

How to Teach Your Kids to be Thankful

Crystal Cox

God has given us everything. David says in Psalm 9:1, "I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds."

Paul, writing to the church in 2 Corinthians 4:15, expresses that the hardships he faces are for their benefit, "so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God."

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"Thank you" often goes unsaid. So many people seem to be too hurried, indifferent, or angry. But the world includes me and my family, you and yours.

How do we make sure we are living a life of gratitude and leading our children's hearts in gratitude?

Five Ways to Instill Gratitude in Our Children

1. Thank God out loud.

Many people do this is before meals, but you can also thank God during the day for little and big blessings.

Thank God when you find a great deal at the store. Thank Him when you are on your way to school and work for the privilege of doing both. Thank Him for His blessings, even when your heart and mind are troubled and your family is facing challenges. Even in loss, we can thank God for having had something or someone of great worth.

2. Give your children a realistic view of the world.

This happens in stages and according to what is appropriate to a child's age, but provide experiences that help them recognize all they have.

Pack boxes of goodies for children who don't have toys and personal items.

Volunteer time through church or in community organizations to serve people with need.

Buy food for church and school food drives.

Go on a mission trip together.

Help an elderly neighbor by taking a meal or doing a project.

Visit a nursing home and share your company.

These experiences help children see what they have to be grateful for and also ways the people they are serving are grateful.

3. Give your child an opportunity to work and save for something they want.

Our children are provided with so much. It's good to teach them that working for something is also a blessing from God. They will be excited to earn something on their own. Make sure to remind them the ability to work and money to buy things both come from God.

4. Steward your blessings well.

Stewardship is simply caring for what God has given you. As parents, we can model stewardship by taking care of our possessions and our bodies. Use your money wisely. Teach your children to do the same and hold them accountable for taking care of what God has given them. When we live this way, we show our children we value the blessings of God, recognizing them as worthy of care.

5. Enjoy life with your children.

So many people hurry about frustrated, checking off the to-do list, even during what should be joyous events and occasions. Raising children is hard. It can send our nerves to the edge, but take a breath and enjoy the time with your children.

Show them what it looks like to enjoy their birthday, Christmas, the ride to town to run errands. Each moment with our children is a gift. Show how thankful you are by truly enjoying the moments.

Building this list was convicting for me. So if you're questioning whether you're living a life of gratitude, just know: It's never too late to start!

Ask God to show you one way to better model gratitude for your children. The key is not to make a to-do list for yourself, but to fix our eyes on Jesus who has died and lived for us (Hebrews 12:2).