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parenting CHRISTIAN kids



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Show Gratitude by Giving & Serving

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To help your children be grateful for their God-given blessings.
2. To nurture servant hearts and attitudes in your family members.
3. To provide uplifting, gratifying serving opportunities for your entire family.

A 2013 study commissioned by the John Templeton Foundation found that most Americans have a “gratitude gap.” They believe gratitude is important and should be taught to children, but they don’t practice it very often—with one exception. Parents say they express gratitude frequently to their own children. Such modeling is a first step toward helping young people express thankfulness to others.

One great way to show gratitude is serving others and forming habits of generosity. And such expressions of gratitude don’t have to be grand. Poet William Wordsworth said the “best portion” of good people’s lives are their “little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love.” Small acts of gratitude can make a big difference.

Follow these tips to help children grow into lifelong givers and servers:

- Choose fun, age-appropriate serving opportunities for your whole family, and keep them within reasonable time limits. As you serve, discuss with children what you’re doing—and why.
- As kids get older, encourage them to participate in anonymous serving projects to learn that generosity is its own reward. Let kids brainstorm their own acts of service.
- Create a family gratitude journal, designating one section for listing ways to give back to God.
- Reinforce the message that we give to and serve others because we love Jesus, who’s given so much.

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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Treasure Thanks

Hide 100 pennies in a room. Have family members search for the pennies. Afterward, have them name one thing for which they're thankful for every penny they found. Help younger children as needed.

Read aloud Matthew 6:19-21. Ask: **What are some things you treasure and why? What does this verse say about our treasures and our hearts? How can thankfulness help us keep our eyes on heaven?**

Take turns giving away pennies to other family members. With each penny, tell that person one thing about them for which you're thankful. Then ask: **When is it easy or difficult to share our blessings with others? How can we serve others with our blessings from God?**

Close in prayer, thanking Jesus for his blessings and asking him to show you ways to share those blessings with others.

Ready, Set, Give!

"Kids have a natural affinity to gratitude," says Dr. Robert Emmons, author of *Thanks! How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier*. "They often teach parents as much or more about gratitude than the other way around." Gratitude has side benefits, too. Research shows that thankful kids get better grades, experience less depression, are more content, and maintain a more positive outlook on life. Encourage your kids to be grateful—and to give back—by offering them authentic experiences for sharing and serving. Sure, you may have to do these things alongside your children—but that's a good thing. Get started with some of these fun ideas.

Giving Challenge Introduce the concept of "love languages" to help children explore different ways of giving. Brainstorm ideas for giving that are related to physical touch (giving hugs and foot rubs), quality time (walking together, doing a puzzle), gifts (making a drawing or bracelet), service (doing a chore), and kind words (writing a letter or story).

Creative Blessings Hand out paper and pens or markers. Have family members write or draw a prayer for someone they know. It can be a prayer of thanksgiving for that person or for a specific need. Decorate the borders of the prayers, place them in envelopes, and mail or deliver them.

Recognition Cookies Make several batches of cookies while talking about people who help others without much recognition (nurses, teachers, pastors, firefighters, paramedics, police officers, etc.). Have kids choose a group to deliver the treats to and decorate gift tags or write notes of thanks to those people to include with the treats.

Marvelous Missions Bank Give family members each a tube of mini M&M's. While eating the candies, discuss missions organi-

zations and pick one to contribute to as a family. Decorate 3X3½-inch pieces of paper with the group's name or a picture representing its work. Tape a paper around each empty tube to create quarter banks. After filling the banks (each will hold \$20 in quarters), donate the money to that organization.

True Servants Collect a variety of household items, and display them on a table. Take turns picking up an item and using it to serve another family member somehow. Read aloud John 13:3-5, 12-17. Discuss how it felt to serve and be served, why Jesus served his disciples, and how you can serve others in the week ahead.

Grateful Givers At dinner time, have each family member jot on slips of paper reasons they felt blessed during their day, and place the slips in a Gratitude Jar. Pull out and read the blessings together occasionally. Also use a Giving Jar to collect ideas about ways to serve. Whenever you add a slip to the jar, pull out a giving slip, and start serving!

Pitch in Together Ask your pastor or Caring and Sharing Team about opportunities to serve as a family in or through your church.

"Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back." —Luke 6:38

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *Jem & the Holograms*

Genre: Live-action musical fantasy

Rating: PG (for thematic material including reckless behavior, brief suggestive content, and some language)

Cast: Aubrey Peeples, Molly Ringwald, Juliette Lewis, Ryan Guzman

Synopsis: After a friend uploads a video to the Internet, a small-town girl becomes a pop superstar. The movie is loosely based on an '80s cartoon and line of dolls.

Our Take: Kids who dream of fame may be starry-eyed over Jem's glam makeover, but the film also reveals the downsides of hitting it big. For older kids and preteens, the movie could spark discussions about how friendships change and how we can use our God-given talents for God's glory.



BOOK

Title: *The Worst Class Trip Ever*

Author: Dave Barry

Synopsis: The latest kids book from Pulitzer Prize-winning comedy writer Dave Barry centers around a middle school trip to Washington, D.C. When Wyatt and his best friend Matt encounter some strange men with a mysterious device on an airplane, it's up to the boys to discover the truth and save the world—maybe.

Our Take: Barry, who got his start writing humor pieces in his school newspaper, has been writing kids and young-adult books for years. This new adventure seems like goofy fun but also raises questions about not judging people by their appearances—a lesson everyone can stand to learn. The book is geared toward kids ages 9-12.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Bible Stories? We often refer to events in the Bible as “stories,” but we may be doing a disservice. Studies show that children with a prior exposure to religion are less likely to be able to differentiate between factual and fantastical stories. (*Wiley Online Library*)

The Value of Boredom Due to the constant stimulation of smart devices, cognitive psychologists warn that children are forgetting “how to be bored” and losing the benefits that come with it—such as creativity and emotional development. (*trendbible.com*)

QUICK STATS

Underage Uploads Children as young as seven are *uploading* sexually explicit content. Of images uploaded by kids, 17.5 percent depict children 15 and younger, and 7.5 percent depict children 10 or younger. Nearly 86 percent of the content was created with a webcam, not a cell phone. (*Emerging Patterns & Trends Report Into Youth-Produced Sexual Content*)

Quality vs. Quantity Quality trumps quantity when it comes to the time we spend with kids. A study published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* shows virtually no relationship between the amount of time parents spend with kids between ages 3 and 11 and how the kids turn out. (*washingtonpost.com*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Disney Infinity 3.0

In the big lead-up to December's *Star Wars* movie release, this game features characters from the franchise that can battle with counterparts from other Disney titles. It's stuffed with nostalgia, thanks to a variety of characters found in the game's Toy Box or unlocked on the screen by figurines.

Art for Kids Hub

A dad started this site to help other families create artwork together. Tutorials show kids how to draw, paint, and sculpt a wide variety of images, including favorite cartoon characters. Low-cost printables and a free subscription are also available. You can find the site at artforkidshub.com.

Periscope

Twitter's live-streaming app lets users broadcast video from a cell phone but also allows two-way, real-time communication and instant feedback. In just four months, the app garnered 10 million users. It's also raised concerns about online privacy and predators, so proceed with care.

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This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.