

Gratitude Toward the Fixer

Considerable research has been conducted on the benefits of possessing an attitude of gratitude.

It turns out that those benefits extend beyond the possessor. Much research, including his own, said Dr. David DeSteno, “confirms that gratitude toward someone for past assistance increases the odds that we’ll return the favor and help a benefactor in need.”

Who is Dr. David DeSteno? He is a professor of psychology at Northeastern University, where he directs the Social Emotions Group. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and Association for Psychological Science. He is also editor-in-chief of the American Psychological Association’s journal *Emotion*.

In his lab, Dr. DeSteno said, “We’ve shown this using a simple framework. We stage events where individuals experience a problem and then have someone come to their aid just when it looked as if all hope was lost. The result? Lots of gratitude toward the fixer. But that’s not the interesting part. It’s what happens next that is the surprise.

“When these newly grateful souls subsequently run into strangers who ask for help, they not only more readily agree to aid them than do individuals who weren’t feeling grateful, but also expend a lot more effort in the act of helping itself. The more gratitude people feel, the more likely it is they’ll help anyone, even if it’s someone they’ve never laid eyes on before.”

What’s the lesson for us?

Christians talk about being the hands and feet of Jesus to a needy world, but how does God equip us for such a task? The answer is that He stages events in which we experience a problem, and just when it looks like all hope is lost, He delivers us! The result? Lots of gratitude toward the Fixer.

But the most interesting part is what comes next. When we run into strangers who ask for our help, we are much more willing to help them than those who haven’t experienced God’s help, even if it’s someone we’ve never laid eyes on before.

Dr. DeSteno’s conclusions are those already discovered by associates of Life Care and Century Park, but not by research in an academic lab. They’ve learned these principles in everyday life with the people they serve in our centers. Kindness is our stock in trade, applied in the care and compassion extended to residents and patients.

In so doing, gratitude is extended to the fixers.

I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me (Matthew 25:36 NLT).

– Beecher Hunter