

All Souls Spiritual Parenting Group

November 2008

Thankfulness

~How do we encourage thankfulness in daily life?~

Welcome & Introductions – Share your names, your children’s names and ages and some thoughts you have about the word *thankfulness*. What do you want your child or children to understand about *thankfulness*?

Definition¹ –

Thankfulness is being grateful for what you have. It is an attitude of gratitude for learning, loving and being. Thankfulness is being glad for the special things which come along. It is also being grateful for the little things which happen around you and within you every day. It is an openness and willingness to receive each of God’s bounties.

To be thankful is to have a sense of wonder about the beauty of this world and to welcome all of life as a gift. Thankfulness is a path to contentment.

Thankfulness is a way to get perspective when things don’t look good and you start to lose hope. It is a way to grow when painful things happen, by looking at the gifts which are always there, even when they seem hidden.

Spend a few minutes reflecting on this definition together – what ideas resonate with you? Does any part of the definition not fit for you?

¹ The definition and “how to” sections on mercy are from *The Family Virtues Guide: Simple Ways to Bring Out the Best in Our Children and Ourselves* by Linda Kavelin Popov.

Share Prayers and Readings on Thankfulness –

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:12-17

Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to God with songs of praise!

Psalms 95:2

Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:14-18

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

BCP, introduction to the Proper Preface

O heavenly Father, who has filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works; that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

BCP, Prayer for Joy in God's Creation (pg. 814)

Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love.

We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side.

We thank you for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us.

We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone.

Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ; for the truth of his Word and the example of his life; for his steadfast obedience, by which he overcame temptation; for his dying, through which he overcame death; and for his rising to life again, in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom.

Grant us the gift of your Spirit, that we may know him and make him known; and through him, at all times and in all places, may give thanks to you in all things. *Amen.*

BCP, A General Thanksgiving (pg. 836)

It's not having what you want, it's wanting what you've got.
Sheryl Crowe from "Soak Up The Sun"

When we were children we were grateful to those who filled our stockings at Christmas time. Why are we not grateful to God for filling our stockings with legs?
G.K. Chesterton

For each new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food, for love and friends,
For everything Thy goodness sends.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

If a fellow isn't thankful for what he's got, he isn't likely to be thankful for what he's going to get.
Frank A. Clark

Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our thanksgiving.
W.T. Purkiser

Only a stomach that rarely feels hungry scorns common things.
Horace

Grow flowers of gratitude in the soil of prayer.
Verbena Woods

I thank God for my handicaps, for, through them, I have found myself, my work, and my God.
Helen Keller

For what I have received may the Lord make me truly thankful. And more truly for what I have not received.
Storm Jameson (Journey from the North, v.2)

Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.
Melody Beattie

No one is as capable of gratitude as one who has emerged from the kingdom of night.
Elie Wiesel

Discussion Questions –

- 1) How can we teach our children to practice thankfulness?
- 2) How do we help our children understand the value of thankfulness?
- 3) What makes thankfulness a challenging virtue to practice?
- 4) What are the spiritual effects of practicing thankfulness?

How Do You Practice Thankfulness?

You practice thankfulness by noticing the beauty around you and within you. Then let yourself feel the gratitude in your heart.

Count your blessings often, especially when you are having a hard time. Find the lessons in all things, for they are the true gifts of this life. Avoid envy because it can destroy your trust. The moment you envy someone else, you are rejecting the gifts that are yours.

If you want to practice thankfulness, learn to receive. It is blessed to give, and it is blessed to receive. Everyone needs to have the opportunity to give, including the people who care for you. Be optimistic by being receptive to life rather than allowing fear or worry to control you.

To practice thankfulness, appreciate little things—a flower by the road, the stars at night, a challenge met, a laugh with a friend, a sorrow shared. To be truly thankful, don't wait for a dream to be fulfilled. Celebrate the moment.

Scenarios to discuss with your children –

What would thankfulness look like if...

- ♦ you feel sad and defeated because of many problems?
- ♦ you wish you were more like the most popular person you know?
- ♦ you go for a walk in a place of beauty?
- ♦ you have a painful experience and wonder why God allowed it to happen?
- ♦ someone give you a gift?

Signs of Success –

You are practicing thankfulness when you...

- ♦ have an attitude of gratitude
- ♦ are receptive to gifts
- ♦ appreciate your own abilities instead of envying others
- ♦ see the difficulties of your life as opportunities to learn
- ♦ expect the best
- ♦ appreciate the beauty of this earth
- ♦ count your blessings every day
- ♦ offer thanks to God

Affirmation which you can teach your children –

I am thankful for the many gifts within me and around me today.
I celebrate each moment by opening myself to beauty and to learning.
I expect the best.