



Celebrating God's blessings!

LEADER and PARENT GUIDE

When is the last time you thanked someone for what they did for you? Gratitude sometimes feels like a lost art. Yet gratitude is something that is very close to God's heart. Think about all of the Bible stories where people give thanks to each other, celebrate God with feasts and festivals—not to mention the how the Psalms are filled with songs of praise. Just take a moment to consider everything God has done for you: the world He made, the promises He's kept, the new life He offers through Jesus, and the hope of eternal life He gives us. When we remember all of that, we can always be thankful. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul instructs us to give thanks no matter what happens and that it is God's will for you to always be grateful. It's pretty clear that giving thanks is something that God wants us to do. No matter what happens, we can be thankful for Jesus and God's gift of salvation and that God is with us, even when life is hard. Even in the worst circumstances, you can always find something to be grateful for. Whether your life's easy or not, focusing on what you are thankful for can be challenging. Remember, no matter what, you can always be thankful to God for sending Jesus to save us and for the fact that His Spirit is with us every day.

In a powerful moment in Israel's history, King David had the privilege of bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. He was so overwhelmed with gratitude and excitement that he wildly danced through the streets and celebrated. David was willing to make himself look foolish in order to give God the credit He deserved. We should all celebrate what God has done. Just like King David took time to thank God for His faithfulness, we can do the same. Even in an unusual year like 2020, God has still done so much for us. Think about what things you can celebrate, even now, and offer thanks to God.

Although we should live every day with an attitude of gratitude, most of the time people do not express their gratitude. When Jesus healed the ten lepers from their skin condition, they were so thrilled that they ran off and forgot to say, "Thank You." Only one man, a Samaritan, turned around and showed his gratitude. Jesus made a point to comment on this man's faith. Just say "thank you." It's such a simple thing to do, but it's often so hard to put it into practice. People frequently offer their help and kindness and love, yet we often take all of that for granted, just like the lepers did. By looking at the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan who turned back, we can understand the importance of remembering to say thanks when others are kind to us and to be the one person who shows gratitude, even when others don't.

One day, Jesus told a parable about a few vineyard workers who were making comparisons about what others were getting paid. They became ungrateful for what they received and started complaining. In the end, the workers needed to adjust their attitude and be grateful for what they did receive, instead of comparing and complaining about what others had. If we are honest, most of us could use an attitude adjustment. We can change our whole outlook on life if we refocus and think about all that we've been given instead of what we don't have. When we begin to see our own lives differently, our gratefulness increases.

Another way to focus on having gratitude is to consider all that God has done for us. We can do that through prayer and also through taking communion or the Lord's Supper. When we drink the cup and eat the bread, we remember and celebrate that Jesus lived, died, and rose again to make us right with God. Get in the habit of being grateful. People often focus on trying to get rid of their bad habits. However, the best way to stop a bad habit is to replace it with a good one. Replace those sweets with healthy choices. Replace TV with exercise. Replace complaining with gratitude. Gratitude requires not only feeling thankful, but also acting on it, and living it. Make a decision now that every day, you will be thankful and express it to others. Gratitude is a choice that God can help us make, especially when we remember all that Jesus did for us on the cross, and that no matter what this world brings us, God is with us and we have the hope of spending eternity with Him. Now that's something to be grateful for!



Give thanks to the Lord, because He is good. His faithful love continues forever. - Psalm 136:1



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Read Luke 17:11-19

1. Which leper do you think you would be and why? If we are honest, most of us would be one of the nine lepers who did not return to thank Jesus because gratitude does not come easily for most people.
2. What is Jesus trying to teach us through the story of the ten lepers? That our human nature is to be ungrateful. Instead of living in ungratefulness, we should focus on showing our gratitude to others and giving thanks and praise to God for all He has done for us.

Read Matthew 20:1-15

3. Why were the workers complaining about what they were paid, and what was wrong with their attitude? The workers were complaining because they were comparing what others were getting paid, instead of being grateful that they had a job. The landowner did pay them what he said he would, so they should have been content with what they received, instead of complaining that things were not fair. Life is not always fair, but God is always good.
4. When we compare what we have to what others have, what effect does it have on us? Comparing ourselves to others makes us ungrateful and dissatisfied with all that we do have, and we become envious and jealous of what others have.

Read Memory Verse

5. What is this verse commanding us to do and why? To give thanks and praise to God because of his goodness, faithfulness, and love that will continue forever.

Life Application Questions

6. What are some things in your life that you have to be thankful for? Answers will vary. Jesus, family, friends, home, enough food to eat, clothes, toys and games, pets, teachers, school, church, health, living in America, having your own room, opportunities and activities that you get to participate in, God's unconditional love, etc.
7. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:18 which says, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus," when and why are we supposed to give thanks? In all circumstances because God wants us to always be grateful. Whether things are good or bad, we can always find something to be grateful for, even in the worst situations.
8. How can you focus on gratitude more and put it into action? You can focus on being grateful and on expressing it more to people by finding things every day to be thankful for and by finding ways to express it or to show it to people. Also, you can thank God for something every day when you pray to Him, and you can praise Him for what He has done.
9. Name three people who you could show gratitude to this week and how you can show them that you are grateful? Answers will vary – parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, church leaders, teachers, neighbors, God, etc. We can thank them verbally for the little things they do, write a note of appreciation, buy them a small gift or even serve them in order to show gratitude for all they've done. We can pray and praise God for what He has done for us, instead of just asking him for what we need and want.



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