probably six years of age, was sitting in an elaborate wheelchair. It did not take much time to realize that this little boy had more than his fair share of physical challenges. And what was even clearer was that his parents had their hands full in attending to his needs. It was a sobering snapshot of life.

As I walked to my car, I was overcome with the thought that even on my worst day, my challenges don't come close to what these parents and their son deal with every day of their lives.

It was one of those moments that gripped me. And humbled me.

The self-talk went something like this: "Chuck, do you realize just how much you take for granted? Are you aware of how really good your life is? Does GRATITUDE lead your life or is it just a passing thought tucked away on the back shelf?"

Perhaps you've had similar conversations.

What are we talking about here? Wikipedia makes its case by saying that "gratitude is a positive emotion or attitude in acknowledgement of a benefit that one has received." **But God makes a different case.** Receipt of a benefit notwithstanding, He trumps the online wisdom and turns it upside down and says, "Always give thanks to God the Father *for everything*, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ".

Not much wiggle room there. No byes. No exemptions. Everything.

Here's the point: leaders are called to constantly cultivate a heart of gratitude, even when (or can I say, especially when) the troubling challenges of life come knocking on their door.

> **Leaders are called to constantly cultivate a heart of gratitude, even when the troubling challenges of life come knocking on their door.**

Over the years, I had the privilege to work with multiple teams of leaders whose lives I admire and respect. When I would ask them what gratitude looks like in the life of a leader, some of their thoughts included: "lightness" of spirit; an embrace of each circumstance as part of God's life-shaping work; a heightened capacity to care for and seek the success of those we serve; a deeper desire to bring a blessing into each person with whom we interact; that life is a gift that we are called to steward well.

Their perspectives have helped to foment a greater alertness to the inexhaustible inventory of things for which I can give thanks.

And as I choose (note that it's a choice) to live a life of gratitude, I find that I am becoming more like Jesus—the ultimate Leader—who provides the complete template for how to "lead with your life".

Chuck Olson
Founder | Lead With Your Life