



Bulletin

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Happy Thanksgiving!



MODELING THANKFULNESS FOR YOUR TEENS


BY PAM WOODY

IN PHILIPPIANS 4:11-13, PAUL CHALLENGES BELIEVERS TO BE grateful no matter their circumstance. He writes that God strengthens us to resist the temptation to be ungrateful or greedy.

It's a great reminder during Thanksgiving, but recognize that lecturing older kids about thankfulness likely isn't very effective. Instead, consider open-ended questions that delve into your kids' world. Asking, "What are a few things you really appreciate about your life?" provides insight into what your children are focusing on. It also creates opportunities for deeper discussions on how gratitude can enrich us.

Feelings of joy and contentment come naturally when we focus on our blessings—even if we don't have everything we want. To move in this direction, tell your kids that you'd like your family to experience the full benefits of gratitude, and challenge them to remind you to be more thankful. Maybe even ask them to keep you accountable when you begin to grumble. If your teens ask you to do the same for them, agree to it . . . but don't volunteer.

As parents, we may recognize ingratitude in our teens but fail to notice our own poor attitude. By expressing our desire to grow in thankfulness, we have the privilege of exemplifying the very attitude we'd like to see in our teens.



Tough Questions from Kids

Why do we thank God at every meal? He already knows we're thankful.

TEAM UP FOR CLEANUP

My tweens were old enough to help clean up after meals, but dividing the chores overwhelmed me. So I came up with an easy-to-follow system: When the last person finishes eating, I call everyone to the kitchen. We all clear the table, then I hold craft sticks, with additional cleanup jobs written on the ends. Each child chooses a stick. (The job names are hidden from view.)

I have four children, so each night I offer four jobs that are needed that evening, such as sweeping the floor, wiping down the table, loading the dishwasher or taking out the trash. I've also added one rule: Everyone stays in the kitchen until the kitchen is clean. That encourages the kids to pitch in as a team to help each other finish quicker.

—Rachel Schmoyer

REVEALING GOD'S BLESSINGS

Here's a fun way to help kids understand that God's blessings are evident if we take the time to look for them:

Make a solution of equal parts milk and concentrated lemon juice. Dip a cotton swab into the liquid and write words such as *life*, *family* and *forgiveness* on a plain piece of paper. Let the "ink" dry.

Show your kids the paper, telling them that you wrote down some things you're thankful for. Since the words are invisible, expect some confused looks. Explain that God's blessings in our lives are often invisible to us because we don't take the time to give thanks.

At the kitchen sink, pass the paper over a flame from a small candle or lighter. The paper will need to be close to the flame, but not touching it. The flame will burn the carbon in the solution before it burns the paper, revealing the hidden words. (If the paper accidentally catches fire, drop it into the sink.)

Once all the words are visible, ask your children these questions:

- Why are we often unaware of the blessings in our lives?
- Does God do things for us every day that we don't see?
- What might we be missing?

Hang the paper on the refrigerator as a reminder to be more aware of God's blessings.

—Tim Shoemaker



REJOICE IN YOUR SPOUSE

At a Thanksgiving dinner in our home, I encouraged friends and family to pick someone at the table and then say one thing they were thankful for about that person. When it was my 10-year-old son's turn, Garrison said, "My dad makes plenty of mistakes." I think he was trying to be funny, but the group's awkward laughter tipped him off that his comment wasn't quite as positive as the other remarks. So he quickly added, "and he sometimes feeds me."

Sure enough, we can't force true gratitude.

But in marriage, our expressions of sincere thankfulness can bless our spouse and strengthen our relationship. One survey found that gratitude is a significant predictor of "marital quality." I think this is part of what King Solomon meant when he encouraged husbands, "Rejoice in the wife of your youth" (Proverbs 5:18). We are to *rejoice* in our spouse. How can we bless our spouse by rejoicing in him or her? Here are some suggestions:

Show thankfulness. The words *thank you* are two of the most powerful words you can say to your spouse. But for thankfulness to be effective, it must be specific *and* it must be verbalized. So don't simply say, "Thank you for being a great spouse." Instead, say something like, "Thank you for doing the grocery shopping this week."

Express affirmation. While gratitude is about recognizing what your spouse *does*, affirmation is about appreciating who your spouse *is*. Your words of affirmation can acknowledge your spouse's character qualities: courage, faithfulness, humility, kindness, creativity, integrity, joyfulness, honesty. Pick one character quality that your spouse displays and tell him or her why this matters so much to you.

Cherish. When you highly value your spouse, you *cherish* him or her. It's important to acknowledge some of your favorite things about your spouse—especially when you face busy times or difficult seasons. What do you value about your spouse? It might be a personality trait, a personal accomplishment or some other characteristic. Consider making a list of your favorite things about your spouse and giving it to him or her for Thanksgiving.

—Dr. Greg Smalley



FAMILY MATTERS

Answers to your questions . . .

Should parents ever argue in front of their children?

ANSWER:

Parental modeling of respectful disagreements can be a powerful and useful life lesson for children to observe, provided that a few cautions are kept in mind:

- **Consider your audience.** The children should be old enough to comprehend what you are talking about and emotionally mature enough to grasp the concept that you can disagree with someone whom you deeply love and respect. Preschoolers and early-grade-school children should rarely, if ever, witness a serious parental disagreement. Older children and adolescents,

on the other hand, can benefit from seeing how two mature people can settle an issue in a positive way.

- **Play by the rules.** If kids are going to watch or listen, you should be well-versed in healthy conflict resolution, resolve to keep the tone of conversation respectful, and be sure to come to a positive resolution of the issue.

- **Consider demonstrating how you settled an issue.** If you have had a particularly fruitful conversation about a problem, think about re-enacting it for your children to show how you dealt with it.

- **Beware of voicing a disagreement in front of a child who is the subject of the disagreement.** Parents should be united, even if they are not in total agreement, when

dealing with basic issues of child rearing—especially those relating to limits and discipline.

- **Declare a cease-fire, if necessary.** If your discussion is deteriorating into a shouting match and children are within earshot, *call it off* until you can continue in private—after you have cooled down. It is devastating—and inappropriate—for children to hear their parents yelling, insulting one another, or being physically aggressive. If your disagreement often reaches this level, you should not only isolate it from your children but seek counseling as soon as possible.

(Adapted from the *Complete Guide to Baby & Child Care*, primary author Paul C. Reisser, M.D.)

TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

ANSWER:

Thanking God for food reminds us to be thankful for all that He gives us. Sometimes we think we are thankful when we really aren't. If we just sit down and eat without thanking God every time, we can easily forget to be thankful. We can forget that our food comes from God.

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