

# Count your blessings

## Being grateful for what we have

*Don't set your mind on things you don't possess as if they were yours, but count the blessings you actually possess and think how much you would desire them if they weren't already yours. But watch yourself, that you don't value these things to the point of being troubled if you should lose them.* – Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 7.27

In challenging times, it can be helpful to remember what we have. When overwhelmed with the situation, we likely forget all the good things we were given in life. And all the good things we can still find in our lives.

Don't forget to be thankful for what you have — even in the face of adversity.

## Things to remember

Marcus reminds us in the opening quote of three things:

1. *Material things are not important, don't gather and hoard that stuff.*
2. *Be grateful for all you have.*
3. *Be careful not to get attached to those things.*

Who cares what others have? You can decide for yourself what's truly important and what isn't. Focus on yourself. Recognize how life has been generous with you. You don't need more and more stuff. You need less. And you'll be freer. Remember: nothing has any meaning besides the meaning we give it.

The more you have, the more you can lose. Be grateful for what you have. Appreciate those things. And find ways to take advantage of what you already have.

Here's a divine law Epictetus generously shares with us:

*And what is the divine law? To keep a man's own, not to claim that which belongs to others, but to use what is given, and when it is not given, not to desire it; and when a thing is taken away, to give it up readily and immediately, and to be thankful for the time that a man has had the use of it.* - Epictetus *Discourses*, 2.16

Desire not what you don't have, but appreciate what you do have. Always

be ready to give back what you've been given, and be thankful for the time it was yours to use.

What a simple yet invaluable law!

Seneca agrees:

*The greatest blessings of mankind are within us . . . A wise man is content with his lot, whatever it may be, without wishing for what he has not.* - Seneca, *On the Happy Life*, Chapter 2

## An attitude of gratitude

Let's keep such an attitude of gratitude at all times. For everything we have, and for everything that comes our way.

## We do not know the future

As we do not know the future, we cannot really say whether the present is good or bad. It can certainly seem good or bad, but we ultimately don't know what will come out of it. How many times already did something sour turn into something sweet?

The point is simple: Let's be grateful for what we've been given. In challenging times, let's count our blessings. While some things don't seem to go our way, many things certainly do — always did and always will. As we are all part of the same universe, we can trust that things will turn out well.

Here's something I try to do before every meal: Be grateful for what's on the plate. I thank the cow for the milk, and the farmer for milking the cow, and the boy who brought the milk to the cheese dairy, and the old woman who made the cheese, and the young man who delivered it to the supermarket, and the woman who put it onto the shelf... there were so many hands and hooves involved — let's be grateful for all of them.

In the face of adversity, look for all the things you can be grateful for.

Jonas Salzgeber of [jonas@njlifebacks.com](mailto:jonas@njlifebacks.com) is an author. At the core of his actionable philosophy lies the goal of leading a happy life even — and especially — in the face of adversity. He is the author of [The Little Book of Stoicism](#).

Jonas Salzgeber

