



Rick & Sue McCoy

The Love Letter

Abba's Arms International, Inc.
4th Quarter Volume 10

We're going to Africa in 2019!!

♥ **April 30 – May 21 in Kenya** We will be ministering at a school for orphans in Kitale, Kenya and sponsoring a Fatherheart Ministries A School for pastors in Nakuru, Kenya

♥ **May 22 – June 4 in Zambia** We will be ministering to street kids in Kitwe, Zambia, training pastors on the Father's Love in Ndola, Zambia, and speaking at two churches

♥ **June 5 - June 11** We will be visiting Victoria Falls and Chobe National Park in Botswana to rest after our time of ministry.

Please pray for all the coordination to go smoothly for the trip, the Holy Spirit to direct us in what we share, and all of the finances to come in for travel, lodging, and the schools. Pray that the words we speak will be filled with Spirit and Life and will impact many people and children beyond those who attend the meetings.

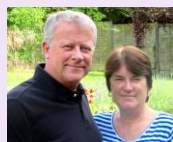
If you would like to sow into the lives of those in Africa, you can financially support us by either donating online at our website www.abbasarmsintl.org or sending a check made out to:

Abbas Arms International, Inc.
P.O. Box 1396
State College, PA 16804

Fatherheart Ministries A School is Coming to PA

February 17 – 23, 2019

Trevor and Linda Galpin
will be presenting an A school at the
Barn Vineyard Church in Landenburg, PA



For more information visit:

<http://thebarnvineyard.com/project/fatherheart-a-school/>

Or contact Bob Mulrooney at
fatherheartbob@gmail.com.

The Power of Appreciation!

These past two years Father has been opening my eyes to the importance of healthy relationships that help us deal with life's circumstances and enjoy the "life more abundantly" that Jesus spoke of in **John 10:10**. Father created us for relationships with Him and others, to experience great joy all the time through the fellowship within these healthy relationships. One of the most powerful ways to achieve this joy is through appreciation. Our nervous system and whole being are wired to respond to appreciation and expressions of gratitude that we express or we receive from each other. I (Rick) want to share with you some of what I have learned so far about the power of appreciation!

First Some Definitions

Webster's Dictionary defines:

Appreciation *"the recognition and enjoyment of the good qualities of someone or something"*

Gratitude *"the quality of being thankful, readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness"*

Thankfulness *"being happy, pleased or grateful for something or someone"*

The definitions seem to overlap one another and convey similar meanings and understanding. I (Rick) will stick with the word "appreciation," but I believe that whether we are expressing appreciation, gratitude, or thankfulness, they have similar effects on our body and nervous system and those around us!

There are at least 40 times in Scriptures where Father commands us to "give thanks" to the Lord or show appreciation for all that He has done for us. And there are many more like **Col. 3:15-17** where we are to sing with "gratitude" in our hearts and have praises continually on our lips. We are to enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. **Ps 100:4**

The Effects of Appreciation

Chris Coursey in his book **Transforming Fellowship** states that *"appreciation is packaged joy."* The actual joyful event or encounter is stored in our heart, and every time we remember that stored memory by expressing appreciation, we get an even bigger boost of joy that spreads to those with whom we are sharing it. That's why sharing appreciation joy stories can be so powerful, impacting both the atmosphere and changing any negative emotions in those who are listening!

Now when Sue and I find ourselves stuck in some negative emotion with each other, we are quick to stop and begin looking at pictures of joyful memories or just share joy stories with each other. It's not long until the tension and negative emotions are gone and we can deal with the situation in a healthy loving way!

Appreciation can be as simple as a compliment like, "You look pretty in that dress," or being thankful for something someone has just done for you, "Thanks for that tasty soup you just made." But the effects can change the course of someone's bad day or bring a smile and comfort to someone who is hurting. Sue and I have found creative ways to express our appreciation like hiding notes or small gifts around the house. Chris Coursey says, **"When shared, appreciation activates our brain's relational circuits, resettles our nervous system, and releases a cocktail of bonding hormones so we feel connected and peaceful."** (Our "relational circuits" are the part of our brain that allows us to have and stay relational and connect with someone else.)

Gratitude boosts our dopamine levels making social interactions more enjoyable, and thinking thankful thoughts elevates serotonin levels making you "feel good" and have a sense of well-being. As the nervous system resets itself, the release of serotonin and dopamine make us feel connected and at peace. In this state cravings are less intense and our emotions are quieted. It also strengthens feelings of belonging and contentment. We feel valuable. Sue's words of affirmation to me have really helped my feelings about myself.

Appreciation is a gift we can give ourselves or others. Entering into a state of peace and rest through appreciation puts us on the parasympathetic side of our nervous system and stimulates the Vagus nerve to release acetylcholine, a natural tranquilizer. Our body and mind calm, our heart rate slows, and our blood pressure drops.

If you can add a smile or hug to your appreciation, you release oxytocin that reduces pain, stress, and calms the brain's "guard shack," the center for the flight/fight/ freeze response. Oxytocin also makes us feel peaceful, generous, calm, and connected. I always look forward to Sue's hugs and she enjoys mine too!

Appreciation also resets our nervous system to joy and peace. Quiet and rest are the natural state of our body and result in a healthy brain and nervous system. Healthy minds are full of appreciation which fills us with joy!! Sue and I are enjoying each other now more than any other time in our marriage! **Zeph. 3:17** says, *"The Lord your God is in your midst, The Mighty One will save; He rejoices over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."*

Falling Asleep

If you're struggling to fall sleep after just having one of those "intense conversations" with your spouse or children, watched an intense movie or are just having trouble falling asleep at all, you might try Dr. Jim Wilder's **"Three – Three – Three"** exercise as you lie in bed. (Dr. Wilder is a neuro-theologian with THRIVE Training, Connexus, and Life Model Works)

First, identify three things from your day that you feel thankful for, like the special call you got from a loved one, or the beauty of a sunrise or sunset. Pause and think about how you feel after each one.

Next, identify three qualities you appreciate about your spouse, other friends or loved ones. Pause and experience the feelings. Third, name three qualities about Father you feel thankful for or express appreciation for three things Father has or is doing in your life. When I have tried this approach, by the second set I'm feeling pretty relaxed and I never seem to make it through the third set before I'm asleep!

Appreciation Takes Practice!

Dr. Wilder says that if we can practice feeling appreciation for five minutes three times a day, in 30 days we can reset our "normal" to appreciation. Our response will be appreciation instead of anxiety, anger, despair or other negative emotions! With a family, when you sit down for mealtime, take a couple minutes and have each person at the table express two or three things that they are thankful for today or that they can express appreciation towards someone else sitting at the table. Sue is better at this than I am, but I am starting to look for opportunities to express appreciation during the day too, whether it's the person at the service desk, the cashier in the checkout lane, a sales person that helps me, or the person stocking the shelves.



As we practice appreciation, we build positive memories and strengthen long-term memories that help us grow closer to people. For appreciation to become a usable brain skill, it needs to be practiced, enjoyed and shared on a daily basis. It helps us focus on people instead of the problems in our life because the relational center of our brain is engaged. When we express appreciation towards our Heavenly Father, our relational center is also open to have fellowship, intimacy and to receive from Him! With practice we can use appreciation to help us get past feelings of being overwhelmed or disconnected from others. When you start experiencing these negative feelings, simply ask yourself, "What can I be thankful for today or who can I express appreciation towards?"

Start each day with appreciation and you will feel more energy, stamina, and a more positive outlook on the day! Then all day long look for opportunities to be thankful. We can express appreciation about a special event, person, pet, a time in nature, a favorite place, a pivotal spiritual experience, music, art, etc. The areas of potential appreciation are limitless! Sue and I express thankfulness to Father for beautiful things that He has created like a sunset, pretty flower, or a colorful fall scene. We even thank Him for parking places and favor when we get a good deal buying something! *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."* **1 Thess. 5:16-18**

Think, Feel, and Share

When we express appreciation, we need to be actively involved. It's important to **Think, Feel** and **Share** what

we are experiencing as we express appreciation.

Think -We think of an experience or person that was pleasant, enjoyable, fun, etc. Be as specific as you can about what was happening as you revisit the event or situation.

Feel -As you are thinking about the event, take notice of the feelings and emotions that might be rising up inside of you. Focus on the positive feelings as you replay the memory.

Share -You can either contact the person, write a note, journal about your feelings or share them with another person, etc. Or you can just think about some thing or a person you appreciate without taking any further action. Express what you appreciated about what took place or what they did. Again focus on how you are feeling as you express the appreciation. Pay attention to your feelings, body sensations, and emotions. As you share, also be aware of the presence of Father or Jesus and ask them to respond to your sharing appreciation.

Make Appreciation Your Default Response!

I've started to make appreciation a higher priority in my day. As we begin to practice appreciation, we will look for things to appreciate. It will become our default response to help us turn on our relational circuits, quiet our mind and body, deal with negative emotions, and turn around arguments and other stressful situations. Appreciation helps put us into a place where we can return to joy through healthy interactions with other people. Joy comes when we know that someone is pleased to be with us. With our relational circuits on, we can stay connected with others even in the midst of a difficult situation. ***We can become joy starters wherever we go!***

Father's Blessing for Appreciation

I bless you to be a joy starter spreading joy wherever you go as you express thanksgiving, gratitude, and appreciation. I bless you to experience the joy, rest, and peace that comes as you express appreciation to others and bring quietness and peace into difficult situations. Just as your righteousness goes before you and creates peace so will you be a carrier of joy and rest to those who are hurting, lonely or overwhelmed. I bless you with an open heart and eyes to see opportunities to be a blessing to others as you express appreciation and thankfulness to them. Joy and rest will be your normal rhythm of life and you will be able to help others synchronize with you in it. Your joy will become contagious and spread to others both individually and in group settings. The joy of the Lord will be your strength and energize you every day!