



PRETEEN
NOVEMBER 2023

FOR LEADERS ONLY

GOD VIEW: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN GRATITUDE AND GOD'S CHARACTER, SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

Gratitude sometimes feels like a lost art. Yet gratitude is an idea close to God's heart. Think about all of the Bible stories where people gave thanks to God. The Israelites celebrated God with feasts and festivals. The writers of the Psalms wrote songs of praise to thank God for being faithful. Throughout this month, we hope kids will learn to be grateful for everything God has done: for the world God made, for the promises God has kept, and for the new life God offers the world through Jesus. When we remember all of these things, we can always be thankful.

GRATITUDE is letting others know you see how they've helped you.

HEADS UP: IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK ABOUT GRATITUDE WITH KIDS

On the surface, gratitude might be one of those topics that everyone can relate to. We all have something to be thankful for. However, there are some things to keep in mind when it comes to how kids think and process these sorts of topics. Remember, kids think like scientists. They are concrete thinkers who start from the most literal interpretation of what they hear people say. When we use a phrase like, "We can be thankful for God's blessings," and kids don't come from a family with many monetary blessings or have recently lost a loved one or pet, they might start to feel like God isn't blessing them. Kids are also starting to compare and contrast. When we go around the circle and kids start naming things they're grateful for—good grades, video games, big vacations, etc.—kids who don't have those things might feel bad about themselves and what they have. Steer the conversation to include more general reasons for gratitude that can be inclusive for everyone: friends, church, needs that are met, and people who love us. Of course, be sure to tie all of it back to being thankful to God for the free gift of salvation through Jesus.

WEEK 1

Key Question: **What are you grateful for?** We kick off this month of gratitude by helping kids to refocus on their own life and discover reasons they can be thankful. We can get so busy with life that we often don't take the time to pause and notice what God has done for us. We pray that kids will consider why they can always be thankful.

We start off this series with something Paul wrote in **1 Thessalonians 5:18**: "Give thanks no matter what happens. God wants you to thank him because you believe in Christ Jesus." It's pretty clear. Giving thanks is something God wants us to do. No matter what happens, we can be thankful for Jesus and God's gift of salvation.

Bottom Line: **You always have something to be grateful for.** When life is hard, or even if life is normal, it can be difficult to find why you should be thankful—especially for kids. We pray that as kids think about this Bottom Line, they'll remember that they can always be thankful to God for sending Jesus to be our Savior.

WEEK 2

Key Question: **How can you show God you're grateful?** Saying thank you doesn't have to feel like a chore. Preteens have great imaginations that can run wild as they discover all sorts of fun ways they can show gratitude to God (and others).

In week 2, we head to **2 Samuel 6:12b-22a** where we find King David in a powerful moment in Israel's history. David had the privilege of bringing the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem. He was so overwhelmed with gratitude and excitement that he danced and celebrated. David was willing to make himself look foolish to worship God for being faithful to the Israelites.

Bottom Line: **Celebrate what God has done.** Just like King David took time to thank God for being faithful, we pray that kids will learn to do the same. God has done so much for us. God will continue to show us love and faithfulness in the future and deserve all of our gratitude! We pray that kids will take time to celebrate and offer thanks to God.



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WEEK 3

Key Question: **What helps you remember to be grateful?**

It's important for us to identify the reasons behind what we do. We hope to help our preteens think about the reasons why gratitude is important. As they discover these reasons, we pray they develop a strategy for remembering to say thank you when people help them.

In week three, we head to **Luke 17:11-19** and discover a significant moment when 10 men with a serious skin condition asked Jesus to heal them. As their skin cleared up, the men were so thrilled about the miracle that most of them ran off and never returned to thank Jesus. Only one man, a Samaritan, turned around and showed his gratitude. Jesus made a point to commend this man's faith.

Bottom Line: **Take time to say thank you.** This is a simple idea, but it's often so hard to put into practice. People offer their help with kindness and love, yet we often take those people for granted. We pray that through this moment in Jesus' life, kids will understand the importance of remembering to show gratitude when others are kind to them.

WEEK 4

Key Question: **What are some good habits you have?** As kids get older, they can establish routines and habits that help them remember certain things: brushing their teeth, eating healthy food, and yes, even saying thank you. Throughout this lesson, we hope that kids discover ways that will help them remember to show gratitude for Jesus and the gift of salvation.

We finish up the month in **1 Corinthians 11:23-26** and **Exodus 12**. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul talks about taking time to celebrate Communion, or the Lord's Supper. When we eat the bread and drink the cup, we celebrate how Jesus lived, died, and rose again to make us right with God. As we think about what Paul wrote, we'll also take time to remember that this celebration is rooted in the Passover celebration, where God's people remembered how God rescued them from being enslaved in Egypt.

Bottom Line: **Make a habit of being grateful.** People often focus on bad habits that they need to stop. 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. We pray that kids will start to see that gratitude is a choice that God can help them make—especially when they remember all that Jesus did for us on the cross.