

## #237 - A Quick Word Before Thanksgiving

Hi there! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't! Today is episode 237 - a quick word before Thanksgiving.

Now listen, if you need practical Thanksgiving help - hosting, recipes, that kind of thing - I've got you covered. There's a Thanksgiving-themed preorder bonus for folks who order my upcoming book, *The Lazy Genius Kitchen*, with downloads on how to host Thanksgiving as well as the most Lazy Genius turkey recipe around if you still need a recipe for a turkey. Links are in the show notes.

There are also Lazy Genius podcast episodes about gratitude, fall rhythms, opening and closing ceremonies, and lots of other things that could be beneficial to you this week. But even listing those things out reminds me how much there is to potentially think about this time of year. This week is a holiday week for a lot of you, it's in the middle of the fall season, you're maybe trying to get an early start on Christmas things so you can enjoy that time as well... it's easy to feel like this particular week is pretty condensed. It's hard, for me at least, to let Thanksgiving just be Thanksgiving.

So I want to take a few minutes to center us this week before everything ramps up, whatever that looks like for you and your family.

I went back to one of my favorite books that is perfect to revisit this time of year. It's a book written by Diana Butler Bass called *Grateful: The Subversive Practice of Giving Thanks*. I love a good subversion, and gratitude was always something that needed it. I never found conversations around gratitude, practices around gratitude, or even just the posture around gratitude to meet me where I was. I'm all for being grateful and have been known to use it in parenting. A kid is complaining, and I ask them to try and think of three things they're grateful for. Not a bad idea, but then I'm doing to them what I often feel - forced. Gratitude seems hollow when it's forced. I could never get my head around what it really means to be thankful, to mark the moments I am, and how that changes me. It just always felt like another chore, another thing I was supposed to do, like drinking a lot of water or going on a date night, that I couldn't seem to make work in my own life.

Then I read this book, *Grateful*, and everything changed. It really did subvert the idea I had in my head and taught me a new way to see gratitude. In this very specific titular season of thanksgiving, I wanted to share some words and thoughts, mostly from this book, that will hopefully give you a grounding perspective that has so helped me.

One of the many things that used to frustrate me is that I didn't always feel grateful in the moments I thought I should. Or when everyone else did. Or maybe the way I felt about a particular moment or event or person landed differently than it landed for someone else. And when my own experience of something was different than someone else's who was also

experiencing gratitude but maybe more overtly, I felt like my gratitude wasn't quite right, that it didn't quite count, that I wasn't seeing the full picture. That posture always kept me on guard. I would temper my reaction until I had a better understanding of everyone else's reaction; then I would know more fully how to act, what to say, how to feel.

Then I read this foundational thought from Diana's book:

"There is no one experience of gratitude; rather, it is a complex and episodic thing, and one that is deeply personal. For all its uniqueness and complexity, there is a common core to feeling grateful: we recognize a circumstance, event, or situation (even if it is a trial) as a gift, we have received some unexpected benefit, we respond with words and actions, and we become our best selves in the process. Gifts are not only pleasurable, but the right gift at the right time can change us. When such gifts arrive, we know it. Something deep within rises to the surface, that mixture of love and appreciation we call thanks."

"Something deep within rises to the surface." Just the other day, I was in my bathroom after dinner, changing clothes or something, and I heard this burst of laughter. Hearing a kid deep belly laugh might be one of the greatest sounds on the planet, even if the kid isn't yours. It was Annie, my five year old. She was cackling, and I went into the bedroom and saw her playing and wrestling with Kaz, my husband, her dad, and even though he makes her laugh like that a lot, even though they play together pretty much every night after dinner, even though this wasn't a particularly unique moment, something deep within rose to the surface.

I had this moment of deep gratitude, of realizing the tremendous gift of Kaz being the father of my children. I don't have a relationship with my biological father, and I know that loss played a part in my gratitude. This swell, this mixture of seeing their joy together, of knowing what a consistently fantastic dad Kaz is, of knowing that unless tragedy comes upon our family, Annie will have a dad who deeply loves her and invests in her for a lifetime... I was overcome with gratitude. It was a moment that changed me a little. It moved me further away from the fear that I've often lived with of having kids who experience a childhood like I had, of being afraid of a parent or not sure if they were loved. Every time I experience that gift of gratitude, that moment in time that just lands, I move deeper into healing. And I can't manufacture that. I can't mechanize that. Which is part of what makes it magical and beyond me. Because it is. G.K. Chesterton says that "gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder." I love that.

### **We'll be right back...**

There's an interesting paradox with gratitude. Moments just happen, right? Something deep within rises to the surface. We feel small in the best way, we feel interconnected, we feel alive. But are we just at the mercy of those accidental moments? It's important to remember that that's not the only way to experience and even look for gratitude. Diana Butler Bass talks about something we're all relatively familiar with, and that's mindfulness. Paying attention. Staying aware. When we are mindful of our lives, our eyes can see those places that inspire wonder and gratitude.

But there is one specific difference she talks about in her book that, again, has been so transformative for me in my own relationship with gratitude, and that is headwinds and tailwinds. If you're running, it's the wind in your face versus the wind at your back. Researchers have found that we tend to notice the headwinds in our lives more quickly. We see the challenges, we mark the hardships, we feel resentment when we don't get what we worked for despite all the challenges. And sometimes we even have confirmation bias that things are so hard because we're looking for them to be hard.

Tailwinds, on the other hand, are those advantages and privileges and blessings that we grow so accustomed to that we don't really notice them anymore. They contribute to our wellbeing and our place in this world in big ways, but because they are at our back, supporting us almost invisibly, we don't really notice them and therefore have a harder time being grateful for them or seeing them as a more integral part of our story.

She says in *Grateful*, "Tailwinds should not be invisible. Instead, they should call forth, 'I received this. I am so grateful.'" It's so simple, but a regular awareness of our tailwinds helps us cultivate gratitude on a regular, deep level. It's different than just saying "be grateful for what you have!" That distinction between headwinds and tailwinds has always been huge for me.

And to put a more conclusive point in this, she also writes "Gratitude is not about stuff. Gratitude is the emotional response to the surprise of our very existence, to sensing our inner light and realizing the astonishing sacred, social, and scientific events that brought each one of us into being." That, to me, gives a new, more compelling perspective on things like gratitude journals, at least in the way that I previously saw them.

So that's essentially the quick word. A reminder or even a new reframe on gratitude as you move into this week and this season. Again, the book is *Grateful* by Diana Butler Bass. And to close this episode, I'd love to read to you a prayer she wrote in November 2016 to be read around a Thanksgiving table. Even though you're not around one right now because listening to a podcast while you're having Thanksgiving dinner would be weird, I want to share this beautiful prayer with you as we close. And even though this prayer is written to God by a person who believes in God, I believe that many of these words and especially the spirit from which they were written are relevant to anyone who listens.

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we are alone. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors. We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that gives life; and for the air we all breathe.

We make the choice to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, and be thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors, no matter how they voted or how much we feel hurt by them. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the public stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it. And we will make thanks, with strong hands and courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. That we all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to see grace, free and unmerited love, the giftedness of life everywhere, as the tender web of all creation. In this choosing, and in the making, we will pass gratitude onto the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks. And we ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.