Gratefulness

If you weed the garden or mow the lawn, and your dad says, “Well done!” does that make you feel happy inside? If you surprise your mom by mopping the kitchen floor without being asked and she rewards you with a hug, does her delight cause you to smile? Your parents stopped what they were doing, took time to acknowledge your helpfulness, and demonstrated their gratefulness to you with a word or an action. You can give that same encouragement to others! Instead of grabbing the popsicle Mom made for you and rushing outside, stop and thank her for the yummy treat. In the excitement of opening a birthday gift, pause to let the giver know that you appreciate his thoughtfulness. It only takes a moment to express gratitude, but what a difference your thanks can make in another’s life!

The Samaritan Leper Returns

Gratefulness

Making known to God and others in what ways they have benefited my life.
Gratefulness Overview

What Is Gratefulness?

Read aloud, study, and discuss what gratefulness means and how it applies to life.

The operational definition of *gratefulness* is “making known to God and others in what ways they have benefited my life.” What would happen if no one ever taught you how to read instructions, road signs, or the Bible? How long would you live if you never received food? What would you do if no one provided a roof over your head? Even the very breath needed for life is a gift God has given to you! Every day you can find reasons and opportunities to appreciate what God and others do on your behalf. Recognizing these gifts and those individuals who have given them is the first step in giving honor where honor is due. Gratefulness is then complete when you take that extra time and care to demonstrate outwardly through your words or actions how much you inwardly appreciate what they have done for you.

The opposite of *gratefulness* is *unthankfulness*. An unthankful person does not notice how much others have done for him. He may proudly think, “I did such a good job!” without acknowledging those who have helped or trained him. He forgets to say “Thank you,” but rather has the attitude that he deserves certain benefits or favors. He might even murmur or show displeasure with another’s act of kindness toward him, if the deed was not done to his satisfaction. Because he is self-centered, he is also unable to see the efforts of others and how he is blessed by them. The one who is ungrateful misses the opportunity to encourage those around him with a contented attitude, a cheerful countenance, and a verbal appreciation for their efforts.

Even when you do not feel grateful or do not see how God is working through a certain situation, you can still give thanks—by faith. Faith is taking a step of obedience, even when your feelings and understanding are not there. You have an adversary, Satan, who wants to defeat your faith and steal your joy. If he can entice you to dwell on anxious, discontented, or resentful thoughts, he can divert your attention from the truth you know of God’s character, power, and goodness. Don’t listen to the enemy; rejoice and give thanks always, knowing that God is for you! (See I Thessalonians 5:16–17; Romans 8:31.) No matter your circumstances, praise God for Who He is and trust that He is working greater purposes than you could ever imagine. “But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them” (Psalm 22:3–4).
Gratefulness in Scripture

Read aloud and discuss each verse, question, and concept.

Proverbs 2:1–6 says, “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” What a privilege to study the rich truths of God’s Word, hide them in your heart, and apply them to daily life! These truths are priceless treasures, far above the value and beauty of rubies and diamonds. As you dig deeper into God’s Word, see Who He is, and allow Him to work in you, your life will be a radiant expression of His love. He will be glorified as His character is seen in you.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

We see how God is worthy of our gratefulness, how Jesus demonstrated gratefulness, and why we can be grateful for the Holy Spirit in the verses below:

- God’s magnificent creation, mighty acts, and glorious majesty merit our public praise and testimony. (See Psalm 145:10–12.)
- God, Who in His overwhelming mercy and love wrought salvation for us, is worthy of our gratitude. (See Ephesians 2:4–7; Romans 5:8.)
- God gives us good and perfect gifts for which we give thanks. (See James 1:17; Luke 11:13.)
- God Almighty will receive adoration and thanksgiving from His saints throughout eternity. (See Revelation 11:15–17.)
- Jesus gave thanks to the Father for His wisdom in revealing the plan of salvation. (See Luke 10:21.)
- Jesus expressed His gratitude to the Father for hearing His prayer before resurrecting Lazarus. (See John 11:41–43.)
- The Holy Spirit is an invaluable Gift from the Father to believers to be treasured as our Comforter, Teacher, Advocate, and Intercessor. (See John 14:16–17, 26; Romans 8:26–27.)

GRATEFULNESS IN MY LIFE

Now let’s examine some ways God wants us to live out gratefulness daily.

- What will happen to my mind and heart if I am continually unthankful for God as He is revealed in creation? (See Romans 1:19–21.)
- What attitude does God desire me to have regarding the family He has given me? (See Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 31:28.)
- In what ways can I acknowledge my gratitude to God? (See Psalm 69:30; 111:1; Philippians 1:3–5.)
- Who is worthy of double recognition for their excellent work and why? (See I Timothy 5:17.)
- How can I follow Christ’s example of gratitude at mealtime? (See John 6:11.)
- What is God’s will for me in every situation? (See I Thessalonians 5:18.)
- When I murmur about my circumstances or authorities, against Whom is my complaint? (See Exodus 16:8.)

GRATEFULNESS KEY VERSE

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” I Corinthians 4:7
Bible Story
THE SAMARITAN LEPER RETURNS

Long ago, leprosy was considered a symbol of sin and judgment from God. This disease of the skin and nervous system had no cure. A leper’s hands and feet became damaged due to the inability to feel pain when injured. Lepers could experience physical deformities, raspy voices, and even blindness. Because people thought that leprosy was an extremely contagious condition, those infected were forced to separate themselves from others and live outside the city. These ailing people were shunned as outcasts of society. They had to wear torn clothing and shout, “Unclean!” so others would know they were near. Only the priest could declare someone “clean” (well) who had been suspected of having leprosy. One day, as Jesus traveled between Samaria and Galilee on His way toward Jerusalem, He was met by ten lepers outside a village. This mixed group of Jewish and Samaritan lepers had overlooked their national prejudices, even though Jews didn’t normally intermingle with Samaritans. They now were united by a common factor—their illness. Hearing of Jesus, these alienated men cried out for healing. Would their request be fulfilled? What would Jesus say to them? What would they experience that day, and would they make time to express their gratitude to Jesus?

BIBLE STORY QUESTIONS
Read Luke 17:11–19 together and discuss the following questions:

1. What did the lepers ask of Jesus? (See Luke 17:12–13.)
   In addition to saying “thank you,” what are other practical ways can you show your gratitude to those who have benefited you?

2. Did Jesus heal the lepers immediately? What did He tell them to do? (See Luke 17:14.)
   What do you ask God and others to give you? How should you ask?

3. What happened as the men went to see the priest? (See Luke 17:14.)
   Should you expect to always get what you ask for when you want it? (See Ecclesiastes 7:8.)

4. What did one of the men immediately do? Why? (See Luke 17:15.)
   What miraculous or amazing things has God done for your family?

5. What did the man do to show that he was truly grateful? (See Luke 17:16.)
   How can you give glory to God when you receive a blessing?

6. How many of the ten did not make time to thank Jesus? (See Luke 17:17.)
   In addition to saying “thank you,” what are other practical ways can you show your gratitude to those who have benefited you?

7. Was the thankful leper a Jew or a Samaritan? (See Luke 17:16, 18.) Why was this significant? (See John 4:9.)
   What can distract you from expressing thanks? Will you make time this week to write a thank you note? To whom?

8. Why was the thankful leper made spiritually whole? (See Luke 17:19.)
   How are people today made spiritually whole? (See Ephesians 2:8–9.) Do you make time to thank God for your salvation? (See II Corinthians 9:15.)
Memory Verse
I CORINTHIANS 4:7

Play the game together to help the children commit I Corinthians 4:7 to memory. In the section “Doers of the Word,” have the children record how they will apply the verse to their lives.

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”

I CORINTHIANS 4:7

MEMORY VERSE GAME

Knock, Knock, You’re It!
Select one child to sit facing a wall with his back toward the others who are seated in a semicircle. Have the other children slowly read the verse aloud together. As each word of the verse is said, starting with the child on the left, have each child take turns raising and lowering his hand. While the children are reciting the verse, the one with his back to the others chooses when to knock on the wall. When he knocks, whoever was raising his hand at that moment switches places with the “knocker.” Continue until everyone has the verse memorized or until each person has had a chance to be the knocker.

DOERS OF THE WORD

In the blank below, write how this verse could be applied in your life, e.g., “recognize what I’ve been given,” or “identify and thank those who have given to me,” or “give You the credit for all that I have.”

“Dear Lord, I yield to You and am willing to apply this verse. Help me to ________________
______________________________
______________________________.
I ask that You would develop gratefulness in my life. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”

When the Lord gives you an opportunity to apply this verse, write it in your journal to later recall God’s working in your life.
INTRODUCTION

Enjoy meditating on and thinking about the words of the *gratefulness* key verse and definition as you find them in the word search below. The underlined words are hidden horizontally, vertically, diagonally, or backwards.

If finding the underlined words is too difficult or frustrating for your child, assign only a few words to find, such as “God” and “others.” Younger children could point to the ABCs. Older children may enjoy the extra challenge of finding all the words instead of only the underlined words.

**I Corinthians 4:7**

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”

**Gratefulness**

Making known to God and others in what ways they have benefited my life.

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**Word Search**

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E O B D O G I Z T R N Y O
P S S E N L U F E T A R G
K N O W N P E Q S S E O B
N O E V I E C E R C R L T
T T S A H X F V E T E G L
W H Y T M O N I H H F I G
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O T O U D E Y C O E I S A
U S D I D S T E N K D F H
N O T W A I H R A A I N W
G D H J F R O M H M D N A
M O O T H O U Y Z H S O Y
I O U E U W R W H A T W S
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Activity

BLESSING MY BENEFACTORS

Supplies:
- Cardstock paper
- Crayons
- Stickers
- Pencil

Instructions
You may be very grateful for all that others have done for you. However, until you express that appreciation, others will not know how grateful you are. In the chart below are three columns. In the first column, list the items for which you are grateful, such as family time, food, or a birthday gift. In the second column, name the person who made these benefits available for you to enjoy. The benefactor might be God, Dad, Grandma, or someone else. Finally, in the third column, write down how you can outwardly express your appreciation. You might give a hug, a thank you card, a thank you poster, a phone call, a word of prayer, a verbal blessing, or a special gift.

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If you have planned to make thank you cards for some of your benefactors, use the cardstock paper, crayons, and stickers to create them. Then you will be able to let them know how much you appreciate what they have done for you.

Some fun card themes may include the following:
- BANANAS - thanks a bunch
- SNOWFLAKES - thanks snow much
- DONUTS - I donut know how to thank you enough
- BERRIES - thank you berry much
- PLANTS - thank you for helping me grow
- TACOS - taco-bout a blessing
“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan” (Luke 17:15–16).
“Now Thank We All Our God”

Sing “Now Thank We All Our God” and read about the gratefulness proclaimed by the hymn writer, Martin Rinkart.

The year was 1637, and the terrible Thirty Years’ War in Europe was underway. In the walled German city of Eilenberg, a group of starving citizens approached the tents of their Swedish invaders. The Swedish army’s commander had levied an unbearable tax on the impoverished city, and no one could pay it. Led by their pastor, Martin Rinkart, the people had come to plead for a reduction in the tax. The response was a firm “No!” Turning to his fellow-townsmen, Pastor Rinkart humbly urged, “Come, my children, we can find no mercy with men; let us take refuge with God.” Falling to his knees, Pastor Rinkart prayed, surrounded by others now also on their knees. Then they sang the German hymn, “When in the Hour of Utmost Need.” Seeing the humble scene before him touched the heart of the commander, and he greatly reduced the tax!

The Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) began as a spiritual conflict between Protestants and Roman Catholics in Germany but eventually became a political war for territory. Multitudes had sought refuge in the walled city. The crowded conditions produced starvation and disease. One plague in the city claimed 8,000 lives! In 1637, Pastor Rinkart, the only minister in Eilenburg, toiled long hours caring for the sick and performing funerals for the deceased. In that one year, Pastor Rinkart buried 4,480 people. Today it is unusual for a minister to officiate three funerals in one day, but that year Pastor Rinkart conducted up to fifty funerals a day! During this time of misery and suffering, the pastor wrote the hymn, “Now Thank We All Our God.”

How could a man who witnessed such suffering, starvation, and death write a song of gratefulness to God? The words reflect his firm belief that in all things, good and bad, Romans 8:28 stands true: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Pastor Rinkart knew that hardships responded to in faith would draw us even closer to our Savior. The hymn teaches that thankfulness leads to praise. The hymn writer acknowledges God’s blessings from his birth and through these darkest moments of his life. His thankfulness crescendos into exultant praise, very similar to the doxology:

All praise and thanks to God
The Father now be given,
The Son and Him Who reigns,
With Them in highest heaven,
The One Eternal God,
Who earth and heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be evermore.

As you sing this hymn, for what in your life can you thank God? May your gratefulness grow into greater praise to God!
Now Thank We All Our God

Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)

Johann Cruger (1598-1662)

Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices,
O may this bounteous God
Thru' all our life be near us,
All praise and thanks to God
The Father now be given,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In Whom His world rejoices;
Who, With ever joyful hearts
And bless-ed peace to cheer us;
And The Son and Him Who reigns
With Them in high-est heaven,
The from our mother's arms,
Hath blest us on our way;
Keep us in His grace,
And guide us when perplexed,
One Eternal God,
Whom earth and heav'n adore;
With count-less gifts of love,
And still is ours to-day.
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next.
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be ever-more.

Hymn Sheet Music
Word Search Answer Key

Recommended Resources

• 2019 Biblical Character Illustrated Calendar
• Hymns for the Family CDs
  (“Now Thank We All Our God” is sung to piano accompaniment on Volume 4.)
• The Power for True Success
• Character Cards
• Character Cards Memory Game
• Character Sketches, Volumes 1–3
• Achieving True Success
• What Is the First Indication of Turning Away From God? by Jerry Benjamin
• “Christ, Who Is Good” (Message by Jerry Benjamin, available at embassymedia.com.)
• “God Will Make a Way” (Message by David Gibbs, Jr., available at embassymedia.com.)
• “The Weapon of Rejoicing” (Message by Otto Koning, available at embassymedia.com.)

To view these resources and many more, visit us at:
store.iblp.org

Hymn History Bibliography

