

FAMILY FAITH BUILDER

Character Lessons for Practical Application of Faith

GRATEFULNESS



Letting others know by my words and actions how they have benefited my life.

"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others." Cicero argued this centuries ago but it appears to be time-honored wisdom. A constant and consistent focus on Gratefulness is transformational in our lives. Gratefulness goes beyond the simple kindness of responding to a gift with a "Thank You". Gratefulness is being grateful for the giver, not just gift. It is seeking the good when faced with difficulties and failures. It is recognizing that the greatest blessings in our lives are the people and then showing genuine appreciation for them in your life. It is understanding that the best way to say "thank you" is to give back and that it may not be directly to the person who gave to you. Focusing on gratefulness helps us to be more Christ-like in our relationships and attitudes. When we are grateful we feel and act abundantly blessed. This feeling ripples into everything we do.

To Practice Gratefulness I Will:

- show my parents and teachers that I appreciate them
- write "thank you" notes
- take care of my things
- be content with what I have
- count my benefits rather than my burdens

Any others appropriate to your family?

This month, practice gratefulness in good times and in bad.

God's Word on Gratefulness

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 5:18

"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe."

Hebrews 12:28

"All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God."

2 Corinthians 4:15

"I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers."

Ephesians 1:16

"So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.""

John 11:41

The Grateful Leper Teaches Us about Gratitude

One day, when Jesus was walking through a small village he noticed a group of ten lepers. They stood far away from the crowd and shouted, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us." The lepers knew who Jesus was and that he had the power to heal their leprosy. Jesus heard their cry for help. He took pity on their condition and healed the sores that covered them. He shouted back to them to show themselves to the priest. This is what they had to do to prove they were no longer contagious and could return to the city.

Having faith in Jesus, the lepers began to make their way to the priest. As they were walking, they noticed that their sores were healed and their skin was clear. They had been healed! Now they started to run to the priest, singing and dancing as they went.

Suddenly, one of them remembered that he needed to thank Jesus so he went back to where Jesus was. He began praising God loudly and then he threw himself at Jesus' feet and said, "Thank You." What a heartfelt gesture it was to place himself at the feet of Jesus and simply say "Thank You". This was so much more than a show of manners. It is heartfelt gratefulness.

Yucky Presents

This exercise is intended to give everyone practice at gracefully accepting gifts they view as less than desirable. Find some pictures of items that would make “yucky” gifts to your family such as ugly sweaters, kitchen appliances, or items that are intended for a much younger person. Place each picture in an envelope and draw a gift bow on the outside. Have the each one pick an envelope and open the gift. Their challenge is to accept it gracefully and gratefully. Model this with an envelope containing a gift that you don’t really want and show how it’s done. Make sure to instruct everyone that they must be truthful and kind in what they say to the giver. Appreciation for a gift should be framed as gratefulness to the individual and not the value of the gift. Some examples are:

- For a plain sweater: “Thank you, Aunt Betty, for the warm sweater. It will certainly keep me toasty this winter. I appreciate your thoughtfulness.”
- For toy that is for a younger child: “Thank you, Uncle Roger, for the cool toy truck. Now when play with my little brother I can have my own truck. I’ll think of you when we play with it.”
- For utilitarian socks: “Thanks, Grandma for the socks. You never forget my birthday. I love you!

If they give a good response but their tone or inflection doesn’t match, ask them if their attitude said the same thing as their words and give them a chance to re-state the Thank You. It is important to stress sincerity in their gratefulness. To close, talk about the best gift we have ever received, our new life in Christ, bought with his death and resurrection. Spend some time in silent prayer, offering our thanks for this wonderful gift.



POSTER IDEA:

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by my words and actions

how they have benefited my life.



“Jesus asked, ‘Were not all ten cleansed?’”

Luke 17:17

**Are you the “one”
or part of the nine?**

Dear Jesus,

We praise you for your goodness and mercy and thank you for the example of gratefulness in your life. We always remember that whenever you broke bread, you always gave thanks. Help us to remember to say Thanks and to write Thank you notes to those who have been kind to us. Guide our thoughts so that we are grateful for what we have and to take care of it and not focus on what we lack. Help us to remember to be appreciative for those who take care of us, especially you.

Amen.

Other ways to teach character in the home:

- Display the character quality and definition in a prominent place such as on the refrigerator or let each child decorate it for their bedroom door.
- At the dinner table ask if anyone noticed anyone (not just family members) demonstrating the character quality (or not demonstrating it).
- Point out news stories where character was or was not involved.
- During car trips, challenge the kids by describing scenarios and having them identify if it describes being the quality or being the opposite.
- Praise with character by recognizing the character quality involved rather than the achievement.
- For more ideas visit www.charactercincinnati.org/faith.php

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For more activities that can be adapted for family use, visit

www.charactercincinnati.org/quality_resource.php?q=Gratefulness