



HAVING  
= A =  
THANKFUL  
*Heart*



Theme Leaders Guide **2016**



# 2016 Leaders Guide

## Introduction to the Theme

### **Theme Topic:**

God is generous, loving, and good. When we have a living relationship with Jesus, our hearts will be permeated with thanksgiving. Because of God's goodness and love, we can always give thanks to God.

### **Theme Verses:**

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. *Philippians 4:12*

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. *1 Thessalonians 5:18*

Give thanks to the LORD; for he is good, His love endures forever. *1 Chronicles 16:34*

### **Concept:**

Having a thankful heart is the secret to living a holy and joy-filled life. Gratitude recognizes that all of life is a gracious gift from God's almighty hand.

### **Aims:**

To teach GEMS/Cadets that the primary reason to give thanks to God is found in Jesus. Our gratitude to God should not be measured by comfortable circumstances or earthly possessions.

To teach GEMS/Cadets that the secret of being content is having a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

To teach GEMS/Cadets that a thankful heart recognizes that every part of life is a gracious gift from God's hand. When we complain and grumble, we snub God, the giver of all things. To teach GEMS/Cadets to cultivate the holy habit of giving thanks to God for everything.

## **Theme Background**

There is a hunger that spans the generations that keeps resurfacing in our world. It's a hunger for satisfaction, joy, and contentment. People look for satisfaction and joy in the work place, shopping centres, and entertainment. Coffee houses and spas are filled with people who are seeking inner peace and contentment. GEMS/Cadets look for happiness in popularity, in stuff, in success, and fame with their peers. Many GEMS/Cadets live by a "just-one-more" mentality. Just give me one more pair of jeans, just one more CD, just one more win on the soccer or hockey field. . . then I'll be happy.

Pursuing contentment and joy in finite objects will fail- every time. It's only when we have a living relationship with Jesus Christ, when we throw our arms up to Him in thanksgiving, no matter what our circumstances, that we will experience true joy and contentment.

Satisfaction can be found in Christ alone! When Christ is our Lord and Saviour, we can give thanks in every circumstance. Our joy will overflow from a thankful heart that celebrates that every part of life is a gracious, lavish gift from our Heavenly Father. God is good. His love endures forever!

# Ways to Use the Theme in Club

## **Option A: Three consecutive theme sessions:**

⌚ Time Needed: approximately 60 - 90 minutes per theme session.

At your first club meeting present Part 1: A GEMS/Cadet Mystery: The Best-Kept Secret: Finding the Secret. On the second club night present Part 2: A GEMS/Cadet Mystery: Knowing the Secret. On the third club night present Part 3: A GEMS/Cadet Mystery: Living the Secret.

The third part contains more discussion and small group interaction, as well as the theme craft, so the time frame will be largely determined by how talkative your GEMS/Cadets are and how long it takes them to complete the craft!

## **Option B: One theme session:**

⌚ Time Needed: approximately 4 hours.

Plan to conduct theme night at a special kick-off event, camp activity, or sleepover. Enhance the event with devotionals, games, skits, etc. also included in this theme pack.

## **Overview & Set-up for Theme Night(s)**

### **Part 1:**

**A GEMS/Cadets Mystery: The Best-Kept Secret: Finding the Secret.**

Detective Davis introduces herself and starts the night off by asking the GEMS/Cadets what do they think makes them happy. The GEMS/Cadets, assisted by the leaders start the introductory activity of making collages using magazines and cutting out pictures

to create posters titled, I wish...., I want.... This is then followed by Detective Davis introducing the theme. The Chief Investigators or leaders then announce the names of the GEMS/Cadets in their groups, issue them their badge and break off from the main group to fill in the first section of their study journals together.

### **Part 2:**

**A GEMS/Cadets Mystery: The Best-Kept Secret: Knowing the Secret:**

The night starts with a short interactive object lesson to help get everyone thinking about being thankful to God. This is followed by a News interview with Paul. Presented as a skit in the form of a TV current affairs interview, Paul tells all about his life and how he is content knowing God is always with him – even in times of trouble. The GEMS/Cadets

will then break off into their groups with their Chief Investigator and continue with the next section of their study journals.

### **Part 3:**

**A GEMS/Cadets Mystery: The Best-Kept Secret: Living the Secret.**

The evening starts with a skit reinforcing the importance of thankfulness.

Skit: Problems, suffering, thankfulness. After the skit, Detective Davis discusses what it means to be 'Living the Secret.' The GEMS/Cadets then break off into their groups with their Chief Investigator to finish off their study journals. Conclude the theme badge and session with a group craft activity of making a personal journal or creating a thankfulness mobile.

# Part 1:

## A GEMS/Cadets Mystery: Finding the Secret!

### Overview

- **Welcome** – (5 - 10 minutes). “Detective Davis introduces herself/himself and starts the night off by asking the GEMS/Cadets what do they think makes them happy”.
- **I wish, I want collage posters** – (30 minutes). Create a series of collages filled with pictures of all the things the boys/girls wish they had and things they want.
- **Introduction** – (10 minutes). Detective Davis discusses the foundation to the theme land introduces the theme verses through the Treasure Chest game.
- **Study** – (25 - 30 minutes). Boys/girls break up into groups with their Chief investigator.

#### Discuss:

- Looking at how special we are. We are all individuals.
- What makes us happy?
- What is the secret to a content and joy-filled life?
- What is your relationship with Jesus?
- Sharing and Prayer circle

### Resources

- PDF slide, overhead transparency or poster board of theme logo.
- PDF slide, overhead transparency or poster board of theme verses.
- One to two large tables (depending on club size) with cardboard, magazines, scissors and glue to make I want... and I wish... posters.
- Treasure Chest (box)

| Treasure Chest Items                                       | Items Symbolic For                          |
|--|---|
| Purse, piggy bank, money                                   | Being rich                                  |
| A+ on test, dictionary, calculator                         | Being smart                                 |
| Picture of party, birthday card invitation                 | Being popular                               |
| MP3 player ,CD player, iPod, CDs, DVDs                     | Circumstances of having everything you want |
| Teen Magazines, pictures of celebrities/athletes           | Being Famous                                |
| A Bible with three bookmarks in the corresponding passages | The truth about being content and happy!    |

- Three clue bookmarks with theme verses on them.

# Welcome

*Technology person shows PDF Slide, overhead transparency; or poster board of the theme logo, "Having a Thankful Heart. Living the Secret!"*

## **Detective Davis:**

Hello, Private Investigators. Welcome to A GEMS/Cadets Mystery: The Best-Kept Secret, I'm Detective Davis and I'm pleased to have the (name of your Club) GEMS/Cadets Club Detective Agency join me in cracking the mystery of the best-kept secret.

But first I have a question. Do you know the secret? Do you know the secret to being happy and content in every circumstance or situation?

Lets see what makes you happy and content! Everyone gather around the table(s). We are going to use these magazines and cardboard to create two (per table) posters titled "I wish... and I want.... These will show images of all the things we want or wish you had.

## ***I want....I wish collage posters.***

*Spend up to 30 minutes with the boys and girls, cutting out pictures and sticking them to the posters. Use cut-out letters to form the I want and I wish title for each poster.*

## **Detective Davis:**

Wow!!! Those posters look great! But are all these things enough to make us truly happy and content?

I've interviewed and observed girls and boys, men and women from around the world, and discovered that there are a lot of unhappy, grumbling, complaining, whining, discontented people in the world! Maybe you know someone like that. *Look through your magnifying glass or binoculars and scan the group of GEMS/Cadets.* Maybe I just described you!

If so, you'll want to be especially attentive to this case! I'm on a hunt for happiness. Will you help me discover the secret to being happy? Fellow PIs, if we can solve this mystery, it has the potential to change our lives forever.

Now, I've done some pre-investigation. According to my sources, I've noted (*take the detective notebook out of your pocket and rapidly page through it as you recite your discoveries*) that some people believe the secret to happiness is being rich, popular, beautiful, healthy, smart, funny, athletic, artistic, musical, successful, cute, famous, and (*take a deep breath - - -*) you fill in the blank. Others think that the secret to happiness is based on circumstances. They convince us that we'll be happy if our circumstances are perfect. If our days are fun, exciting, and trouble free. Is that the secret or are they clueless to true happiness? (*Listen to responses.*)

Let's crack this case Private Investigators, and unlock the best-kept secret, how to be happy and content. I need two volunteers. (*Choose volunteers and lead them to the treasure chest. Open the treasure chest and say. . .*)

Thank you for volunteering. The secret to being happy and content is found in this treasure chest! Can you find it?

## **NOTE TO DETECTIVE DAISY (LEADER):**

*As the volunteers pull out items, ask questions. Examples: If the volunteers pull out a purse and/or piggy bank, ask the GEMS/Cadets in the group, "Does money bring us happiness?" If the volunteers pull out a popular, must-have item like an iPod, ask, "Does owning an iPod bring us happiness?" Note: Some may say "Yes!" because they really want an iPod. Respond, "An iPod may make you happy for a little while, but do you think it'll keep you happy, no matter what troubles come your way?"*

*When the boys/girls pull out the Bible, jump up and down with excitement and say. . . Look, look! God's Word is the key to cracking this mystery! Tell us what the Bible says about the secret. Please read Clue #1, what's the secret?*

### **Volunteer reads:**

*I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. Philippians 4:12. Technology person shows corresponding PDF Slide, overhead transparency; or poster board.*

### **Detective Daisy:**

*(With great excitement! "Write" down your discoveries in your detective notebook.)* The secret to being content is having a real relationship with Jesus Christ! When Jesus is our Saviour, Friend, and Lord we can give thanks in every circumstance! It's a choice that you and I must make. We will be content when we choose to give thanks no matter what our circumstance – whether we're full or hungry, whether we have lots of things or have nothing. Please read Clue #2, when do we give thanks?

### **Volunteer reads:**

*Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is Gods will for you in Christ Jesus. 1Thessalonians 5:18. Technology person shows corresponding PDF Slide, overhead transparency; or poster board.*

### **Detective Davis:**

*(Again, rapidly write in detective notebook and show great delight in the discovery!)* The secret is saying thank you to God in everything that happens. God's Word says give thanks in everything that happens, not for everything that happens. It's easy to give thanks in joy- filled situations like a vacation, new clothes, or skateboard, or a beautiful day! But do we need to give thanks when our grandma dies or our house starts on fire? Of course not! We don't give thanks to God for death, disasters or other troubling circumstances, but we can give thanks to Him that even in the middle of our sadness, He is with us. He will comfort us and provide everything that we need. Please read Clue #3, why do we give thanks?

### **Volunteer reads:**

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34. Technology person shows corresponding PDF Slide, overhead transparency; or poster board.*

### **Detective Davis:**

*(Repeat excited response and "writing" in detective notebook.)* Our circumstances are always changing, but this truth will never change: God is good and His love for us will never end. We will always have a reason to give thanks, whether we're soaring in joy or sinking in sadness because God is good and He will always love us! He will always be there for us.

Thank you for your help in solving *A GEMS/Cadets Mystery: The Best-Kept Secret*. The secret is having a thankful heart in every circumstance because God is good and His love for us never ends. *(Dismiss volunteers back to their seats.)*

### **Chief Investigators:**

*Each Chief Investigator or leader comes forward and calls out the list of Private Investigators in their group. They give each member a name badge and then have their small group sit together. When all the small groups are ready to begin, move off to a quiet place and discuss the study questions together.*

## **Study**

**Chief Investigator:** Break of into groups.

# Stuff About Me:

Let's get started by filling out the inside cover, Stuff About Me.

A place for the girl's photo and name:

My birthday: .....

My favourite book: .....

My favourite song: .....

My favourite place to be: .....

My favourite thing to do: .....

My favourite Bible verse: .....

My favourite colour: .....

My favourite sport: .....

My best friend's name: .....

This is how my best friend would describe me: .....

My favourite school subject: .....

My favourite instrument: .....

Number of brothers and sisters: .....

My favourite family memory: .....

A place for girl's family photo:

*(Note to Leader: If you have a digital camera and printer available, take the GEMS/Cadets photos and paste them in at club night or bring the photos back on a separate club night.)*

## What will you do?

On the bottom of the page it says, what will you do? Think carefully about your decisions, GEMS/Cadets. Will you say yes to all of them? Will you say no to all of them? Don't just check a mark; think carefully about what you're saying you will do! Once you've made your decisions, sign your name and add today's date.

## What will you do? Tick your commitment(s)!

..... Living the secret is a choice I'm making today.

..... With God's help, I want to have a thankful heart.

..... I will give thanks to the Lord; for He is good; His love endures forever!

## Happiness Is...

Have you ever thought or said, "I'll be happy when..." I'll be happy when I get older, my grades are even better, my parents don't have to work as hard, or when my aunt's cancer goes away. What are some things that you thought - whether a long time ago or today - would make you content and happy?

..... Being rich

..... Being popular

..... Being beautiful

..... Being healthy

..... Being smart

- ..... Being funny
- ..... Being athletic
- ..... Being artistic
- ..... Being musical
- ..... Being cute
- ..... Being famous
- ..... Being successful
- ..... Other: .....
- ..... Other: .....
- ..... Other: .....

Let's read Philippians 4:12 together: I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation whether well fed or hungry; whether living in plenty or in want

*(Note to Leader: Write this verse out on a poster board and attach it to the wall. Spend time this year memorizing this verse!)*

What does this verse mean? *Listen to responses: It means that there are a lot of circumstances in life: having nothing and having everything, being hungry and being full, wanting things and needing nothing. In whatever circumstance or situation you're in, you can be content. The secret is to have a living relationship with Jesus Christ. Our response to living with Jesus is having a thankful heart!*

What does this verse mean to you? How will you live out this truth in your life? *Listen to responses.*

The secret to being content, the secret to living a joy-filled life no matter what's going on is to have a real relationship with Jesus Christ! Is Jesus your Saviour, your Friend, your everything? Nothing else - no person, no thing, no dream - will satisfy your happiness hunger. Jesus is the only One who gives joy and contentment!

This is the relationship I have with Jesus: .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

*(Note to Leader: If your GEMS/Cadets do not know Jesus as their personal friend and Saviour, talk to them about the ABC's of Salvation. Invite them to ask Jesus into their hearts and lives.)*

## ABC'S of SALVATION

### A – ADMIT

Admit that you have done some things in your life that are wrong.... that you are a sinner, and that you are genuinely sorry for your sin.

*... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23*

God tells us that no sin can enter Heaven. Something must be done to get rid of the sin in your life.



## B – BELIEVE

Believe that Jesus is who He says He is, that He is your Saviour, and that He died to pay the price for your sin. Believe also that once you accept Him as your Saviour, you will live forever with Him.

*Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved... Acts 16:31*

## C – COME

Come to Him and He will come to you. If you ask Jesus to come into your heart, you can know for certain that He will do that, and that you are His.

*Come near to God and He will come near to you..... James 4:8*

When you do these three things and mean it, Admit, Believe, and Come, God tells us that He will come into our lives and become our Father, Saviour, and Friend. You will have the privilege of living your life on earth with God and spending eternity in Heaven with Him.

### **Close**

Close the evening with a prayer circle. Ask each girl/boy if they would like to pray for something they are thankful for. Finish the prayer by asking the Lord to help us to be happy and content in all circumstances in our lives.

## Part 2:

### A GEMS/Cadets Mystery: Having a thankful heart.

#### **Overview**

- **Introduction** – (5 - 10 minutes). Short interactive object lesson to help get everyone thinking about being thankful to God.
- **News Interview of Paul** – (5 -10 minutes). Skit in the form of a TV current affairs interview where Paul tells about his life and how he is content knowing God is always with him - even in times of trouble.
- **Study** – (25 - 30 minutes) GEMS/Cadets break up into groups with their Chief investigator.

#### **Discuss:**

- Being thankful in all circumstances, not for all circumstances.
- Things to think about to help us to be thankful in difficult circumstances
- Reasons for being thankful to God
- Sharing and Prayer circle

#### **Resources**

- Opening Club Ideas: See below.
- News Interview Skit:
- Area setup to look like a prison cell. Use dark blankets for cell walls. Create cell window bars by sticking black cardboard strips vertically on a lighter cardboard background. Make some paper chains from dark paper or cardboard loops and hang them from the cell walls.
- “Stage Curtain” to hide prison cell at the beginning of the skit (petition, large blanket or simply dimmed lights could be used for “stage curtain”)

- Area setup to look like “news desk”
- Old clothes and chains for “Paul” to wear.
- Bible for Paul to hold up during the interview.
- Formal clothes for “Stevie” and “Tony” to wear

## ***Introduction***

### **Opening Club Ideas**

*Start Part 2 of the Theme by choosing one of the six “Opening Club Ideas” listed below. Some of these can be completed in a fairly short time while others (that require more time) can be started during Part 2 of the Theme and continued on other “normal” nights during the year. Consider using some of the “Opening Club Ideas” that were not used during your Theme nights on “normal” club nights to consistently bring the Theme to the forefront during the year.*

### **I’m Thankful to God Because**

*Open your Club meeting with an “open mic” time giving GEMS/Cadets the opportunity to run up to the front and tell why they are thankful to God. Their sentence should begin, “I’m thankful to God because...” They can then list an attribute of God or a blessing they’ve experienced.*

### **Table cloth of Thanks**

**Resources:** *Fabric pens, fabric paint or permanent markers, plus a fabric tablecloth or use a bed sheet as the group’s Tablecloth of Thanks (best if the cloth is a solid, light-coloured fabric).*

*During each Club meeting give the GEMS/Cadets the opportunity to write something they’re thankful for on the Tablecloth of Thanks.*

### **Gratitude Wall**

**Resources:** *Prepare a long piece of white paper with colourful border to be your gratitude wall, colourful Index cards, pens/markers and glue.*

*During each Club meeting encourage the GEMS/Cadets to write something they’re thankful for on an index card and then glue it to the Gratitude Wall.*

### **Chain of Thanks**

**Resources:** *Basket filled with strips of colourful paper, tape or glue, and markers, pencils, or pens.*

*Invite the GEMS/Cadets to write on a strip of paper something that they’re thankful to God for in their lives. They can then connect their strip of thanksgiving to a growing chain. How long will your chain get in a month? How long will it get during the entire season?*

### **A Thankful Caterpillar**

**Resources:** *Basket filled with strips of colourful paper, “googly eyes”, pipe cleaners, tape or glue, and markers, pencils, or pens.*

*Similar to the “Chain of Thanks” except you create a caterpillar. On the first circle create the caterpillar’s head, use googly eyes, pipe cleaners for antennae, and a pom-pom for a nose. Tape the head to a wall and let the GEMS/Cadets extend his body by writing things they are thankful for on round pieces of paper.*

## Thankfulness in a Jar

**Resources:** A BIG jar, Index cards (or post-it notes), pencils and pens.

Have each girl/boy write something they are thankful for onto an Index card and place them into the jar. Go around the group several times.

During the year, continue filling the Thankfulness Jar by placing it, the Index cards and pencils or pens where the GEMS/Cadets will see them. Each week, ask the GEMS/Cadets to think about something different they are thankful for and have them write it down and place it in the jar. At the end of the year, during a sleepover or a special time of closing at club, take turns reading aloud God's blessings. If the jar becomes TOO full, you may have to do this more often!

## TV Interview Skit

This is to be presented in the form a TV current affairs show. If you are short of Leaders to be in the skit, the part of the Announcer (Stevie) could be done by the Interviewer (Tony) with a different voice from behind the curtain.

### Stevie Barbarina

Stevie sitting at "news desk" (Note: Lines could be written on sheets of paper on the desk to help but remember to have eye contact with audience).

Good evening. I'm Stevie Barbarina. Welcome to a special edition of "People From the Past", the show that finds out more about the amazing lives of people from long ago. Tonight we'll meet a man called Paul and find out how he can be so thankful even though he spent many years in prison. Our reporter, Tony Eagerbeaver, brings this report to you live and exclusive from Paul's prison cell. It's over to you Tony.

(Remove the curtain to reveal a prison cell with a reporter and a prisoner in chains.)

### Tony

Tony standing sideways toward Paul but facing the audience (Note: Bullet points or lines could be written on a piece of paper on a clipboard to help remember what to say but remember to have eye contact with the audience. If Paul gets stuck on a line, help by asking the question again in a more pointed way).

Thanks Stevie. Yes I'm here in Paul's cell ready to talk to Paul. Paul, tell us about your upbringing.

### Paul

Paul standing sideways toward Tony but facing the audience.

I was called Saul back then. My family life was strict. My father was a Pharisee who wanted to keep all the laws. It was my dream to be like him when I grew up.

### Tony

What did you know about Jesus then?

### Paul

I knew that the other Pharisees didn't like him because he said we tried to show other people how good we were but inside our hearts were full of pride. Some Pharisees got so angry with Jesus that they planned to kill Him. Finally Jesus was killed on a cross.

### Tony

What happened to Jesus after that?

## **Paul**

Well His disciples said He had come back to life. One day, one of his disciples called Peter, spoke to a large crowd all about Jesus and how He could forgive their sins. About 3000 people believed in Jesus that day and then more people began to spread the news that Jesus was alive. But I wanted to stop them.

## **Tony**

And did you manage to stop them?

## **Paul**

I thought I was at first when I was taking people off to jail but then one day an amazing thing happened.

## **Tony**

Tell us about that day Paul.

## **Paul**

I was on my way to the city of Damascus to arrest anyone who followed Jesus, when a bright light from Heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and I heard a voice that said "Saul, Saul Why do you persecute me?" "Who are you Lord?" I asked. "I am Jesus, who you are persecuting" He replied, "Get up and go into the city and you will be told what to do". When I got up I couldn't see. I was blind, so the other men with me had to lead me into Damascus. Three days later a man called Ananias came to visit me, placed his hands on me and said I would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Then I could see again!

## **Tony**

Did you go and arrest any followers of Jesus?

## **Paul**

No way! God had completely changed me. Now I wanted to tell others the exciting news that Jesus is alive. But some people wanted to stop me doing that and they even tried to kill me.

## **Tony**

Well Paul maybe you should have kept quiet about your new faith in Jesus.

## **Paul**

Knowing Jesus was something I couldn't keep quiet about. It was such good news to share, but it did mean that sometimes I came close to death. Once I was stoned, dragged outside of the city and left for dead. Another time I was beaten, thrown into prison and placed in the inner cell with my feet fastened in stocks. In fact if you read the book of Acts in God's Word (show Bible) you'll find out all about what happened to me in my travels.

## **Tony**

I think that I would be very unhappy about such a life as yours Paul, but you still look happy. What's your secret?

## **Paul**

What's the secret of being content in every situation? Well it's living for Jesus and giving thanks to Him in all circumstances, whatever you are going through. I could have been angry with God when I was put in prison, but

I chose to sing and pray because I knew God never left me. I knew that God was right by my side, so I wanted to give thanks to Him to show Him my gratitude for His faithfulness to me.

## Tony

Wow Paul! Thanks for sharing your secret with us. Now I know that even when I'm going through tough times I can be thankful because God is always there.

Well everyone, that's our special report on Paul. So now it's back to you Stevie.

## Study

**Chief Investigator:** Break of into groups.

### Giving Thanks for a Broken Leg?

Can you think of some things or circumstances in which you have a hard time saying thank you to God? Maybe you can think of something that feels impossible to give thanks for!

God tells us that He wants us to give thanks in all circumstances not for all circumstances.

What's the difference? It means that although you don't have to thank God for a broken leg, you can thank Him that He is with you every step of the way-crutches and all.

### List five things in your life that is difficult to thank God for:

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

### Leader:

There was a guy in the Bible named Job who had everything taken away from him. One by one, messengers came to tell him the bad news. A messenger wouldn't even finish his story before the next one interrupted with more bad news!

Job lost his oxen, donkeys, sheep, camels, servants, sons, and daughters. What did Job do? He grieved, fell to the ground in worship and said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised:" Job 1:21

What if you lost everything within the next 24 hours? (*Listen to responses.*)

## Pick, Pray, and Praise!

### Leader:

Look at each circumstance. When troubles come our way, remember these three words that start with the letter **P**:

Each time we are sad or scared, we need to pick our attitude - will we grumble or say thanks?

### 1. Pick!

Will you choose to grumble or will you choose to thank God in each difficulty because He will be with you in the pain? God wants you to rely on Him.

**Leader:**

Secondly we need to pray to God. Your prayers might be tearful as you tell God all your hurt, troubles, and loneliness. That's OK. Or, they will be filled with joy. God can handle everything you tell Him. Even when you're upset with God, He will continue to walk alongside you.

**2. Pray!**

Bow your head, fold your hands, and tell God what you are thinking and feeling. Maybe your prayers will be said in tears as you pour out your fear, pain, anger, and loneliness to Him. Maybe your prayers will be filled with joy as you think about all that is good in your life. All prayers are heard by God. Nothing you tell God is too hard for Him. He will never leave you. Whatever your situation, thank Him that He will always be there for you. Note to Leader: Play soft worship music on the CD. A song can signal the start and end of this personal, special prayer time.

**Leader:**

And thirdly, we need to praise! We don't praise God for bad things; we praise Him that even in the middle of the storm, He is our refuge, a place where God comforts and encourages us.

**3. Praise!**

We don't praise God for bad things; we praise Him that even in the middle of a difficult situation, He is our refuge, a place to go to be comforted and encouraged. Write a thank you note of praise to God.

Dear God, .....  
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Amen.

**Leader:**

Let's read 1 Thessalonians 5:18 together:

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is Gods will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

*Note to Leader: Use the poster provided and attach it to the wall. Spend time this year memorizing this verse!*

**Leader:**

What does this verse mean?

*(Listen to responses: It means that no matter what circumstance or situation we are dealing with, we can say thanks to God because He will never leave us or forsake us)*

## Leader:

What does this verse mean to you? How will you live out this truth in your life? (*Listen to responses*).

Giving thanks is a choice. Pick your choice!

- I will choose to give thanks only for good circumstances.
- I will choose to give thanks only when I feel like it.
- I will choose to give thanks in all circumstances.

## Why?

Why must we give thanks? When we think about who God is, the better question is, "How can we NOT give thanks?" Our life is a generous gift from God! The air we breathe and each new day is a gift from Him. If we take God's gifts for granted, we brush-off, ignore, and snub our God, the giver of all things. What can you give thanks to God for today?

God gave the greatest gift of all to us-His Son, Jesus Christ. Check all the attributes and names of Jesus that you are thankful for:

I'm thankful that Jesus is . . .

- The Light of the World
- My Friend
- Forgiving
- The King of kings
- My Protector
- Compassionate
- The Truth
- My Saviour
- Love
- The Good Shepherd
- My Rock
- Faithful
- The Wonderful Leader
- My Provider
- Good

*Note to Leader: Discuss ways that Jesus is the Light of the World, that He is their Friend Take it to the next step, rather than having the GEMS/Cadets mark all of them without thinking. Ask them to give personal examples! Be prepared to share your own personal testimony about one of Jesus' attributes.*

## Leader:

Let's read 1 Chronicles 16:34 together:

Give thanks to the LORD; for he is good; his love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34.

*Note to Leader: Use the poster provided and attach it to the wall. Spend time this year memorizing this verse!*

**Leader:**

What does this verse mean? Listen to responses: This verse tells us the truth about God' He is good! His love endures or goes on forever. His love never ends! When we think about how awesome God is, we are commanded to respond with thanks. We MUST thank God!

What does this verse mean to you? How will you live out this truth in your life? *Listen to responses.*

**A Circle of Thanks**

Have your small group sit in a circle. Go around your circle five times with everyone giving thanks to God! Answer the following question with one or two word answers.

*Note to Leader: Ask for a volunteer to start each round of thanksgiving.*

**Round 1:**

God, thank you for.....  
(List a thing. Example: sunshine).

**Round 2:**

God, thank you for.....  
(List a person. Example: my sister).

**Round 3:**

God, thank you for.....  
(List a place. Example: A nearby National Park).

**Round 4:**

God, thank you that you are my.....  
(Example: Creator).

**Round 5:**

God, you are so good to me! Thank you for.....  
(Example: your love!).

**Close**

Close the evening with a prayer circle. Ask each girl/boy if they would like to pray for something they are thankful for. Finish the prayer by asking the Lord to help us thank Him in all circumstances.

**Part 3:**

**A GEMS/Cadets Mystery:  
Living the secret with a thankful heart.**

**Overview**

- **Introduction** – (5 - 10 minutes). Shhh! It's a secret! Start with a short interactive object lesson to help get everyone thinking about being thankful to God.



- **Skit** – (10 - 15 minutes). Skit in the form of a conversation between two friends about problems, suffering and thankfulness.
- **Theme closing** – (10 - 15 minutes) Detective Davis reflects on what we have discovered.
- **Study** – (25 - 30 minutes) GEMS/Cadets break up into groups with their Chief investigator.

### **Discuss:**

- Going and living the secret!
- Setting aside time to express thanks to God.
- Being on the lookout for the things that God is doing in your life and give Him thanks for them.
- **Journal Making** – (30 - 60 minutes) Create a two week journal using materials provided, to record all things you are thankful for and the ways you show you are thankful to God.
- **Close the evening in prayer.**

### **Resources**

- Introduction lesson: Three sheets of paper with the answer to your questions on them and a bible.
- Problems, suffering and thankfulness skit:
- Stage area for characters to stand
- Box of letters
- PDF slide, overhead transparency or poster board of theme logo.
- PDF slide, overhead transparency or poster board of theme verses.
- Craft material to make journal covers and enough journal pages for each girl/boy (15 each).

## **Introduction**

### **Resources**

- Sheets of paper that contain answers to your “secrets”

# Shhh! It's a secret!

## **Scripture: Philippians 4:12-13**

I have some secrets! Do you think you can figure out my secrets? We'll see! Pay careful attention and see if you can discover them.

Here's the first secret: What is my favourite chocolate bar? *Hold a sheet of paper in front of you with a picture of your favourite chocolate bar or the name of your favourite chocolate bar.*

You figured that out with no problem, didn't you? Maybe that one was too easy. Let's try again. Here's the second secret: What is my middle name? *Hold a sheet of paper in front of you with your middle name written on it.*

You GEMS/Cadets are good! You must practice these detective skills at home. Here's my third secret: Who is my favourite author? *Hold a sheet of paper in front of you with your favourite author written on it.*

Wow! There's no stumping you, is there? Would you like to tell me the secret to your success? How come you're so good at figuring out my secrets? *Listen to responses: You're telling them the secret so it's not a secret!*

Did you know that the Bible tells us about a secret? It tells us the secret to being content and filled with joy. Listen carefully as I read Philippians 4:12-13.

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether we fed or hungry; whether living in plenty or in want I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Just like when I held a piece of paper that told you the answer to my secret, so God tells us in the Bible the secret to being content. It's so plain - just like the words on these sheets of paper. *Hold up the sheets of paper that you used to show your secrets.*

The secret to being content is to have a real relationship with Jesus Christ. It's in Jesus that we receive our strength, contentment, and joy! When we have a thankful heart, when we continually go to God and say, "Thank you!" we will live out the secret of contentment.

People who complain, whine, and are always grumpy, need to know the secret. They need to know Jesus and say thank you to Him! Will you tell them the secret? Let's ask God in prayer to help us be bold in telling others His secret.

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you that whether we're in need or have plenty, whether we're well fed or hungry, whether we are living in plenty or in want, we can do everything through You. You give us strength and joy! Help us to continually live out the secret of being content by having a thankful heart. Please help us to be bold in telling others that the secret to joy is giving thanks to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

## Skit

### ***Problems, suffering, thankfulness***

#### **ALEX:**

*(enters)* I hate my life! Nothing is going right. I went to a half dozen different shops a couple days ago and couldn't find a decent pair of shoes. Then, my car ran out of petrol. And when I pulled out my mobile phone, the battery was dead. So, I went into the convenience store on the corner, but the cashier wouldn't give me change for a twenty.

#### **JESSIE:**

*(follows, carrying a box full of letters)* Oh that reminds me. Here's your mail.

#### **ALEX:**

My mail. That's all MY mail?

#### **JESSIE:**

Yes. *(offers)*

#### **ALEX:**

ALL my mail?

#### **JESSIE:**

Yes.

#### **ALEX:**

There must be a thousand letters in there. *(Examines a few)* Hey! They've all got my name on them.

#### **JESSIE:**

Yes. I said it's your mail.

#### **ALEX:**

What's going on? I don't get this much mail in a whole year.

**JESSIE:**

I ran an ad on the Internet.

**ALEX:**

The Internet? You ran an ad? And I get mail?

**JESSIE:**

Yes. The ad read, "My roommate is one of the most ungrateful people I know. She/He has more problems than any other person I know. Would any of you like to have her problems?" I then listed your problems.

**ALEX:**

So, what are the letters for?

**JESSIE:**

These are people who would love to have your problems.

**ALEX:**

I don't get it.

**JESSIE:**

Read one of the letters. (pulls letter from box)

**ALEX:**

*(opens, reads)* To whom it may concern. I would love to have your problem of not being able to find new shoes. My family and I have no money. So we are all barefoot. We would love to be able to wear your old shoes. *(looks at envelope)* Who is this from?

Bangladesh!?! Is this for real?

**JESSIE:**

Yes. Here, read another.

**ALEX:**

*(opens, reads)* To whom it may concern. I would love to have your problem of not being able to find new shoes. My feet were amputated. *(looks at envelope)* Oh, this is so sad!

**JESSIE:**

Isn't it amazing how many people would love to have the problem of not being able to find new shoes? Here, read another.

**ALEX:**

*(opens, reads)* To whom it may concern. I would love to have the problem of running out of petrol occasionally. Our nation is in civil war. Our village hasn't had any petrol for many months. *(looks at envelope)* These letters are from all over the world.

**JESSIE:**

Yes. Here, read another.

**ALEX:**

*(opens, reads)* To whom it may concern. I would love to have the problem of running out of petrol. I am a missionary. I travel thirty miles between villages on foot. I would be grateful to have a car to make these trips, even if I ran out of petrol occasionally. *(looks at envelope)* This is for real, isn't it?

**JESSIE:**

Yes, Here, read another.

**ALEX:**

Do I have to?

**JESSIE:**

Yes. It will be good for you.

**ALEX:**

*(opens, reads)* To whom it may concern. I would love to have the problem of dead batteries on my mobile phone. At least I would have SOME telephone service. My village in the mountains of Guatemala has no phone service at all. I must travel fifty miles to a city with phone service and Internet connections.

**JESSIE:**

Here, read another.

**ALEX:**

*(opens, reads)* To whom it may concern. I would love to have your problem of not having change for a twenty-dollar bill. I have been out of work for three months, and my family is starving. Twenty dollars would put food on my table for a week. *(looks at envelope)*

OK, you've made your point. I am an ungrateful slob. God has blessed my life incredibly compared to these people. Compared to them, I have nothing to complain about. I never really thought of it before, but the world would love to have my problems.

I never ever thought I would be thankful to have such small problems.

**JESSIE:**

Good for you. *(Exiting)* Say, you got change for a twenty?

**ALEX:**

*(follows)* Very Funny.

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# Review And Response

The aim of this time is to review the main points of the theme.

This can be done in a few ways;

## Option 1:

*The leader asks the questions and encourages the group to respond .*

## Option 2:

*The questions can be written out on numbered pieces of paper and different members of the group can read the questions in turn.*

## Option 3:

*The questions can be written on numbered pieces of paper which are attached to a cardboard chart. As each question is taken from the chart it reveals a letter underneath. Answer each question as it is taken off . Explain that the letters will spell a word that describes how we should be in all situations. When all the questions are taken from the chart, ask the group if they can put the letters together to make a word. The letters should spell the word 'thankful'*

## Leader:

### Question 1:

#### **Who can remember some of the things that Alex complained about?**

Complaints included not finding a pair of shoes, running out of petrol, having a flat battery in the mobile phone and not getting change from \$20.

### Question 2:

#### **What do you complain about?**

Maybe you complain about your school, or your family or about things you don't have or about the way you look.

*(You could wait for the group to offer some suggestions or do the following activity)*

On this paper (hand our small sheets of notepaper) write down 3 things you complain about.

*(Give the group about 3 minutes to do this and then collect the papers in a box.)*

Look at this box full of complaints. Complaining is so easy isn't it?

### Question 3:

#### **What did Alex learn by reading all those letter?**

He/she had lots to give thanks for compared to people in poorer countries. Alex had been blessed by God in many ways.

### Question 4:

#### **Who remembers what we learnt about Paul when he was going through tough times?**

Instead of being angry and upset he was thankful that God was always with him and never left him.

**Question 5:**

**What did he do instead of complaining about being in prison and being treated so badly?**

He sang and prayed to God and he kept sharing the gospel with others. He was thankful that God was always with him.

**Question 6:**

**Paul had learnt the secret of being content in every situation. What was his secret?**

Let's check in 1Thessalonians 5:18

*(This could be read by a child or everyone could read the poster you have made of the verse. You could also award a prize to anyone who knew it from memory)*

**Question 7:**

**Is it wrong to be sad and unhappy?**

No, sometimes bad things do happen in our lives like accidents and sickness which make us sad. God cares about us when we are sad too.

**Question 8:**

**What can we be thankful about when we are going through tough times?**

*We can be thankful that even when we go through tough times God is there right beside us, because He cares for each one of us and is always with us.. Let's check in 1 Peter 5:7*

**Study**

**Chief Investigator:** Break of into groups.

**Put The Theme into Action!**

*Complete the next two activities in your small groups, and then choose one additional option to do on your own.*

**Small Group Activities**

1. On a large sheet of paper write or draw reasons why your small group is thankful to God. Colour coordinate your words and pictures!

| Colour of Marker/ Crayon/ Pencil | Reasons you're thankful to God!                 |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Gold/Yellow                      | Thank God for who He is                         |
| Green                            | Thank God for things in creation                |
| Blue                             | Thank God for small things                      |
| Red                              | Thank God for people                            |
| Purple                           | Thank God for big things He's done in your life |

*Note to Leader: Toss the names of everyone in your small group in a hat. Have each person draw one name. Give some time for the girls to think and then have each person finish this sentence,*

*"I'm thankful for (name drawn) because ....."*

2. After putting your name into a hat and drawing out one name, you will finish this sentence,

“I’m thankful for (name drawn) because

.....”

## Choose One to Do on Your Own

1. Read a book, magazine article, or research on the Internet (with an adult present!) about children around the world who live in horrible conditions. What country did you research? What is the need of the children there? Pray for these children for the next seven days.
2. Write a thank you note to someone in your life who has cared for you, taught you, or told you about Jesus. Write the reasons that you are thankful for him or her.
3. Write down 20 of your favourite things. When you’re finished, thank God for each of these things that He has given to you as a gift!
4. Make a Thankful Box. Decorate a shoebox with coloured paper and set it on your dresser. Whenever you’ve had a bad day-maybe it was a difficult circumstance, maybe it’s a person you’re upset with - write it down on a piece of paper. On the back of the piece of paper write a note to God telling Him why you’re thankful for this person or why you’re thankful that He will help you with this problem. Put the paper in your box. At the end of the month, pull the papers out again and pray for the people and about the circumstances that caused you trouble.
5. Make a list from A to Z of things you’re thankful to God for.
6. Create a drama based on the life of Paul or the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19). Practice it with your small group and find an opportunity to present it to others.
7. Talk to a friend, neighbour, or classmate about what it means to be Living the Secret! Having a Thankful Heart
8. Write a poem of thanksgiving. Read it to your GEMS/Cadets small group or to your family.
9. Show thanks to God for the talents and spiritual gifts that He’s given you by using the ability to help someone else. Do you make great chocolate chip cookies? Then bake some and bring them to an elderly neighbour. Are you a good childcare provider? Then volunteer to help a young mum on a Saturday morning. You get the idea!

### ***Detective Davis:***

How can we get in the habit of thanking God every day for who He is and all that He has done for us? The best way I know, to make giving thanks to God a daily habit is to write it down on paper. Have you ever given or received thank-you cards? Listen to responses. Well, when we write or journal our thanks to God we’re making a Thank -You Book for God!

We are now going to spend sometime making a special journal which, for the next two weeks, will be your special dairy where you can say thank you to God! In order to live the secret, we must make the choice to have a thankful heart!

# Make your own Journal.

## Card Cover Journal:

### What you will need:

- A4 card stock
- 15 pages (A5) as supplied for each journal
- plain and decorative scissors
- coloured paper
- stickers, rubberstamps, markers, fabric, glitter, paint, rhinestones, etc.

### What to do:

1. Using the plain scissors, cut the card stock in half so you end up with two sheets of A5 paper.
2. Decorate the cover in whatever creative way you choose.
3. Combine the cover and inner pages and bind using a comb-binding machine.

## Craft Foam Cover Journal:

### What you will need:

- A5 craft foam sheets
- 15 pages (A5) as supplied for each journal
- 2 x loose leaf binder rings
- hole punch and ruler
- plain and decorative scissors
- coloured paper
- stickers, rubberstamps, markers, fabric, glitter, paint, rhinestones, etc.

### What to do:

1. Decorate one of the craft foam sheets in whatever creative way you wish. This will be your front cover.
2. Measure and mark 50mm from the top edge of the front cover (along the left side) and 50mm up from the bottom edge. Punch holes. Repeat steps for the back cover (foam sheet) and the 15 journal pages.
3. Complete journal by attaching the covers and inner pages with the loose-leaf binder rings.

## Timber Cover Journal:

### What you will need:

- Two timber boards cut to A5 (210 x 148.5mm)
- 15 pages (A5) as supplied for each journal
- Sandpaper, drill and drill bit, hole punch, pencil and twine
- Rubberstamps, markers, paint, paint brushes, etc.

### What to do:

1. Have an adult cut the timber boards and drill two holes (align with whatever will be your paper holes)
2. Sand boards to smooth rough edges.
3. Place paper under a board and mark with a pencil where the board holes are located.
4. Paper-punch the two holes in the 15 journal pages, in the places that were marked.
5. Cut two small lengths of twine and lace through the holes and tie knots. Make sure you can easily turn the pages before knotting the twine.
6. Use markers, paint, fabric or bits of timber to decorate the journal cover.



## Thankful Heart Journal verses/questions:

| Day # | Verse   | Thank God for...  |
|-------|---|---|
| 1     | I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. Philippians 4:12 | What do you have plenty of today? Tell God thank you!   |
| 2     | Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18  | What circumstance are you facing today? Give God thanks that He is there for you!   |
| 3     | Give thanks to the LORD; for he is good; his love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34a  | How has God been good to you today? Thank God for His goodness.   |
| 4     | Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Ephesians 6:1   | What is your favourite thing to do with your mum or dad? Thank God for your parents!  |
| 5     | So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10  | What causes you to fear or worry? Thank God that He is always there to help you.  |
| 6     | Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Isaiah 12:4  | If you could host a three- minute telecast that would be shown across the world, what would you tell others about God?  |
| 7     | My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name forever and ever. Psalm 145:21   | Do you have a pet? Or, if you had a pet what pet would you choose? What do you or would you enjoy about having a pet? Give thanks to God for your favourite creature! |
| 8     | Give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:20  | What's your least favourite food? What is your most favourite food? Thank God for the meals He's provided today!  |
| 9     | So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him. . . overflowing with thankfulness. Colossians 2:6, 7b  | Today did you pour out complaints or overflow with thanks? Be honest! Tell Jesus all the reasons that you're thankful for Him!  |
| 10    | Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Colossians 4:2  | Be on the lookout for something special to give God thanks for today! Give thanks to God for the work He's doing in your life!  |
| 11    | You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. Revelation 4:11.  | How do you praise God? Do you sing, dance, pray, or sit quietly before Him? Thank God for who He is to you!   |
| 12    | I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. 1 Timothy 2:1   | Who is the leader of your country? Give thanks to God for all your government leaders!  |
| 13    | God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. 1 Corinthians 10:13b.   | What tempts you to do wrong things? Give thanks to God that He will help you turn away from the temptation!   |
| 14    | For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16.   | What does God sending Jesus to this world mean to you? Thank God for all the ways He shows you His love!  |

## Last page of journal:

*(Note to Leader: This part should not be filled out until the entire Thankful Heart Journal is complete.)*

What I like most about writing in my Thankful Heart Journal is: .....

.....

.....

.....

When I read through my journal entries I discovered: .....

.....

.....

.....

I will try to continue to have a thankful heart in all situations.

Signature: .....

Date: .....

## Pray.

*Close the evening all together with a prayer circle. Ask each girl/boy if they would like to pray for something they are thankful for. Finish the prayer by asking the Lord to help us to live the secret by having a thankful heart and to remember God is always there for us in every circumstance, He will always love us and provide for us no matter what.*

## The next 14 weeks:

*Set aside a time to express thanks to God. Every club night for the next 14 weeks spend the beginning of the session sharing an Object Devotional together and filling in the Thankful Heart Journal. Be on the lookout for the things that God is doing in your life and then give Him thanks! When your journal the complete, the GEMS/Cadets must show their Leader!*



A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.



## Contact us

For more information please contact us at  
G.E.M.S. & Cadets National Board

GEMS Website: [www.gems.org.au](http://www.gems.org.au)

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