

Episode #3: Gratitude vs Entitlement

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CANEEL: Welcome to Allowed. I'm your host, Caneel Joyce. Today we're doing something a little different. This is a personal episode. It's Thanksgiving week here in the U.S. and a lot of us are getting ready to head off for family gatherings. This week, our focus is on gratitude. This is a really cool holiday here in the U.S. where we're all focusing together on gratitude and ironically we also are presented with some challenges to really appreciating what we have. The stress of travel and meeting up with family that you may not have seen in a long time, back in familiar situations that can bring you right back to a prior age.

We often might find ourselves accidentally slipping into a sense of entitlement and that simply means we have a thought like I should get to do something I'm not doing, I should get to be treated like some way I'm not being treated or I shouldn't have to deal with some way that it currently is. With my guest, Heather Nienaber who has been my right hand woman here at Kickass Enterprises for five years, we're going to be exploring the difference between entitlement and appreciation and the results of these two really different states. We're also coming at this from two very different angles. Mine tends to be more spiritual/secular, whereas Heather comes from a deep Christian faith. You're allowed to grow from any change and find appreciation in any situation. Now let's start the show.

Welcome to the show. I'm your host, Caneel, and I'm joined here today by Heather Nienaber, our head of operations here who is a superstar in every way and has really helped keep me, my family and my business afloat even though we've never even been in the same state. We've worked together for five years. Heather, how is it out there today in Missouri?

HEATHER: It is very cold. It's actually November and we're not really having fall today. They said feels like January. It's in the 20's, so, it's not the ideal.

CANEEL: And here I am, I have flip flops and I've got my jean shorts in my purse because I know I'll need to change into them later when it warms up. So LA is a pretty different situation.

HEATHER: Extremely valid.

CANEEL: It's so great to have you here today, Heather. It's really cool that you agreed to come on the show. For our guests, the neat thing is Heather and my producer Alayna, who's also here, supporting us today as we record, we always talk about the content for any upcoming show ahead of time. We gather some ideas, we might gather resources and quotes we talk about who might be a good guest. And when we were planning this Thanksgiving week show on gratitude and I was sharing some of the practices that I wanted to share with you guys. Heather shared that she has a similar practice that she's been practicing in her, is it a Bible study group or a prayer group?

HEATHER: Yes.

CANEEL: And what's really neat is that we often find these overlaps even though we come at things from slightly different perspectives. I tend to be more spiritual. You could probably digest my work if you're secular and atheist, I think it's still really rings true. And Heather's a very devout Christian Catholic, correct?

HEATHER: Correct. Catholic.

CANEEL: I was raised Catholic. So, we share a lot of similar understandings and backgrounds, but we come at things from different angles and yet we seem to always find ourselves in the same place. And so I thought it would be neat to bring her on and share some of the overlaps that we have seen and in particular around this area of gratitude.

It's Thanksgiving week and a lot of us are getting ready to head off to see our family. Some family that we don't see very often, that always comes with a little bit of stress and sometimes a lot and some challenges. Many of us will be getting on airplanes and hoping that our flights are on time and there are no delays. I know I've had many hours of laying on the floor of the Oakland airport trying to get home to LA back when I lived in the Bay area. By the way, the bar in the Oakland airport is really, really fun. The Wednesday before Thanksgiving cause everyone's delayed and everyone's just like trying to make the best of it. So highly recommend that. But I haven't had to do that in a few years. It's really nice to be back here in LA.

CANEEL: I want to dive into this idea about entitlement versus gratitude. I think this is a useful thing to bring into the holidays in particular because most of us would not describe ourselves as entitled. It's a really subtle thing when we accidentally dip into entitlement. Nobody's trying to be entitled. So I want to offer that as a word that has essentially a technical meaning. And it just means that you have a thought that anything should be different from how it currently is now.

HEATHER: I think a lot of times people think that's a bad word. They throw it around a lot of days now for millennials, for different young people. I know the children today with technology, they throw that word around a lot and people think it's a negative terminology. So when we were discussing this episode and talking about this kind of idea of entitlement, it was very eyeopening. I know, to me to hear it from this perspective.

CANEEL: Yeah. So, what's the distinction between how we work with entitlement with our clients and how you think most people think of that word?

HEATHER: I think it's getting past those norms and those ideologies that you have on entitlement and thinking about how you can shift to a different perspective and point of view and how that shift can change everything about the way you see your life, the world, the people around you, the way you respond to people. It has a big impact.

CANEEL: It has a huge impact. So gratitude itself, which is available to us when we're not in an entitlement mindset, it has a lot of proven benefits. So when we're in gratitude, we have increased happiness. Actually, our happiness can increase by 25% or much more according to some measures. Gratitude counteracts depression. It lowers our stress level, it increases our sense of abundance and our ability to attract abundance to our life. It also increases our willpower.

There's a lot of really interesting work by Roy Baumeister and others on a willpower. And when we're in a gratitude mindset, we literally have more self control. And who doesn't want more of that. We have happier relationships when we're in gratitude. It enhances our self esteem and our sex appeal. And it just allows for such a more enjoyable life when we can be out of the drama triangle and in a spirit of appreciation, not just for others and for the world around us, but also for ourselves.

In my family, we have, of course, you know, we say grace at Thanksgiving, we always go around and say what we're thankful for. My husband's family is not religious at all. And so for them we go and we do like a really long, deep check-in on what we've been grateful for over the last year. That's just one of my favorite parts

of that holiday. And then at the dinner table, sometimes with my family, we try to say, what's one thing we're grateful for. Do you guys do that, Heather?

HEATHER: Yeah, we've tried in the past. You know, things come and go as your kids grow and practices come and go. It's always entertaining with little kids to ask them what they're grateful for when you go around the table and you try to model for them so they go a little bit into more depth than they do. But little kids will say wonderful things like they're snuggly or you know, their favorite piece of candy or something really specific and you get into the teens and they're just like my family or my phone or something very generic like, come on, can't you get a little more specific for me please?

CANEEL: My daughter almost always says food and she loves food and I know she's genuinely really, really grateful for the food. And she's four, my son, it depends. It's varied every single day. And then there are others days where sometimes we're stumped, you know, I don't know what I'm grateful for today. And that's when it's actually such a good time to do that exercise is when you are really in a day where you need to look in order to find something.

I have this journal here with me, I've shared a couple of times on social and on my blog. For those of you who are watching this podcast on video, you can see it's called the five minute journal. And most mornings I do this, I go out to my little shed in the backyard. And that's the only place where I can't hear anyone else, which as a mom with little kids is a really important for me. It asks me every morning, what are three things that I'm grateful for. And as Heather and I were planning out this episode, I realized that probably the most important or most common entry in that section of this journal is Heather.

HEATHER: Aw!

CANEEL: Heather and I have been through so much. I mean she was with me when we were living in San Francisco and helped us plan our move down to Los Angeles, helped us with our house hunt from afar, from across the country. Helped us coordinate a remodel, going from living in a little apartment in the city to all of a sudden having to fill a whole entire house with furnishings.

And she helped me kind of keep track of our budget there and track orders and then even help me coordinate the birth of my second child, Arrow, and my midwife knew who Heather was and, you know, cause Heather would help me make my appointments and help me coordinate a really beautiful home birth over here. And we have been through a lot.

HEATHER: We really need to meet in person.

CANEEL: We really do. I also really appreciate that we haven't, it's such a remarkable story. It shows you how connection can happen in so many different ways. I mean the fact that we've been on video together and yet I feel we have so much trust and ability to work together, which I credited a lot to your character and both of our deep passion for what we're up to, but people are always blown away when they find out that I haven't met you. Most people think that you worked right here sitting next to me.

HEATHER: I've had the same experience even with talking to our clients or people that you know I mentioned, "oh yeah, and we've never met," and they are like, "really?" It's like shock. You've got to credit technology to that too. We wouldn't have been able to do this I think in this same manner without the video capabilities and the remote working capabilities that we have today.

CANEEL: Yeah. Heather is a mom of four. Our little girls are close in age and so she's been through it and also deeply involved in your church and your community and hoping to take care of your mother.

HEATHER: Busy with a capital B.

CANEEL: Oh man. You've been through I think two or three moves since we started working together.

HEATHER: Maybe more. At least two. Probably three. We moved a lot for a short period of time. I think we moved like five times in six years or something. So, lots of moves. And I moved my mom in that timeframe too, so I feel like I'm an expert mover.

CANEEL: And now you know, a house that has become a project. So I remember, great example of shifting out of entitlement and into gratitude, was when you guys bought your new home and found some surprises.

HEATHER: Oh, surprises. Yeah. So we bought this house because we needed to move my mother in and it had an apartment and we actually would put an offer on it and the guy rejected it. And so we just were like, "okay, it's not, it's not meant to be, it's not going to happen." And we were going to move on. We were going to put it on hold and just wait and knew that the timing would come and it just wasn't in the cards at the moment.

We just moved along and about a month later, we got a request from his realtor that he was gonna accept our offer if we were still interested. And so we were like, "okay. I guess it's meant to be." So we knew the house had some work and we knew

we'd have to pull up the floors and do a lot of painting and stuff. But as soon as we got in here and started working, my husband and I said the only thing that was really in good condition was the roof.

So we found all sorts of interesting things that we didn't know were wrong with the house that needed work and things, you know, you think, "oh, this works and this is going to be okay." And then you get in and it's not okay. So lots of surprises. Still a long term project, but yeah, thankful that we're here, that it's a good long-term place for us, even though it didn't work out with my mom, which I'm sure we'll talk about in a little while. It's still a good house for our family and it will be a good long-term place for us. So I still am thankful.

CANEEL: I remember when you first moved in, every day when we'd huddle up, it was a new surprise discovery. Did you find a hot tub in the basement or something like that?

HEATHER: Yeah, well there was a hot tub in the basement when we went to buy the house and the guy couldn't believe that we didn't want to keep it in the house and we were like, "no, of course we don't want to keep the hot tub in the house." So he had to cut the hot tub in half to get it out of the house. Actually, couldn't even fit it out of the house. He had tiled the floor around the hot tub. So once he removed the hot tub, there was no floor underneath it.

And then there was no tile that would match it. So then it became, we weren't originally gonna redo the tile in the basement, but then it became, we need to take up the tile in the basement and then it became, we needed a Jack hammer because the tile would not come off the basement floor. And then it was just like the next thing and the next thing. And it continually was something new.

But the grateful appreciation that I had from that experience, so we were doing all this work ourselves because to take floor up apparently costs a fortune and already costs a fortune to put it in. But having them take it out costs a lot of money too. So we wanted to save and cut costs. So we said, "okay, well we can pull out carpet, we can pull out tile, we can pick up, we can get the hardwood floor out. No problem."

Well I have two teenage sons and we brought them in and we spent November this time last year leading into Thanksgiving, demoing our house and taking the flooring out. And it was a very cool experience for our family to do together. Our boys learned things. They were not on devices. We got to spend time together as a family.

And actually last Thanksgiving last year, the four of us, four children and my husband and I, so, let me stop. The six of us were in the house and working on it.

There's not much heat. It's pretty bare. My daughter, she was six at the time. She's got a chisel and a hammer and she's chiseling up tile in the kitchen floor and pulling tile up. And my older boys are doing work and we spent all day Thanksgiving just doing work. And then for Thanksgiving dinner we went to a 24 hour diner and you know, we've got this wonderful memory that even though it was all a challenging timeframe for us, I feel like we made memories that will last forever from the experience. So it was good.

CANEEL: I remember you just talking about the blessings that you found in that challenging experience. You've always been, for me, somebody who's so good at staying stable. And I think a lot of it is because you're constantly looking for what's the gift in this challenging situation? In conscious leadership, we talk about that as looking for, you know, how is this here for me? How is everything related to this issue here as an ally for me and my own learning? And we take responsibility for the situations we create consciously and unconsciously knowing that even if we non-consciously created a really challenging situation, somehow we were setting that up so that we can learn and grow in a way that we really deeply want to.

When challenging things happen in our life, we, we can easily slip into a state of kind of powerlessness or victimhood that in conscious leadership that would be described as being in the drama triangle where we're perceiving life as happening to us. And being against us. And often when these challenging situations come up, we have a tendency to blame or criticize those situations. So you could easily blame the house or the previous seller or agent or there are a million people you probably could have blamed. You and your family could have started blaming each other or the weather or whatever.

But there's an alternative view which is that instead of being a villain, these challenges in our life are constructive in some way. They're what would be called a challenger, like in the technical sense and a challenger might be something that's clearly here to challenge you like training for a marathon where you're going to be overcoming something and learning something new intentionally and you created it on purpose. Or you know, launching a company is another challenging situation that people take on on purpose.

And then there are a lot of challenges that arrive in our lives, which we did not invite and which may not have immediately obvious gifts and which actually are more deconstructive challengers. They take our lives apart in some way. And for many of us who've been through some sort of healing or recovery process that whatever that initial injury or trauma was, is a deconstructive challenger and it really rattles us and shakes us to the core of who we are and has us pull apart pieces of ourselves that maybe aren't serving us anymore.

And then our role is to put it back together again. And Heather, you've always been one who I think can welcome any challenge as something that has a silver lining. And I remember you telling the story around Thanksgiving last year and I believe shortly after that then you found that you had no internet. No internet can reach your house and no phone lines were there and communication was very challenging for awhile. And then that was nice because the kids couldn't be on their devices as much over the Christmas holiday. And I'm sure that was challenging. But you got to be together.

HEATHER: Yes, that was a good thing about this house that they still, we still do not have very good cell service here. So when we didn't have internet here and we have internet, but it's, you know, through the DSL. So it's not the best. And that's the only option. They couldn't use their devices when they were here. There was nothing they could do but hang out and talk to us. And it was not a bad thing as far as a parent is concerned to just spend time with your family and your kids and know that they can't be distracted by technology. In today's day and age when teenagers are all on Snapchat and other social media and devices that keep them distracted and their attention elsewhere.

CANEEL: And that was even challenging for us because we were so used to being able to communicate whenever we wanted to really, really easily. And then suddenly it was no, only when you went to that one cafe, it had a good connection near you. And so you'd hang out there for hours, thank goodness, because everything would've collapsed without you.

HEATHER: Yup. Thank goodness they have a free meeting room that I can use.

CANEEL: Yeah, that's great. Shout out to them. But it also challenged me, it was a wake up call of like, wow, we've got a lot riding on one person and it's time to invest in putting some more process and system and redundancy in place because if Heather can't even have any life events happen without things starting to kind of fall apart, that means that she can't really take a vacation and that's not okay with me. It's not okay with you. It's definitely not what we believe in or how we want to work.

And so that was the beginning of a really big push for us in our business to kind of push things to the next level and get really, really organized, which you spearheaded that and we found Alayna and now here we are finally making a podcast. So I also think that was, you know, you not having any internet for those couple of weeks was a real shock to the system and a spark for a lot of inspiring things that have now happened. I'm grateful for that.

HEATHER: Silver lining.

CANEEL: When we were planning this episode and you mentioned the practice that you have in your faith circle. Can you tell us a little bit about that and how that works for those who are interested?

HEATHER: Yeah. So, you were mentioning your five minute journal each morning and how you write things that you're grateful for. When the group first started, we started with the book and I came up with that idea to do like a gratitude list. And that was one of the first challenges that we did. And it was not so much just, uh, three things. It was let's do a gratitude list and just keep going. You can't repeat anything, but you just have to keep going. So when you keep going and you try to make this list that is really everything that you could possibly ever be grateful for, you start getting much more granular and specific because you start out with the big things. Of course, I'm thankful for my kids. I'm thankful for my husband and thankful for my friends and things, you know, parents, you go, you get on the list, you're like, okay, I'm trying to make a list.

So you get very specific and you have a list of you know, 30 people. Then it's like, okay, now what now? Okay, my home and in you're on these bigger, bigger topics. What was really interesting, so our challenge was to do this and then everybody was to bring their lists with them the next time they came. So the next time they came I said, okay, so who did it? Some some were like, "oh I only did five a day." And some were like, "oh I did as many as I could." And I really took the challenge to heart and tried to do as many as I could. And then in the meeting I just said okay, I would just name a random number. I'm like, "okay, so what's your number 12 what's your number 48?" Cause I wanted to get a sense for like, how specific did we get?

You know, I found for this podcast, I was like, I'm going to go find my list and just look at some examples. And so there were things like clean sheets. I'm thankful for clean sheets cause there's something special when you get into bed and your sheets are clean. I'm thankful for giggles. My giggles, my kids giggles, you know, that's a special moment. Or even those belly laughs, conversations with my kids in the car. If you have a teenager and they're not driving yet, having them in the front seat next to you when they're trapped there, it's like the best time to ever have a conversation with them where they'll actually talk to you. Things like slippers. I mean, you know, things like green grass instead of brown grass in the winter. It was really fun to hear everybody's really tiny things that you're like, "Oh yeah, I'm really thankful for that too."

So we did that whole kind of a challenge, which it was good. So you're looking at, okay, I'm thankful for more than just big things. I'm thankful for small things. And

then this year I thought, "well, I want to do a grateful challenge again," Because I felt like there was a lot of use out of it, but I didn't want to just do the easy things.

So this year I challenged the group to every day write down five blessings that were in their life. And I didn't say anything about not repeating, but write down five blessings and then to write down five challenges that were going on in their life and what they could find that they were thankful for from that challenge. So really looking at like, what are you having a tough time with and what appreciation can you find from that tough time in your life right now?

For someone like me, I look at one of my children has a disease that is, for some kids it's very challenging. For some kids it's a lot of bleeding. Some kids die from it, some adults die from it. You just, you just never know. And instead of looking at that as like, "why does my son have to have this and why do we have to deal with this?" Like it is what it is. I know that it's something that he's going to have to deal with and in the long run, like I would rather have my child with this than not have him at all. So you find those nuggets of, "okay, this is okay and I'm thankful for what I've got and this is what I've got." I have him and I, we don't have any severe problems from it. And he's able to live a fairly normal life and it could be so much worse. So I'm thankful for what I have in this moment with that.

It was a really good challenge, I think it was, it changes your perspective when people have to sit down and think about, "okay, I'm having an argument with my husband" or we're not getting along well, I'd rather be able to argue with him than not have a husband, you know? So if you change your perspective on these things, it totally changes, like you were saying, a grateful person is usually a happy person compared to somebody who's grumpy is normally unhappy. So it's all about changing and I'm not saying it's like an easy thing. So having to look at these challenges and try to find the silver lining, sometimes it's in retrospect when you're looking back, you can go, "Oh, okay, I can see how that challenge was for me." And sometimes it's a habit too. You have to kind of go, "how do I get into the habit of trying to see things in a better light than I currently do and understand that these are things that need to happen." I mean, challenges need to happen for a reason. So, there's always learning that can come from them. So I'm thankful for that.

CANEEL: Challenge seems to live at that intersection of the universe is a chaotic place where things randomly bump into each other and they sometimes break and everything is perfect. And all of these opportunities are here for our own learning and growth. And it's such a gift to get to find a silver lining in a challenging situation and just see how much abundance there really is here.

In my life I've faced a couple of challenges where it was really, really hard for me to find my gratitude and I struggled and I just was so I'm below the line and when your

whole body is just triggered and it's just really, really, it feels so irrelevant and inaccessible to get grateful. Kind of like crisis mode sometimes feels like that for me. And one of the biggest challenges I've faced in my life is that when my first baby was born, he quickly developed colic.

And for those of you who have never experienced it, you know, that's wonderful. And what colic is, is it's a syndrome that babies get where they cry at least three hours a day, at least three days a week. And poor Soren, it was much, much more than that. It was more than three hours a day. It'd be three hours at a time, multiple times a day and night. And it was every day. It was very constant. It was especially challenging because I was living abroad.

My son was born in London when I was living out there, teaching at London school of economics, and we actually moved back to the States when he was like five and a half weeks old, which seemed like a great idea when I was pregnant. I had never had a baby before because all I wanted to do was go back home and be with family. Like I was just obsessed with that idea.

But we needed to wrap things up and we couldn't fly home when I was super pregnant. So that's why we did it then. So we were trying to move countries. My husband had very little paternity leave. He had to save up his paternity days to help us move home, cause you have to fly and it takes time. And so very quickly, after my mom left when Soren was about, I don't know, five days old, he started this crying and he was having a hard time breastfeeding and I was just really isolated.

I didn't have any super close friends around nor could I have accessed them. Honestly. My hands were full of a baby all of the time trying to breastfeed him. And I think the hardest, you know, the memory that comes back most clearly is me just being alone in my apartment in London, bouncing on a ball, holding him, he's crying, I'm crying.

I remember like looking at my door being like, "please someone walk through that door." Just someone help me just for like literally 10 seconds - that would be huge. It is so hard to hear your child suffer that much and be powerless to do anything about it. And because I was new at being a mom, everyone kept telling me sometimes there's nothing you can do. It's not your fault. I'm a rabid researcher, so I had to read every book and figure out like, what can I do? There's got to be something I can do to get him to stop crying and nothing worked. I was probably blaming myself in lots of ways. This experience had me, you know, I probably had a certain degree of post traumatic stress disorder from this. I remember I would often hear a baby crying in my head when there was like no baby nearby.

And if I heard him begin to cry at all, I would just go into kind of like a panic. And so as I would lay there at night, I was just, every nerve was on edge waiting for the next spell. So, this wasn't a great introduction to motherhood and it was kind of a little bit of a small T trauma that recently I had the opportunity to process. It wasn't something I had gone into therapy and tending to process, but it came up.

The realization that I had in that session was that, the sensation I had was I was so alone, so alone bouncing him on that ball. And then in this therapy session last week, I realized that I wasn't alone. Like he was there with me the whole entire time and his little head on my chest and I was with him, like I never left him. Then we were in that colic together and I was not alone.

And when I realized that it was like I suddenly was free. It was like took my breath away. I suddenly, it was like I had walked out of a jail cell that I thought I was never going to get out of because it was baggage, it was a thing I carried and I do feel really badly that, I had any like negative feelings about it because I'm sure that it impacts the way that I parent and my tolerance for his suffering is pretty low and that I want to be spacious with him and let him have his own experience.

And also I just want to be grateful for that. Those early days that were, I was really hard for me to find gratitude. And so I am super grateful for all that I learned in that experience and I'm grateful for like finally finding some self forgiveness and I was so lucky because I got to see him. I got to see him right after I did this session and it feels kind of premature to talk through the whole entire thing, but I just held him and I was like, "I will never leave you."

HEATHER: Yeah.

CANEEL: This kind of therapy I'm doing, by the way, is awesome. If you have any traumas big T or small T, it's called EMDR. It's rapid eye movement. And it helps change the meaning of, it helps rewire your brain essentially around like these kind of deep wounds so that you can reframe them and let them go. Like let them move through and which things that you think you can never let go of, like you can. It's like magic. It works really, really fast. It's pretty incredible.

HEATHER: That's tough. Especially as a parent. There is guilt and there are feelings that you get from being a parent that are very hard to push aside and not feel that way. No parent is perfect.

CANEEL: Yeah. Even, you know, I kind of think that we as human beings are programmed to mess each other up in small ways. Every parent is going to mess up their kids. And actually I think there's something very adaptive about that, very like functional and beneficial because I know that my little wounds from childhood,

which came, so my parents were such fantastic parents. So incredibly loving, like off the charts incredible.

But those small wounds that came from my interpretation of little events or interactions, those helped to shape me and give me my quirks and my triggers and my shadows and all of that is what gives me my gifts. Those strengths come from resolving challenges. So even though I know I'm so sad because lots of times I say things like, as in parenting, I don't know if you've had this Heather, where like you're like, "Oh, this is one of those moments that's going to mess them up. They're going to process this later in therapy. I just know it." I'm like, but I can't, I can't figure out any other way to do it.

HEATHER: Sometimes I'm like, hopefully this'll be one of those things that goes and fades into your distant memory and they don't even remember it. Like you know how the older you get, you forget some of those things. I'm like, maybe this'll be one of those...probably not. Well, my oldest is old enough now to tell me the ways that he thinks that I parented him wrong and I'm doing the same to his siblings and I need to adjust and I'm like, hold on, you're not even grown yet. I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing.

CANEEL: Oh man. I remember telling my parents things like that too, and I was like, it must suck. I told my parents when I was a teenager, I said, "it must really suck to have a teenager because you have a person who lives with you and just points out all the things that you finally thought that you were done worrying about."

HEATHER: Well, teenagers tend to think they know it all and we know nothing and they're wrong, so they'll, they'll learn as they grow.

CANEEL: Well it's hard to become a rock star without thinking you know it all.

HEATHER: Yup. Learn and grow, learn and grow, challenges, failures, guilt, life.

CANEEL: I want to say that it's also true that as humans we're going to experience entitlement. We're going to experience a sense that things should not be how they are. And that is a very valid point of view and how to accept, especially in those initial stages that somebody is going to die before their time. And That so much suffering is happening and that we are just destroying our planet. How to be grateful for those things is often a mystery to us.

And I just want to share that there's also a way to be grateful for yourself, even as you're entitled, like grateful for that part of you that really wants things be different, grateful for the part of you that can feel the pain of a situation, grateful that you

know that it could be a different way and that it used to be a different way and that maybe it will be a different way.

When you're nauseous and you've got the stomach flu, like I remember you guys got the stomach flu last Christmas right after that move and oh my gosh, so much going on. And you know, when you're nauseous and my poor baby son just, you know, he's eight, he's not a baby. But, he had a concussion this summer and he was really nauseous a lot of the time and he's was just so sad like, "I'll never ever eat again." And I don't understand how anyone eats.

And I remember that feeling from when you're young and you're just like, "I don't understand how anyone is eating. It seems like the most impossible thing." And then when you're on the other side of it, you appreciate like those first few bites of food that you enjoy. Or like coming in from the cold and like, oh my gosh, just a normal temperature room is the best. Like these things that you didn't appreciate before.

So anyway, back to me being grateful for all of us in our full humanity. If you're in that dark space right now, listeners, where gratitude is hard to find. I just want you to know that I appreciate you for being right there where you are and for having feelings and for wanting something better. And that's human too. It's super, super human and there's beauty in it.

Heather, have you ever experienced something where you really found it hard to be grateful?

HEATHER: Well, yeah, I mean, I'd say this year it's been a tough year. I alluded to earlier, we moved my mom in, in January of this year into my house. We had an apartment for her. That's why we bought this house. She turned 81 in October. She has dementia that has worsened greatly over this year. So she moved in in January was worse than we thought she would be. And we watched her from the course of January to August really lose her ability to care for herself. And it was a very, very difficult time, but I've even said this to others - a blessing at the same time.

So for me it was a time where I was faced with having to deal with some emotions about our relationship, about losing her and who she is and coming to terms with just the whole cycle of even life and death and having my kids become scared of her because she's not the same person that she used to be.

My 10 year old really does not like to be around her at all. It's very frightening for him to see her in such a different way. Through all of that it was like I found a whole other level of compassion. I've found a level of, there's something very, I don't even know how to describe it, when you have to switch into this full caregiver mode for

your parent and you have to take care of them as if they were a child and a baby. I'm talking bathing and helping with going to the bathroom and things that you just never would even picture yourself doing. It creates this tenderness and it changes the relationship in ways that you normally, gosh, I'm getting emotional, that you normally just can't even understand until you experience it.

And so, yes, it was hard, but it also created this different kind of feeling and emotion for me. It created a different type of understanding for people that are going through this situation. And now that we're kind of on another side of it. Like we went through periods where she was very depressed because she knew what was happening as it was happening and I just kind of prayed that we would get past that stage, that she would be at a point where she wouldn't even know what was going on anymore, that she wouldn't be aware of that so that she wouldn't sad. And so the other day I was telling my father in law, I said, "now I'm actually, like the blessing is I talk to her or I see her and she's happy, she's happy." So like we've come to that other side and at least I know she's happy.

And then there's this whole experience now when I go see her, it's like the excitement like a child or a puppy would have when they see you. She lights up cause she's just like, "Oh!" Cause I'm one of the few people that she really remembers or recognizes anymore. So seeing me is like just this beautiful, she just really just, she glows, she's so excited and it's really, really cute even though she doesn't remember that I was there an hour later. And in that moment she has this gift of happiness and fullness and love and it's, it's a blessing. It just is, you know, the reality is there that the end of this is not going to be pretty, that she's nearing the end of her journey on this earth. But you have to, you just can't live through something like this if you focused only on those negatives, you have to focus on what are these things that I find right now that are really special and really wonderful blessings that I can pull out of this moment so that I can live through this moment, that I can process these feelings and make it not be the worst experience that I've ever had, you know?

CANEEL: Yeah. And you, and let me know if this is territory you don't want to go to, thank you for sharing that beautiful story, Heather, and I know that you'd hope that your mom could live with you guys a lot longer than she ended up staying. And I'm really grateful that you were able to find a good place for her to live near you where she can get more care and where you can also take a little more care of yourself and you know, your own family. I know that was an exhausting push and challenges are not complete by any means. And you've had the gift of having not just one mom, but two. Are you willing to talk about that?

HEATHER: Yeah, I was thinking about that when you talked about entitlement. I would say as a little girl, I felt like I was entitled to a normal family and I should, you

know, those "I should's". So I was given up for adoption at birth and so my mom and my dad adopted me from birth and then when I was three, my dad, he passed away. He had a stroke and he died. And so I then ended up being raised by just my mom and it was just me and we didn't have any family nearby. And so as a kid it was, I should, why don't I have a dad? Why don't I have a normal family? Why was I given up for adoption? I could've had a normal life probably, you know, and all these kinds of just, I guess like why I'm entitled to these things.

But as a child, you don't understand and you can't really. It's much harder for a child, I would say, to look at these challenges and be thankful. Of course, you know, as an adult, I look back at it and I'm thankful that I was there for my mom because, you know what, if they didn't adopt me and it was just her and her husband and she would have been all alone, she would have lost him.

I'm thankful that my birth mother made the choice to give me up for adoption. She could have chosen another option and I wouldn't be here right now. So you know, these gifts that you're like, okay, well I am thankful for these things that they happen the way they did. If I hadn't been adopted and my father died and it was just my mom all these years, who would be taking care of her right now? You know, there's, there's a reason that I am in this life situation that I'm in and it's all a plan and it's meant to be. And so you know, you look at it as an adult and you're like, I see why those challenges were there and I see all of this. But as a child, obviously it's not something that we can put our finger on, we feel like, "Oh, I should be like everybody else," when you're not.

CANEEL: I know that you've reconnected with your birth mom since then, which is also pretty neat.

HEATHER: Yes. Yes. Not just my birth mom, my birth father too. So they have been in my life for about 12 years now. And a funny little side note, when my mom and my birth mother would get together, my mom would be like, "I'm so thankful for you. So thankful for Heather," and my birth mother would be like, "no, no, I'm so thankful for you. I'm so thankful for you taking care of Heather." And so it would go back and forth and then I'd finally be like, "okay, okay, everybody's thankful. Let's just stop." Like they would just go back and forth and it was really funny. So see, life has a funny way of bringing it all back together. I often would question, well, you know, why can't, why couldn't I have known these people, you know, my whole life and why did I have to be this way?

Nowadays, adoptions are more open. And a lot of people, if they give a child up for adoption, they still get to see that child's life. They have a part in that life. They are not, it's not as much closed adoption like it was back then. So I'm like, well, why couldn't it be like that when I was a kid? And I just feel like there's reasons and my

life would have been different and things would not have taken the turns that they've taken if it hadn't have gone this way. So, yeah, I'm very blessed that my birth family is amazing and I was able to meet them all. And I have now seven half brothers and sisters that are in my life and I have nieces and nephews and I never had a father. So I have this father in my life and I never had grandparents and I have some grandparents that are still alive that I've gotten to know over the past 12 years, which is amazing.

So, it's been just a really, really cool experience. And now as my mother is, you know, she's declining and she has dementia and it's, we all know the road is not, there's no turnaround from it. I know I still have this family, so like that was meant to be that we would reconnect because when I lose her, at least I have my birth mother. I have my birth father, I still have some sense of family in this world besides my own husband and children that I can connect with and have a relationship with when my mother's gone. So it's all good.

CANEEL: What an incredible story. This is incredible story. You're very fortunate to have all that family and I know that, you know, wow. Hearing how, of course, you know, the feelings that you had when you were a young child. And interestingly, the way that I think I first found out that you were Catholic is I saw you post on Facebook one day that you were heading up to a rally, which connects to this story because it was about your gratitude for being born.

HEATHER: Yes.

CANEEL: And I happened to be pro choice and that's where I discovered that you were pro-life and then we got to learn about it. And I think you shared in your posts that this story about having these two mothers and you know, and sets of parents in your life and that you're just so grateful that you were born. Oh, that is such a moving story.

HEATHER: It's very hard to, I know we have different perspectives, but when you were that baby, that choice, they could have like they could have gone the other way. There's no way that I would have wanted her to obviously choose differently. So yes. So I, you know, very pro-life because of it. And it was the pro-life March and that was another huge blessing was to be able to go on the pro-life March with my son.

CANEEL: It's so beautiful. And I was so grateful to find out, "wow, like I get to work with somebody who, you know, we have a difference of opinion on something, we have our reasons and I get to just like love this person and fully understand where this comes from in her," which isn't something I've had an opportunity to have access to before living in urban centers here on the West coast. So I'm really

grateful for you and for, I'm grateful for that difference too. We all coach each other. I mean, jeez, Alayna, Heather, you guys coach me every single day.

HEATHER: That's the kind of culture you want to be in.

CANEEL: One could easily slip into victim mode about, "oh, I'm being pushed so hard." But you know, interestingly, some of the ways that we often push each other on this team are, "you need to stop working so much, take some time off." But we do believe so much in each other and in what we're doing and in the power of that. And it's not always easy to be asked to bring more forward or to be asked to like stop getting out of my own way. And at the same time, we're human beings and I truly don't believe that what's been able to come out of me. Um, you know what? I've held myself accountable for freeing myself up from a lot of my blockages so that I could do this work in the way that I'm doing it now.

I really think I needed you guys for that. I really don't think it could have been done alone. You're not the only ones, of course, I have so many people who support me in my life, all my partners at evolution, my therapist, my coach, my coaching group, my psychiatrist, I mean everyone. I've got a whole team and my wonderful husband of course is the foundation of all of it. That reminded me of my family, this crazy old house I live in. That's always, it's like a baby. It's always presenting me with new challenges and how much I've gotten to learn about homes and the inside of homes because it keeps breaking down and having new weird things go wrong. That's been cool. But yesterday, speaking of family, I don't know where she got this, but it was very early in the morning. My daughter Arrow came out of nowhere.

She said, she's four, she said, "mommy, you know what the good thing is about cracking your head open?" "No, what is it?" "And she said, "you get to see all of the memories". So sweet. And then, I was like, "how far do I push this scientifically?" And it was such a beautiful thought. I'm like, well, you know, it's a little different than that but on some level it's true. On some level our brain is out there and she is just a walking beam of gratitude all of the time. She can find a good thing about anything. And my mother is the same way. They're often fastest say, "well, at least it's like this," or "at least we get to do that," or "at least it's not this bad." And it's really nice to have those grateful people in our lives.

And that's been a change that actually has been challenging for me to make, is to begin really choosing to surround myself with people who are grateful for my own system. I know there's not much as toxic as being around a person who really is committed to deep entitlement and you know, nothing is right. Everything is wrong. I deserve more. It really brings me down and I had a lot of self-judgements about that, that I should be able to be resilient and be with anybody. And then I realized I don't want to. And it dampens my own energy and when my energy is dampened

and I'm spending a lot of energy, kinda like getting myself back up again, I am not giving to the world what I have to give as a gift and I'm not bringing that energy with me back home at the end of the day to really fill my home with light and brightness and gratitude.

And that's been hard because I have had so many people in my life that I have deep, deep love and affection for. And there's a difference between one who's going through a really challenging time and then one who's decided to make it their life commitment to be entitled, to be out of gratitude. And so allowing myself to just seek out those people whose energy feels good to me. It was a big thing for me to get to. And the only way that I even knew I wanted that was by beginning to have like one or two people in my life committed to gratitude. For the listeners out there, if you're finding it hard, I think a question you might ask is like, "how could I surround myself with more grateful people?"

And Heather and I have both created circles of women who have supported us and we support them. And I think it's important to be the creator of your own life and find ways to attract those who are going to support you and being your most grateful.

There's so much to be said for the support of a group in helping us to grow. We are human beings. Human beings are mammals. We are animals. Beth Killough of Circle Up and I talk about this a lot about how we often want to deny our animal self, but animals, as mammals, we are social creatures. We depend on each other literally to live and we need to be in community. There's so many things that we do need from community. We might be lucky enough that we can find it in our existing friends, our neighborhood, our family, our distant acquaintances, our professional network. But there's something really special to be said about an intentional group, right? That has specific agreements and a container for growth and a certain kind of conversation.

I've been completely transformed by the work that I've done in a group coaching setting myself. I've been doing it for the last three years and I've set up a lot of those groups myself as well. And the transformation that I see in a group setting, even though it tends to be much less expensive kind of investment versus individual coaching is it's often just much, much bigger, which is surprising. And I think it's because we let our guard down when we see somebody else learning. We don't make it as personal. And so we don't get as triggered or defensive. Our ego isn't alert and up. And so as we see someone else learn and someone else get feedback and go through an "aha" moment, their learning can be our learning because we recognize how similar their stuff is to our stuff.

And we've been in similar situations and we've, we've felt that way with different challenges and, and their "aha" moment can be our "aha" moment and it lands because our ego isn't defending ourself. So I think it's beautiful to, you know, the groups that you've created and that you've been in. And I wanted to share with our listeners that, um, that my group program is actually kicking off really soon. You need to register and sign up at Caneel.com by, let's see, when is it? December 15th. By December 15th.

So it's a simple process to register and it's a really, really powerful program. We'll talk about personal power presence as a leader, conscious leadership communication, and really the idea is helping each person to find a path that is leading them to their most powerful, joyful place that's based on their strengths. So I think people listeners are really gonna like it. So you can check that out more at Caneel.com. And I, you know, one thing I've been doing recently is, I've been trying to create that kind of community for myself here in Los Angeles. That's a, you know, another, conscious, intentional community. So now those in LA, reach out to me about that as well.

All right. It's time for questions from our listeners. This topic of gratitude can be a challenging one for many. And I have a beautiful question from a dear listener, "I can see how I can learn by being grateful for the things in my life that are challenging, but I just really don't like being around my family. They're not really kind to me and it's very upsetting. Are you saying I should keep putting up with this?"

No dear listener, I'm not. Sounds like you have some clarity about what your preferences are and that you prefer not to be around your family. You're feeling like they're not being kind to you and it's okay to draw boundaries. It's okay. I would say that if that's the choice that you make, which could be an extremely healthy choice for many, then you'll find more healing by when you choose to kind of draw that boundary, being grateful in many ways. You know, I'm grateful for you, for instance, for drawing a boundary that protects your sense of self. I'm grateful for you for knowing what you want and standing for it and if you can be grateful for yourself in that way. That's awesome. Another thing is, you know, being grateful that you have the space and latitude that you're able to create a little bit of distance right now, but the big leap would be, could you be grateful for them being exactly as they are towards you?

Can you be grateful for the scars and the wounds and the strengths that you have developed in the process of interacting with your family in this way? And can you be grateful even for the sadness and the pain of letting go and just that sweet, sweet sadness that tells us that something we love has been lost. This is all an opportunity to wake up to what we love. So I feel some sadness thinking about this, but I also

hear that you're really, really clear so you can be grateful for anything. You don't need to stay.

Well we've weaved over the place here. It was so fun to get to learn about your life Heather and hear you tell it kind of all in one place. So I want to just, you know, we often hear on this show we often offer a practice or guide someone through an exercise. And so Heather, I really loved the one that you are doing with your faith circle and is that something that you'd be willing to make a little worksheet for and share it as an offering to our community here?

HEATHER: Absolutely. The listeners will be able to go onto our show notes and download it as an option to work on their gratitude through challenges and blessings.

CANEEL: Love it. Such a clever exercise. So that will be at Caneel.com/podcast-3 and there you can find links to, I'll give a link to this five minute journal. It has five questions you can answer each day. Each of which is really helps me boost my own sense of gratitude and abundance and help me manifest like crazy by the way that the thing actually works. It's amazing. And then we'll share Heather's beautiful practice, which you can do regardless of your spiritual orientation. It's a very healthy, um, life affirming practice that's truly good for your sense of well-being, your self-control your happiness level, your ability to give to others. So this week as you head off into Thanksgiving, look for the opportunities to identify the gift in any of the challenges that come your way.

Last week we talked about triggering and how when we get triggered by others, it's just an opportunity to get closer to our own shadow. And to learn about, learn about ourselves and find parts of ourselves that we have not claimed the beauty and the power, the parts of ourselves that we have not yet loved. So that's one offering that we have for you on Thanksgiving. And then I think looking at these challenges and seeing what's the gift, how is this here for me?

And if you haven't heard it yet, last week we posted a bonus episode that's a preview of this episode that you just got to hear. And in this bonus you are going to get to go behind the scenes with us, through essentially a blooper reel. There's also a video available where you get to see Heather and I interacting in real time as we are trying to figure out what the heck to do with our technology and make sure that this episode actually got to see the light of day. So if you want to check it out, it's a pretty fun bonus, just go on back to the last episode. You can find a link to that at caneel.com/podcast.

Next week, we invite you back after your bellies are full to come back for an episode about how to succeed without suffering because you do not need to suffer to

succeed. There is another way that is more filled with presence and ease and flow, and it's the ride of a lifetime. So that's going to be a really powerful episode. I'm very excited for you to come back and get into that as we get deeper into the holiday season here in the U.S. Please check out the show notes at caneel.com/podcast-3, and we will see you next week.