

Give Thanks

November 9th – November 30th

Weekly Memory Verses

November 9th: Psalm 118:29 – “**Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;** His love endures forever.”

November 16th: Psalm 118:24 – “This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

November 23rd: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 – “**Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances,** for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

November 30th: Psalm 150:6 – “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.”

Opening Question

What are three things from *this past week* that you are thankful for? Be specific – not just “food” or “family” but a particular meal you had or something someone in your family did for or with you last week that you appreciated.

Memory Verse Work

Read this week’s memory verse and spend a couple of minutes working on it as a family. Try to say each week’s verse every day during that week. Once everyone knows it well, see if you can remember verses from previous weeks!

Unpack the Theme

Gratitude is one of the most important character qualities of a follower of Jesus. Even people who don’t know Jesus recognize how powerful having a thankful heart can be. But for Christians, being thankful isn’t an option – it is a command! Paul tells us to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4) and to give thanks “always and for everything” (Ephesians 5:20, ESV). The Bible spends a lot of time instructing believers in Jesus to be thankful. Why is being grateful so important?

First, being grateful is important because God is good and is worthy of our praise and thanks. We learned a few weeks ago that the Lord is good to all and that every good gift comes from Him. Every blessing in our lives comes from God, and we need to remember to thank Him for those blessings! Just like it is important to say thank you to someone who gives you a present, it is

important that we remember to thank God for being a good and loving God and for the many good gifts He gives us.

Secondly, being thankful changes the way we think about our lives. Have you ever heard of having an “attitude of gratitude”? When we are grateful people, we are much more cheerful! We tend to look for the positive things about whatever situation we are in. What if the next time you have to clean your room, you choose to be thankful that you have so many toys to put away? Focus on thanking God for your toys instead of being grumpy about cleaning them up, and you will find that you have a much more cheerful heart. If you have to do dishes or unload the dishwasher or help with dinner, try thanking God that you have good food to eat and a family member who loves you enough to make it for you! Grateful people are positive people, and they also feel better inside. The next time you are feeling grumpy or out of sorts, try counting your blessings (remembering the good things God has given you) and thanking God for them. It is hard to have a bad attitude when you are thinking about all the things you are thankful for!

Finally, being a thankful person encourages other people and points them to Jesus. People who have an “attitude of gratitude” are generally positive and cheerful, and they are much more pleasant to be around than people who are grumbling and complaining all the time. Believers in Jesus *always* have something (and Someone) to be thankful for, and when people see our joy, it makes them curious. Being a thankful person provides opportunities for us to tell other people about the reason for our gratitude and joy – Jesus! We can also encourage other people by remembering to thank them for the things they do for us. Whether that is making a meal, fixing a toy, or teaching us something new, people do kind things for us all the time. Let’s remember to say thank you for what our moms, dads, siblings, teachers, pastors, and friends do for us. This brings joy to others and to God.

Pray

Let’s spend some time thanking God today. Be specific as you thank him for the good things He has given you! For an extra challenge, take a couple of minutes to pray as a family every day at bedtime. Have each person thank God for one or two specific things from *that day*.

Go Deeper

Choose one or more of the Bible stories below to read as a family. You could do one per week or pick just one or two to focus on. All of these stories feature people who gave thanks to God.

- *The 10 Lepers*: Luke 17:11-19
- *Paul & Silas in Prison*: Acts 16:16-34
- *Jonah and the Big Fish*: Jonah 1:1-2:10 (Chapters 1 & 2)

- *The Parting of the Red Sea & Moses' & Miriam's Song**: Exodus 14:5-15:21

*This story is long, and you may want to spread out the reading. It also may require a little bit of background knowledge. The parting of the Red Sea occurs after God had sent Moses to Pharaoh to tell him to let God's people go (the people were slaves in the land of Egypt). When Pharaoh didn't listen, God sent ten plagues on Egypt, after which Pharaoh finally told God's people to leave. We come into the story at the point where Pharaoh changes his mind and decides to pursue God's people, who are trapped between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea.

After reading, discuss the story with your family. Questions you could use include:

- Who was the main character in this story? Why was he/she thanking/praising God?
- Was the main character thanking/praising God *because* of his/her circumstances or *in spite of them*?

With the leper and Moses & Miriam, it is because of something wonderful that God has done. Paul & Silas are singing songs of praise in spite of having been beaten and thrown in prison. Jonah is praising God for rescuing him from drowning...but he is doing so from inside the belly of a big fish!

- What does this story teach us about being thankful? How can we apply what we learn from this story to our own lives?

There are a lot of applications here, but some ideas include: remembering to thank God for His blessings (10 Lepers); our gratitude and worship can draw people to Jesus (Paul & Silas); we should be thankful no matter what our circumstances (Paul & Silas, Jonah); even in the hardest situations, there is always something to be thankful for (Jonah); when God blesses us with times of goodness and joy, the response is worship & praise (Moses & Miriam), remembering all God has done for His people and for us specifically can lead us to worship (Moses & Miriam).

Family Challenge Question

Being thankful to God for who He is and what He has done is so important. But so is showing gratitude toward other people in our lives. How can we begin showing appreciation to one another for the kind and helpful things we do for each other? Some of the activities below can help your family begin to develop habits of gratitude at home.

Activity Ideas

1. Start a gratitude journal. Every night at dinnertime or bedtime, have each family member share one or two things he/she is thankful for from that day. Write those things in a journal or notebook, and keep adding to it! Make sure to include answered prayers. This is a neat way to look back and remember all that God has done for your family.
2. Make gratitude jars. Give each family member an empty plastic jar (peanut butter or mayo ones work great for this) and let them decorate it. Make sure to write everyone's name on their jars. Start the jars off by handing out slips of paper and having every family member

write something specific that he/she is grateful for about each other person in the family. Place the slips in the appropriate jars. Put the jars and some additional slips of paper in a prominent place in your home. Encourage family members to write at least two or three slips per week for each other person in your home. By the end of the month, every family member should have a jar full of slips to read and be encouraged by.

3. Create a gratitude collage. Look through old magazines and find pictures that represent things in your life that you are grateful for. You could include actual photographs of family or friends if you wish! Glue pictures onto pieces of paper or a posterboard. Each family member could create his/her own collage, or you could do a big one as a family. Hang the collage somewhere in your home to remind you of all that God has blessed you with.
4. Write thank you notes for people in your church and/or community. Think about the people in your life who have been a blessing to you and your family. You can have each person in the family write to a different person or write a few notes together as a whole family. Young children can color pictures to be included with the notes. In your note, be specific about how the person has been a blessing in your life. Ideas for people you could write to include pastors, teachers, extended family members, Sunday School teachers, AWANA or youth leaders, doctors, neighbors, friends, etc.