

The Muse Offers Thanksgiving Day Gratitude

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Warning: The following post is not related to ColdFusion, SQL, Troubleshooting or anything else of a *technical* nature. For this post active ingredients include faith, sentimentality, syrupy sweetness, hyperbole, statements of love, and over-all good-feeledness. Side effects may include smiles, light hearted chuckles, blushing, desire to hug your friends and loved ones and an internal urge to answer that pressing question "does my life matter". You have been notified. Seriously folks, if blogs that include statements related to faith bother you - my apologies. I have no desire to offend anyone, but Thanksgiving seems like an appropriate holiday for the following.

On this Thanksgiving Day I hope that you all have something to be thankful for. No matter where you are in life it pays to stop and consider the little things. This is not mere Muse sentimentality - although I do tend to cry at the end of "Armageddon" and every time I hear the song "I'm a little teapot" (it's a long story). No, what I mean is that living a life in tune with gratitude is a recipe for being content. You can make an amazing income, have power and influence and be an outstanding talent - but if you haven't learned how to be content then you may have the "good life" but you have yet to learn how to "live well".

Now I don't know everything about being content. I certainly have a ways to go. I am sometimes frustrated by others. I often feel an excess of pride and ambition. I'm not always as grateful as I could or should be. Still, the older I get, the more I am convinced that I am fortunate and blessed - and the more I want to share that blessing with others. More often than not I *am* content - and that is a powerful gift. Gratitude is a huge ingredient in the contentment recipe. Gratitude brings perspective and perspective allows me to rest and enjoy what I have in my life.

So what am I thankful for?

My Staff and Colleagues

I try to *not* think of folks who work for me as "employees" - at least not in any "status" sort of way. There are women and men who are on the CF Webtools staff who have abilities and talents that exceed mine. Some of them could easily start successful companies of their own. Many (maybe most) of them would be better at managing than I am. I have 6 staff members (Jason Herbolsheimer, Mike Klostermeyer, Jake Churchill, Nicole Smith, Guy Rish and Chris Tierney) who I have been privileged to work with for at least 3 or 4 years - some of them quite a bit longer. Others are relative new-comers. Recently we hired our 27th staff member. As we grow I can already feel a sense of loss at not being able to know everyone the way I'd like to. But we have managed to amass an awesome amount of brain power - and in spite of the fact that most of them are remote (I mean they telecommute, not that they are in any way aloof), there is a real sense of community among them. I am truly grateful for the CFWT staff and I pray for them and thank God for them daily.

My Readers

Blogging can be fun, but for a lot of folks it is a trial and a sacrifice. As a blogger you put yourself "out there". It's painful when some reader decides to rip you a ne....er...to criticize you vigorously and forcefully and sometimes even personally. For most folks

writing is an extension of themselves and it takes confidence and faith in your abilities. When readers have no qualms about laying into your latest offering it can be discouraging - even devastating. That's why the Muse is so very very thankful for his readers. My readers are smart - so smart that I write in fear and trepidation at times. But my readers are also kind and thoughtful. When they offer tips or criticism it is almost *always with the goal of making the content better or more complete or more accurate*. The result? My blog has some of the most well documented ColdFusion problem-solution posts on the web - and not because of my writing, but because my readers take the time to expand on what I've written and add their insight, tips, tools and perspectives. I find myself turning back to my blog time and again and digging through the comments... "Now what was it Russ said about that driver? Where was that link Charlie gave me? How was it Sean described that bug again?" You folks make me a better programmer, troubleshooter, technologist and writer - and you do it for free out of love for the CF community. Thank you!

The Men in My Life

No, the Muse is not coming out. My take is that male friendships are important to a balanced life as a man. For my part friendships aren't about the shallow stereotypes you see in beer commercials. I don't make friends centered around drinking, barbeque, football, oggling women, acts of physical danger, bodily functions, primary colors, emotional scales below 3 and that "whoooo!!" sound that all the beer commercial men seem to make at some point (representing some level of blood alcohol I suppose). Yes, I may prefer liver with some Fava beans and a nice Chianti to a beer and a brat but I do enjoy barbeque and football as well (actually I don't eat organs of any kind but I couldn't resist the cultural reference). My point is that my male friends mean more to me than as a backdrop to some leisure activity or as a foil for the latest practical joke. These men have *influenced* and *added value* to my life in a significant way.

First there's the CFWT men. Something that stands out about these 4 men is their willingness to be honest with me when they think I'm running amuck. It's not easy to approach someone with an ego the size of the Muse' - for goodness sakes, I refer to myself in the third person half the time! But Jason, Mike, Ryan and Curt have taught me to trust them so that they have the right to speak honestly and openly to me when they think I'm wrong. That's extremely valuable to me.

- **Jason Herbolsheimer** - Who I hired in 2003 and without whom CF Webtools would still be a one man shop - or more likely out of business. Jason's example to me as an employee and (more importantly) as a man has helped guide my decisions and added great value to my life. I am thankful for his wisdom, humor and friendship.
- **Mike Klostermeyer** - The second developer I hired (2004 I think). Mike is a tremendous stabilizing influence to all who meet him. His wisdom has helped to guide our company and his example has blessed me personally. The type of care he takes with his wife and family are amazing and I know many other men who greatly admire Mike as well.
- **Curt Lovegren** - Our director of sales. Curt has been the force behind doubling our company's size and revenue in the last year. So I owe him thanks for the financial benefits he's brought to me. But more than that Curt has brought a positive "can-do" attitude to every project that keeps me looking forward. Curt's prayerful friendship and willingness to always believe the best in me have made me feel like I could accomplish anything I set my mind to do. I'm humbled and

honored by his friendship.

- **Ryan Stille** - Ryan actually hasn't worked on the CFWT staff for a few years, but he's still in my circle of colleagues as a user group manager - and I still rely on him for advice practically every week. As a technology guru Ryan has made a tremendous impact on my professional life. I'm guessing I would know practically nothing about Linux without Ryan, but there's more to Ryan than that. I admire Ryan for his ability to be himself. He's so even-keeled and relaxed about who he is. That's something folks sometimes say about me - but I think I owe that trait in part to watching Ryan move through life with confidence.

...and lest you think the Muse has no life outside the office, I also have the following men to thank for helping me on my journey through life, marriage, fatherhood, faith, tragedy and triumph:

- **Sean Keith** - I've been friends with Sean now for quite a while. Sean is the worship pastor at my church ([Lifegate](#)), and has been my golfing buddy for the last few years. Sean's allowed me to be involved in his Choir and I've been privileged to sing with the choir on a couple CD's as well. He's a fabulously talented musician - check out his music [here](#). But let me say that *Sean's talent is not the most important thing about him*. He's a great friend. He's supportive and willing to go the extra mile to be there for me. He's a great example as a father and husband. He always believes the best in me. And he's given me opportunities to expand myself personally and musically that have added great value to my life. Thanks Sean!
- **Tracy Rice** - Tracy and I have been friends for many years. We aren't as close as I would like to be but we do get to golf together and occasionally play racquetball. But Tracy makes the list because he is always there for counsel when my life turns to the dark side. His wisdom is combined with humor in a way that lets me consume it without falling apart - and he's helped me on many specific occasions - thanks Tracy.
- **Tom Long** - Tom Long is a customer and friend of many years. He owns a fantastic marketing company called [ISI Technologies](#). Tom is one of those guys that is instantly accessible on a personal level. Now typically I'd rather have my big toe bitten by a bacteria laden Komodo Dragon than have to spend 10 minutes with a marketing pro - but oddly I have found that Tom is *impossible not to like*. Tom's positive energy can lift your spirits immediately. Over the years Tom's "vision-casting" has been an inspiration to me. Tom believes that *great things are not only possible but just around the corner!* That's a great motto for a businessman and it keeps me going and striving for that next level. I value Tom's friendship highly. He's also one of my golfing friends (which is sort of a theme I guess).
- **Greg Ammon** - Greg is my brother-in-law. I don't want to say too much but over the past several years he has had some very serious health issues. Some years ago he was at death's door and we really thought he would not be around much longer. But at some point he decided he was going to live - and live he has! Since that time this amazing man has built a life with a new wife and a precious little daughter (my Neice Jessica who just turned 2). He seems to live each day with a new appreciation. I feel like he is a gift to my wife and I, not just by living but by living well. He's also a terrific influence as an uncle on my children. Thanks Greg!

Family

Finally I have to talk about my family. Some of you might want to stop reading at this point or at least get one of those little airplane bags. My family is the music of my life and home is my symphony hall - the place where I can rest. I am so blessed to have a home and family that is a place that *adds new life* to me. It was not always that way. Ann (my wife) and I went through dark times together over a decade ago. We didn't know if we would even stay together. But I'm living proof that forgiveness, love and sacrifice can make a difference in a marriage where two people *really want* to make it work and are willing to trust God for help. Listen to what I am about to say - after our trouble, when we finally *settled* that we were committed to making it work, our marriage has been *better than I ever thought marriage could be*. Consequently I'm continually surprised at how good it really is - and that is a great place to be at in life. :)

So I'm thankful for my lovely wife Ann. Without her my life would be fragile and easily broken (yes, the Muse is like that). I was recently told that Ann was perfect for me because acts as "brake" on my life and she knows when to "slow down" and when to "let up". That's awesome isn't it! She's able to help me burn hot - but not so hot that I flame out. She knows when to pull my attention away from the computer and when to let me focus. She knows how to get me to re-prioritize when my life gets out of balance. And she knows how to have fun *with me* - something that leaves some people scratching their heads at times. No one has had more influence on me than Ann - and without her I'm sure I would simply be wandering aimlessly through life. Plus she's really hot!

I'm thankful for my three brilliant, talented and awesome Children. Jasmine is age 20, a junior in College, full of creative juices, a dizzying whirlwind of energy for writing, movies, plays, and productions. She amazes me every day. Aaron is age 17 and a senior in high school. He loves quantum physics and he's searching for a university that will let him smash atoms together and discover new things. He's also a talented singer, jazz pianist and trumpet player. It must be cool to have both halves of your brain fully engaged like that! Mathew is 16 and a junior in HS. He has a gift for encouragement. He can make a room feel better just by showing up and being himself. Like his brother he seems obsessed with math and science, but he also sings, plays piano and trombone. I can't wait to see what he's able to do with his life. In some ways my life revolves around these three young people. I love them very much and when it comes to investing in their lives I'm "all in".

Finally...

Well if you made it all the way through you might feel a bit sticky with all that syrup. Sorry about that. When it comes to writing about things that are meaningful to me I tend to become rife with hyperbole. Still, there's one more thing I am thankful for. This is strictly faith based so if that bugs you, you might want to stop reading now. I'm thankful for the powerful and awesome love of God in my life. My relationship with Christ has kept me "planted" and made all the difference in a life of many twists and turns. Sometimes I'm tempted to believe that I'm on "Plan B" for my life... that my life isn't really all it should be or could be. When that temptation comes I remember that only through Jesus am I truly made whole and perfect. All my failures, mistakes, and sides roads are forays into a deeper appreciation for who He is.

Ok that's it. I hope it wasn't too painful. I promise that in my next post I'll be back to my usual irreverent highly technical self. As always I appreciate comments but try to keep them civil and positive. Thanks! Oh... and if you are selling shoes or buying yellow metal or are concerned about erectile dysfunction (aren't we all) please move

on. No matter how polite and civil you are I'm afraid I will still delete your comment. I guess I'm struggling to be thankful for spam. :)