



HAVING
= A =
THANKFUL
Heart



Object Lessons **2016**



What's the Secret?

Verse: Philippians 4:12

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.

Object Lesson:

Print out the words to Philippians 4:12 on different coloured paper (one colour per team, or only have one team depends on the number of girl/boys in your club!). Cut out the words (or group of words) and hide them around the building. Form the teams and send them off to search for all the words. Have them return to reassemble the verse. Once a team has put the Scripture together have them read the verse out loud.

Message:

Tonight (today) you had to search in a lot of secret places to find the words to one of our theme verses this year, Philippians 4:12. What were some of the secret hiding places where you found your words? *Listen to responses.*

You did a great job searching and piecing together the verse ! Did you know that Paul, the author of this verse, did a lot of searching, too? He was searching for joy and contentment. He wanted to discover how to become more and more like his Friend and Saviour Jesus.

Paul searched and found the secret in a lot of unusual places. He discovered the secret in places where he was needy and places where he had plenty. He found the secret when he was well fed and when he was hungry. He found the secret when he was living a life of comfort as well as when he was in desperate need.

Shhhhh! (whisper) Are you ready to hear the secret? The secret to living a joy-filled life of contentment and becoming more and more like Jesus is to have a thankful heart! The secret is to have a thankful heart. Will you whisper that with me? *The secret is to have a thankful heart!*

Talk louder again. Have you ever been asked to keep something a secret? Listen to responses. Sure you have! When we're asked to keep a secret that means we're not supposed to tell anyone what was shared with us.

This isn't that kind of secret. As you spend the entire GEMS/Cadets season living out the secret of having a thankful heart, I don't want you to keep it a secret! I want you to tell your friends what you're learning about giving thanks to God! In fact, I want you to invite your friends to club so they can learn about a thankful heart, too!

Who are some other people that need to hear this wonderful secret? *Listen to responses...*
parents, siblings, neighbours, classmates, grandparents, etc.

That's right! There are a lot of people in this world who are searching in a lot of different places for happiness. They need to hear the secret! Will you tell them that the secret is to have a thankful heart?

Let's pray together...

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you so much for sharing the secret with us. In Your Word, You've taught us that the secret to contentment, joy, and becoming like Jesus is to have a thankful heart. Please take our hearts and soften and shape them by Your Spirit. Teach us to see that all of life is a gracious gift from You and a reason to say thank you. Thank you for life, this GEMS/Cadets club, and each girl/boy here. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Notes

Messy Jobs

Verse: 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Object Lesson:

You will need three cards with a "Messy Job" written on it. Examples: changing a baby's dirty diaper, moving a dead skunk off of your sidewalk, cleaning out a shed that's full of spider webs, etc. Write out three cards and choose six volunteers.

Give each pair of volunteers one "Messy Job" card. Each pair needs to silently act out the job and have the rest of the girl/boys guess what they are doing. When finished with charades and guessing thank the volunteers and say...

Message:

How many of you would be thankful to have the opportunity to do one of those messy jobs? Raise hand so the girls/boys know they are to respond in the same way. There are certain jobs or circumstances where it's especially difficult to give thanks. Cleaning up after someone who has been sick, washing dirty pans, changing dirty diapers are all messy, not so pleasant jobs.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, *Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* Can God be serious? Are we really supposed to give thanks for everything? When it comes to nasty, messy jobs, does He really think we're supposed to be grateful? How is that possible?

Let's look at Jesus. Jesus' work on the cross was the ultimate act of cleaning up after our mess! Jesus died on the cross to clean up the dirt and filth of our sin, the bad things that we've said, done, and thought. Because of the cross, we can be forgiven!

Are you thankful that Jesus died and rose again three days later to clean up the mess in your life? Are you thankful for the cross?

When we focus on the cross, we realize that everything good, and everything bad that God turns for good, was paid by Jesus' death on the cross. The cross helps us realize that life, breath, health, friends, and even messy jobs are a gift from God. When our lives are cross-centered, we can give thanks for everything! Is any job we do too messy when we consider what Jesus did for us on the cross? Is any circumstance too unbearable when we remember the burden of our sin that Jesus took to the cross?

I'd like each of you to take your two forefingers (the index fingers or fingers next to your thumbs) and hold them in front of you in the shape of a cross.

Just a minute ago, I asked how it was possible to obey the command to give thanks to God for everything. The answer is the cross. Because of the cross, you can give thanks in every circumstance!

Let's pray...

Dear Heavenly Father. Thank you for the cross. Thank you that the messiness of our lives was nailed to the cross and that through Jesus' death and coming back to life three days later. We can be forgiven. Please forgive us when we do not thank You for everything. Help us to remember that because of the cross we can give thanks to You in all circumstances. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Notes

Count Your Blessings!

Verse: 1 Chronicles 16:34

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good: his love endures forever.

Object Lesson:

You will need a blank sheet of paper and a pencil/ pen for each girl/boy, and a timer.

Give the girl/boys the following instructions:

1. When you say “go” they will have two minutes to write down everything they are thankful for that can be described in a word or two.
2. When the timer rings after two minutes, the girl/boys must count how many items are on their list.

Depending on how much time you have for this activity... ask the girl/boy with the most items to read off her/his list and everyone else should cross those items off their lists. Only “unique” items remain on the lists. The person with the next “longest” list should read her/his unique items and the rest of the group cross off their duplicates. Do this until you see who has the most unique items left on her/his list. Congratulate the winner with applause or a small gift.

Message:

How did you feel when you were creating your list? Listen to responses. Of all the things on your list, what is the most important to you? *Listen to responses.*

When I make lists of blessings, counting them one by one, I’m overwhelmed by God’s goodness and love. 1 Chronicles 16:34 says, *Give thanks to the LORD for he is good: his love endures forever.*

God is so good to us! We see it in the sunshine that warms the earth, the list of blessings that you just wrote out, and in the smiles of people that we live with each day. Even when bad things happen, God takes them and uses them for good. Clap your hands if you agree that God is good!

God’s love for us lasts forever! Have you ever had a friend who treated you really nice one day and then turned her/his back on you the next day? God NEVER does that to His children. He doesn’t turn His love for us off and on like a switch. His love for you lasts forever! Romans 8:38-39 (MSG) says this, *I’m absolutely convinced that nothing-nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable-absolutely nothing can get between us and God’s love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.* Stomp your feet if you agree that God loves you!

We wholeheartedly agreed that God is good and that His love lasts forever. Knowing that, what should we do? Reread I Chronicles 16:34 if the girl/boys don’t know! That’s right, we need to give thanks to the LORD!

Let’s stand in a circle with our feet touching one another. Hold your hands cupped out in front of you. I’d like you to think about all the good and loving things that God has done for you. Picture those things pouring out from Heaven and into your cupped hands. Keep your hands in front of you, close your eyes, and we’ll thank God in prayer.

Dear Father, thank you, thank you, for Your goodness and Your love. When we think of all the things that You’ve poured into our lives, we stand in awe. Your blessings spill over! Thank you! Thank you for each and every gift, large and small. Thank you for Your goodness. Thank you that nothing can separate us from Your love. In Jesus’ Name,Amen.

Now use your hands to give God a clap offering of thanksgiving!

Notes

Give Thanks to Him in Song!

Verse: Psalm 28:7

The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.

Object Lesson:

Choose a dramatic leader for this! Instruct the girl/boys to stand, repeat, and follow the leader's example:

Leader: I say a BOOM
GEMS/Cadets: I say a BOOM
Leader: I say a boom-chicka
GEMS/Cadets: I say a boom-chicka
Leader: I say a boom-chicka-boom
GEMS/Cadets: I say a boom-chicka-boom
Leader: I say a boom-chicka-rocka-chicka-rocka-chi cka-boom
GEMS/Cadets: I say a boom-chicka-rocka-chicka-rocka-chi cka-boom
Leader: Oh yeah!
GEMS/Cadets: Oh yeah!

Once you've gone through it once, do it in different styles. Example: Whisper, fast, slow, opera, sign language, etc. When finished, thank the volunteer and ask the girl/boys to sit down.

Message:

What fun to use your voices in creative ways! I'm so thankful that God gave us voices so we can talk, laugh, and encourage one another. Give a holler if you're thankful for your voice!

I know you're all capable of doing weird and zany things with your voices! I also know that your voices carry a wide range of volume, from very soft to very loud! Right now I'm going to ask you to stop using your voices, so we can think about one of the ways your voice can be used to thank God.

Psalm 28:7 says, *The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.* One of the ways that we can thank God is by singing to Him!

Our songs of praise are like thank-you notes to God's ears. When we think about the words that we are singing and sing them out as beautifully as we're able, it is a love gift to our King!

Touch your lips while I read Psalm 71:23, *My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you - I, whom you have redeemed.* Point to your tongue while I read Psalm 71:24a, *My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long.*

Your lips, tongue, and voice are instruments to praise and thank God! Let's thank Him in prayer and then thank Him in song!

Let's pray ...

Father God, thank you for the voices that You 've gifted us with to sing Your praise. Thank you for songs that we can sing, for voices to thank You, and for lips and tongues that can shout for joy to our God and King. We're going to sing songs of thanksgiving to

You right now. Please accept them as thank-you notes for all that You've done and all that You are to us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Let's sing . . .

Begin a time of praise and worship with the GEMS/Cadets theme song, other songs of thanksgiving, and/or songs that the girl/boys choose to sing.

Notes

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Retold in Parable Form

Verse: Luke 18:14 (MSG)

Jesus commented, “This tax man, not the other, went home made right with God. If you walk around with your nose in the air, you’re going to end up flat on your face, but if you’re content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself.”

Object Lesson:

You will need three volunteers to participate in this drama (have the girl/boys practice and memorize their lines before the performance). You will need a Narrator, Kelly Pride (Pharisee) and Reese Humble (Tax Collector).

Message:

Narrator: This is the parable of The Pharisee and the Tax Collector, retold as a GEMS/Cadets story. Two girls/boys went to GEMS/Cadets Club to pray and give thanks to God. One girl/boy’s name was Kelly Pride and the other was Reese Humble. Kelly Pride prayed about herself . . .

Kelly Pride: *(Stands proudly on one corner of the stage, looking with disgust at Reese who is on her/his knees with her/his head bowed to the ground.)*

Dear God, thank you that I’m not like other girl/boys in this club. Some of the girl/boys in my GEMS/Cadets Club are nasty, horrid gossipers, and so cruel to one another. Thank you that I’m not like that. I also thank you that I’m not like the girl/boys who only give thanks to You at GEMS/Cadets Club. I’m not like that. I thank You in the morning that I am so beautiful. I thank You in the afternoon that I’m not like the girl/boys who go to my school and I thank You in the evening that I’m not like Reese Humble. *(Point to Reese Humble!)*

Just look at me, God! I’m so thankful!

(Put your nose in the air and “freeze.”)

Reese Humble: *(Slowly sits up, but remains on her/his knees, head stays bowed.)*

Dear God, please forgive me for my sins. I’m sorry for the times that I have done, said, or thought things that were not pleasing to You. I’m sorry for all the times that I’ve failed to thank You. You are so good to me! Please forgive me for taking those good gifts for granted. Please forgive me when I haven’t thanked You for every girl/boy that goes to GEMS/Cadets Club. Each girl/boy in this club is special to You. Help me to always see You in each girl/boy’s face. Thank you for Your love. Thank you for choosing me as Your beautiful daughter/son. My list of thanks for who You are and all that You’ve done for me is endless . . . *(Bow your head back down to the ground and “freeze.”)*

Narrator: Jesus said that if you walk around with your nose in the air, you’re going to end up flat on your face, but if you’re content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself. Luke 18:14 *(MSG)*

Does your heart look more like Kelly Pride’s or Reese Humble’s? A life that is right with God always chooses to give humble thanks to Him.

Let’s Pray ...

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for every girl/boy in this club and the opportunity to know You better. Help our hearts and attitudes to remain humble. Give us willing spirits and minds. Thank you for Your love and help us to remember Your grace and humbleness every time we feel ourselves becoming proud in our accomplishments. Thank you for giving us the ultimate example of humbleness through Jesus. In His Name we pray, Amen.

Notes

In the Stillness

Verse: Mark 6:31

Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he (Jesus) said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

Object Lesson:

You will need Sonicflood's song I Want to Know You.

Break the girls/boys into groups of three. Have one girl/boy sit in the middle with the other two on the outside, each facing one of her/his ears. Instruct the girl/boys on the "outside" to each hold simultaneous conversations with the girl/boy in the middle (pretending there is no one on the opposite side). The girl/boy in the middle has to try to carry on both conversations. After two minutes, rotate the girl/boys, and two minutes later rotate them again so each person has an opportunity to sit in the middle. When finished say . . .

Message:

How did that go? Were you able to hold two conversations at the same time? *Listen to responses.* It's nearly impossible isn't it?

Do you ever feel like everyone wants a piece of your ear? People want you to listen to homework assignments, secrets, and conversations. Then there's the competition of mobile phones. TVs, radios, ipods, computers . . . you name it. People and things are demanding to be heard. Stillness is almost non-existent in the 21st Century!

That is unless we follow Jesus' example. Mark 6:31 says, Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, Jesus said to them. 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'

It may be possible to shoot sentence prayers of thanks to God in the middle of all the people and technology that are swirling through our day, but a heartfelt one-on-one time of thanks with God isn't possible unless you follow Jesus to a quiet place.

Sonicflood sings a song called *I Want to Know You*. The first verse says:

In the secret, In the quiet place
In the stillness You are there
In the secret, in the quiet hour
I wait only for You
Cause I want to know You more.

It's in the secret, quiet place of stillness that you will most effectively be able to thank God in prayer, through journaling, and in song.

I'm going to dim the lights (*if not possible, turn lights off and have candles burning*) and for five minutes we're going to sit in the stillness. During this time, I'd like you to talk to God silently in your mind and heart. Use the stillness of this moment to thank Him for all that has taken place in your life today.

*When finished, play the song *I Want to Know You*. Challenge the girl/boys to do this every day, and even lengthen it from five minutes a day this week to six minutes a day the next week, etc. Wherever they are, they can come to Jesus by themselves to a quiet place!*

Notes



Worship or Whine?

Verse: Ephesians 5:20

Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Object Lesson:

You will need a table(s) dividing the room in half and a substantial number of paper cups (half of the cups turned up and half of the cups turned down). Divide the girl/boys into two groups. Have them stand on opposite sides of the table. One group is the up side and the other group is the down side. When you give the starting signal, the teams have to see how many cups they can turn to the up side or the down side (depending on what team they are on!). Set the game time for three - four minutes and then signal them to stop. The team who has the most cups turned up or down wins!

When finished playing, ask the girl/boys to take a seat, hold up a clear glass of water that is filled half way, and say . . .

Message:

Have you ever heard it said that a person sees a glass half full or a person sees a glass half empty? Raise your hand so they know how to respond. People who see the glass half empty have a negative or gloomy attitude of life. People who see the glass half full have a positive or cheerful attitude of life. You don't have to answer this out loud. but what best describes you? Do you most often see the up side of life or the down side of life?

Each one of you has a choice in how you start your day. You can worship or you can whine. You can whine and complain that it's not fair that your sister gets to sit in the front seat. or that your homework is too hard. or your bed is too soft. OR you can worship! You can thank God for your sisters, for your teachers. and a warm bed to sleep in at night.

It's your choice! What attitude do you think God wants you to choose toward your day? Listen to responses. **He'd want us to worship!** That's exactly right. God would want us to worship Him! He would want us to give Him thanks for every part of our day.

1 Peter 5:7

Verse: 1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Object Lesson:

You will need a bandage for each girl/boy (keep the bandages in their individual packaging). On the bandage packaging write 1 Peter 5:7.

Ask the girl/boys, "Who takes care of you?" Have a volunteer list all their answers on a white board or chalkboard.

When finished say . . .

Message:

Wow! There are a lot of people who care for you! Your parents and grandparents, teachers and doctors, day care providers, and neighbours. Your GEMS/Cadets counsellors care for you, too! There are many people who love you and care for you!

Even with all those people in your life, do you still sometimes get anxious or worried about things? *Raise your hand so they know how to respond.* God knows that we sometimes worry and He tells us often in His Word, the Bible, not to do that. 1 Peter 5:7 says, *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

I want you to hold out your hand and think of some of the worries that you may have in your life right now. Maybe you're anxious about tomorrow's test or next week's dentist appointment. Maybe you're worried about a sick friend or a parent who is travelling right now.

Picture yourself placing that worry or worries in your hand. Now grip your hand tightly, squeeze those worries, and get ready to cast them to God. On the count of three, I want you to throw them to God! Are you ready? One, two, three!

God wants us to cast our anxiety and worries on Him because He cares for us. Some of the ways He cares for you are through the people He has placed in your life. God uses your Dad and Mum, your grandparents, teachers, and other special adults in your life to care for you! God uses doctors and dentists to care for you.

God uses GEMS/Cadets counsellors, pastors, and people in His church to care for you. Isn't that wonderful!

We have so much to be thankful for, girl/boys! God is caring for us in beautiful ways! To remind you of that truth, I have a bandage for each of you. On the bandage package it says, 1 Peter 5:7. That's the verse we've been meditating on, *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

Let's do that in prayer right now . . .

Dear Father in Heaven, thank you for the invitation to cast all our anxiety and worries on You. Thank you that You love and care for us! Thank you for the people that You've put in our lives to care for us. Please hear the girl/boys' silent prayers as they specifically thank you for special people in their lives who care for them each day ...

Please bless and encourage the people that we've prayed for. In Jesus' Name,
Amen.

Notes

He Knows Your Name!

Verse: Isaiah 40:26

Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

Object Lesson:

You will need a beanbag for each girl/boy (or a resealable snack-size bag filled loosely with dried beans), and one of the following:

- 1) Stars Object Lesson #9 Power Point (free downloadable PowerPoint that is on the GEMS/Cadets Web site at <http://www.GEMS/Cadetsgc.org>)
- 2) A picture(s) of stars and galaxies
- 3) A “live” night sky! Go outside with the girl/boys and look at the stars!

Begin with a short game. Have each girl/boy put a beanbag on top of her/his head and walk (skip, jump, hop, etc.) around the room. If someone’s beanbag falls off her/his head, she needs to freeze. If a girl/boy or counsellor sees someone who is frozen she should say her/his name and then place the fallen beanbag on the girl/boy’s head. Play for five minutes.

When finished have the girl/boys sit down and say . . .

Message:

How did you feel when someone called your name? Listen to responses. It feels very special when someone knows our name. We feel valued and loved when someone calls us by name!

Tonight (today) we’re going to look at the stars! *Choose one of the options! Talk about the beauty, vastness, and number of stars.*

Isaiah 40:26 says, *Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.* Psalm 147:4 says, *He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.*

Does that amaze you? It does me! God's power and understanding is such that He counts the stars and names them! Even more amazing is that He knows each one of you by name, too!

God not only knows your name, He knows you personally. He knows when you sit and when you stand up. He knows what you are thinking right now! He knows when you go out and when you lie down in bed. He is familiar with all your ways. Before you even speak, God knows what you are going to say! He's got you surrounded-behind and before. His hand is upon you! He created you within your mother's womb. He knows how many days you are going to live on this earth! (See Psalm 139)

God knows your name and so much more. Does that put your brain in information overload? If you've really thought about it, it will! It's knowledge that is too much, too wonderful to even understand it all.

There is one thing we CAN do with this wonderful information. We can and should praise and thank our God! Let's do that in prayer right now!

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for making the stars in the heavens and each girl/boy in this room. We praise and thank you that You know us by name, that You are familiar with all our ways, and that Your hand is upon each person here. We can't even imagine the vastness of Your love and care for us! But we can humbly thank You for it. Please receive our prayers of thanks as we become more and more aware of how awesome You really are. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Notes

Let Us

Verse: Psalm 95:2

Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

Object Lesson:

You will need a large graffiti sheet (in the shape of a body) and markers. You will need an overhead transparency, large poster board, or other means to magnify Psalm 95:6-7 which the girl/boys will read aloud together. You also need a praise and worship song prepared for them to sing together.

Have all the girls/boys sign their name on the sheet.

Message:

How many names are on this sheet? Listen to responses. What is this graffiti sheet shaped like? **A body!** That's right we have _____ (number of names) written on one body.

Did you know that Christians or believers in Jesus are often called God's body? Even though there are many, many individuals, together they form one body, the body of Jesus.

When we give thanks to God we do that personally at home, school, and here at GEMS/Cadets. We give thanks as the body of Jesus. God loves when we gather together and praise and thank Him!

Psalm 95:2 says, *Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.* Did you catch that? It says, let US come. It didn't say you come (*point to a girl/boy*), or you come (*point to another girl/boy*), or you come (*point to still another girl/boy*). It says let US come (*point to the entire group*).

Let's join together as His body and thank Him right now!

Let's read this aloud together: Psalm 95:6-7, *Come let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker: for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.*

Let's stand in a circle (*or form lines*) and reread this verse. Each time you read the word "us" or "we" reach out and clap the hands of the person to your right and to your left. Psalm 95:6-7, *Come let **us** bow down in worship, let **us** kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and **we** are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.*

Stay standing and let's sing a song of thanks and praise to God! Recommended: We Are One in the Spirit on the CD - Not Be Shaken, by Colleen & Grace. OR *this year's theme song, Livin' the Secret.*

We've read God's Word aloud together; we've sang to God together, now let's join in prayer together. Let's join our hands, forming a circle of prayer to God.

Prayer options: sentence prayers of thanks to God for the people He has put in our lives or popcorn prayers (whoever desires to pray aloud may do so). Thank God for the privilege of thanking Him personally and together as His body!

Notes

Whatever

Verse: Colossians 3: 17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Object Lesson:

You will need a bag full of miscellaneous items (one per girl/boy, or if you have a very large group, one per every group of three-four girl/boys). Item options: a map, water bottle, Bible, jump rope, clothing item, serving spoon, a pen, telephone, school book, flashlight, camera, etc.

Give each girl/boy, or group of three-four girl/boys, an opportunity to pull an item out of your bag. Ask them why they are thankful for the item and/or how they can use the item to show thanks to God. Examples: they can use a map to bring them to new places where they can serve God on a mission trip. OR, they are thankful for a water bottle because it's especially helpful when you're hot and thirsty!

When each girl/boy or group of girl/boys has shared, say . . .

Message:

Maybe it seems kind of ordinary, or even a little silly, to thank God for a map, water bottle, or a jump rope. When you think of all the things that God has made, does He really care if He receives thanks for small and ordinary things?

God does care! He wants us to give thanks for **whatever** gift He gives us! Listen to Colossians 3: 17, *And **whatever** you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Whatever you do, girl/boys, whether it's baking a cake, reading a book, or talking with a friend, we are to give thanks to God! **Whatever** you do, whether it's a homework project, practicing the piano, or cleaning your room, is to be done with a grateful heart!

In the Bible, there is a story about ten lepers that Jesus healed. They were all excited to be healed, yet only one returned to Jesus to say, "Thank you." The thankful leper must have thanked God for his ten healthy fingers and ten whole toes. He must have praised God that he could walk, jump, and run! When people smiled at him, instead of running away from him in horror, I suspect that He thanked God again!

Fingers, toes, and smiles are very small and ordinary things. The leper understood that when you acknowledge all the things that you receive as gifts from God, the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

Grateful hearts don't measure God's gifts by size-small, medium, or large;they simply pour out their thanks to God for **whatever**.

Dear Heavenly Father,Thank you for all of the ordinary and extraordinary things that You bless each of us with. We thank and praise You for all Your gifts whether it is small like our toes or big like the sun in the sky. Help us to daily be aware and give thanks for all the gifts You have given us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Notes

His Promise for Your Feet!

Verse: Psalm 121:3

He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber.

Psalm 1 18:60

The Lord is with me: I will not be afraid.

Object Lesson:

You will need a sheet of thin craft foam, scissors, and a pen or permanent marker for each girl/boy

1. Have the girl/boys take their shoes off and trace them on the thin craft foam.
2. Have them cut the foot outlines just a bit smaller than what they traced so it will fit inside their shoes.
3. On one foam foot write. Psalm 121 :3: God will not let my foot slip. On the other foam foot write. Psalm 118:6: The Lord is with me.

When girl/boys are finished, say . . .

Message:

Look at your feet and think about this saying that I read recently, "I complained because I had no shoes, until I met a man who had no feet."

What would it be like to have no feet? Listen to responses. Having no feet is an experience that we wouldn't wish for ourselves or anyone else. Yet . each day people are faced with difficult, sad circumstances. We can't change that. Life can be very hard. The Bible tells us that we will face trouble in this world! (John 16:33)

Although we can't change our difficult circumstances, we can change our attitude toward them. Instead of complaining and whining about our situation, we can give God thanks!

We can be thankful that even in our darkest moments, God is with us! Psalm 1 18:60 says, *The Lord is with me: I will not be afraid.* Hold up your foam foot that reads. Psalm 1 18:6: *The Lord is with me.* Hold it high in the air as you read it aloud: Psalm 1 18:6: The Lord is with me! Thank God for this wonderful promise! You don't have to be afraid; God is with you. Slip that incredible promise in your shoe.

Do you sometimes wonder and/or worry about your future? *Raise your hand to show them how to respond.* Knowing that we will face trouble in this world may cause you stress. God doesn't want His children to stress out or to worry. Instead He reminds us that He's got His eyes fixed on you. You never leave His sight. He's got you covered! Psalm 121:3 says. *He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber.*

Hold up your foam foot that reads. Psalm 121:3: *God will not let my foot slip.* Hold it high in the air as you read it aloud: Psalm 121:3: God will not let my foot slip! Thank God for this wonderful promise! You don't have to worry or stress about your tomorrows; God won't let your foot slip! He is a sure foundation. Slip that awesome promise in your shoe.

Girl/boys, let these footpads serve as thankful reminders of how God takes care of you. Let the comfort of the foam and the strength of the message encourage you wherever your feet go!

Let's pray . . .

Dear Heavenly Father. Thank you that You are always with us. We don't have to be afraid! Even when we face pain, ugly situations, and a world of hurt. You are with us. We know that we will face trouble in this world. Today (tonight) some of us are facing more trouble and challenges than we'd ever imagined possible. Please untie the knots of worry that are in our stomachs, and loosen the tightness of stress in our necks and shoulders. You have us covered. O God! Thank you that You will not let our feet slip; You have Your eyes fixed on each one of us 24/7. Thank you for the incredible comfort and strength in Your promises and in Your power. In Jesus ' Name. Amen

Notes

You are Special!

Verse: 1 Thessalonians 5:11a

Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up. . .

Object Lesson:

You will need a paper plate and pen for each girl/boy, and duct tape or masking tape. You will need a quiet worship song either played on an instrument or on a CD.

This object lesson is within the message. Tape a paper plate to the back of each girl/boy, give each girl/boy a pen, and say . . .

Message:

One of the things that I'm most thankful for is the encouragement of friends. Good friends do what 1 Thessalonians 5:11 commands. They . . . *encourage one another and build each other up.*

It's so easy and hurtful to tear others apart. Gossip, snide remarks, and cruel actions cause us to curl up in pain or lash out with more of the same. How it must grieve God to see His children wounding each other with words and actions.

His plan is so much better than our natural tendencies. God tells us to encourage one another and build each other up. (1 Thessalonians 5:11) How do we do that? God's Word tell us. Listen to these incredible building instructions.

Love from the centre of who you are; don't fake it. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality. Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody. Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. (Romans 12:9a, 10, 13- 18 MSG)

There's no second-guessing how God wants us to treat one another! We are to love deeply; laugh when our friends laugh, and cry when they cry. We are to get along with everyone and discover the beauty that God has created within each person.

Monday Thanks!

Verse: Psalm 1 18:24

This is the day the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Object Lesson:

You will need to set up seven rows of chairs evenly, depending on the size of your group. For example: if you have 21 girl/boys in your group, you would need three chairs in each row.

Have the girls/boys sit in the chairs and explain that they will be riding on a bus. Each row of the bus stands for the seven days of the week. (Yes, they're riding this bus every day of the week!) The front row is for Monday, the second for Tuesday, the third for Wednesday, etc. Have girls/boys memorize what "day" of the week they are on depending where they sat in the bus.

To keep things interesting, the bus driver (that's you!) allows different days of the week to have a turn at the front seat. When you say, "The Thursday row gets the front seat today," the Thursday girl/boys move to the front row, the Friday girl/boys move to the second row, the Saturday girl/boys move to the third row, etc.

Give them a couple of "slow" trial runs and then speed things up. Eliminate girl/boys who go to the wrong row or are last to sit down. If you have enough time to play this to completion, you'll eventually end up with two girl/boys. The winner is determined by sitting them in the front row, one on the farthest left hand side of the row, one on the farthest right hand side. At your starting mark signal, have them run out of their seats, around the bus, and to the chair opposite of them. The first to get back to the opposite chair is the winner.

Message:

You did a great job playing this bus ride game! When it comes to the seven days of the week, Mondays often get a bad rap. There are a number of people who identify with Garfield, the comic strip cat, who hates Mondays, especially Monday mornings. Garfield has been quoted as saying, "I'd like mornings better if they started later." And, "I'll rise, but I won't shine."

Be the One!

Verse: Colossians 2:6-7

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Object Lesson:

You will need a thick rubber band for each girl/boy and a fine permanent marker. On each rubber band have the girl/boys write, "BE THE ONE!" Have them slip the band on their wrist as a reminder of the truth of this object lesson.

Message:

I read about a family whose parents encourage their kids to "Be the one!" Be the one who gives thanks when everyone else is grumbling. Be the one who is grateful for everything, no matter what choice others around you make. They tell their sons and daughters, "Be the one!"

Being thankful is not complicated. It doesn't take years of Bible study or a demanding training schedule. Maybe it's so simple it seems a bit dull to you. If you're going to make a significant life change and "Be the one!" you want to do something exciting like leave the country on a mission trip or help feed hungry children.

If you want to experience a makeover of the heart maybe you're looking for something more exciting, dramatic, and impressive than giving thanks.

When God makes changes in our lives He usually bypasses grandiose dramas and chooses to transform us through ordinary day-to-day dependence on Him. It's when we face the ordinary stuff like a headache, a bad test grade, a fight with a friend, and a dreaded chore and give thanks (instead of crying, "Why me?") that God's renovation work takes place in our hearts.

Don't be tricked into thinking that giving thanks isn't big stuff. It's when you constantly whisper thanks to God in every circumstance that you will experience the life-changing power of God. When you thank God for everything, He will do an overhaul on your heart that will knock you off of your feet.

Thankful Awareness

Verse: Acts 17:25

He (God) is not served by human hands. as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

Object Lesson:

You will need six volunteers. Instruct the six volunteers to jog into the room and then out again in single file. Wait 30 seconds and have them return in a different order. The rest of the group needs to remember and physically rearrange the six volunteers back into their original order.

Play it a few times, giving more girl/boys the opportunity to serve as “jogging” volunteers. When finished say . . .

Message:

What did you need to do to be successful at rearranging the volunteers into their original order? Listen to responses. That’s right! You needed to pay close attention. It was important that you had an awareness of who was following whom.

When it comes to giving thanks to God, we need to have a thankful awareness. We need to be alert and pay close attention to Who God is and all that He has done for us!

Acts 17:25b says. *(God) himself gives oil (people) life and breath and everything else.* Being able to see and hear, smell and touch, to move your arms and legs is a gift from God. To be able to do your schoolwork or come to GEMS/Cadets or ride a bike is a precious present from God.

Do you take those things for granted? Not everyone has received those gifts. There are many who long to hear and see and move like you can. Sight, hearing, and mobility are just a few of the things that God has given us. When we pay attention and have a thankful awareness. it fills us with a desire to thank God without ceasing. It acknowledges that life, breath, and everything else is a gift from God!

When you begin your day, are you thankfully aware that you had a bed to sleep in, a toothbrush and toothpaste to clean your teeth and a God who has given you a new day? Do you pray, *I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart: I will glorify your name forever.* Psalm 86: 12

Are you thankfully aware that God gives you food to eat, air to breathe, a family to love you, and His only Son Jesus to be your best Friend and Saviour? Do you sing and whisper to Him, "Thank you. Jesus! "

I watched you pay close attention to the girl/boys that jogged in front of the room. You were intent on paying close attention! Now shift your focus and become that intent on seeing all the gifts God has given you. Become thankfully aware!

As we close, I'd like each of you to turn to a partner. Tell each other three gifts from God that you often take for granted. When you' re finished, join pinkies (Pinky Prayers) and pray together. One will start; the other will finish. Thank God for the gifts that you listed together.

Notes

Ebenezer

Verse: 1 Samuel 7:12

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far has the Lord helped us."

Object Lesson:

You will need a small stone for each girl/boy. (Will be used at the end of the message.)

Message:

Maybe some of you have sung the song, Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing. The song contains the words, "Here I raise my Ebenezer; hither by Thy help I'm come." Ebenezer sounds like a foreign, strange word. Does anyone know what "Ebenezer" means? Listen to responses.

Ebenezer means "stone of help." It is a visible, physical reminder of an invisible, spiritual truth. When Samuel set an Ebenezer stone up between the towns of Mizpah and Shen he was remembering

a victory over the Philistines. He named the stone "Ebenezer" and said, "Thus far has the Lord helped us." The Ebenezer stone was a memory rock. It helped the people remember that God helped them in the past and He would be there for them in the future as well.

Did you know that people still use Ebenezer reminders today? It's true! I read about one lady who keeps an old suitcase by her/his front door to remind her/his that this world is not her/his home; she's going to live with Jesus in Heaven one day!

I have a stuffed bunny near my computer where I write these devotionals. It's over 30 years old and looks ratty and worn! My dad gave it to me when I was five years old and very sick in the hospital. During my nine-day hospitalization that bunny stayed right by my side. Today that bunny is an Ebenezer, daily reminding me of my dad's love and my Heavenly Father's healing.

My daughter Elizabeth had a classmate die from cancer just weeks before he turned sixteen. Her/his class purchased a tree for Ben's family, and helped plant it in his memory.

Today that tree continues to grow and to serve as an Ebenezer. It's a reminder that even in loss and sorrow, God is with us. It is a physical reminder of the promise that although Ben no longer lives here on earth, he is living in Heaven and they will see him again one day!

Another Ebenezer that is a physical reminder of God’s spiritual truths are journals. When you write down the lavish things that God is doing in your life. it’s like setting up an Ebenezer stone and saying, “This is how God has helped me!” When you grow tired, weary, depressed, and sad, you can reread your journal and be encouraged.

Ebenezer memory rocks . . . whether they are journals, trees, a shadow box filled with treasures, a favorite toy, or even a rock; help us to give thanks to God. They are reminders that we can thank God for His faithfulness in the past and look forward to the future with much joy and hope!

To get you started in using physical objects to remind you of God’s faithfulness. I have a small stone for each one of you. I’d like you to use this Ebenezer memory rock as a reminder of all you’ve learned about Livin’ the Secret! Having a Thankful Heart. Each time you see your Ebenezer let it bring back to mind what God taught you about gratitude this GEMS/Cadets season. Let it prompt prayers of thanks for the friends and counsellors who are part of club and the faithfulness of your parents for bringing you here each time we meet.

Grip your Ebenezer rock in your hand and we’ll pray together . . .

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the story of Samuel in Your Word that tells about the Ebenezer rock that he set in place to remember Your faithfulness. Father, when we stop and focus on You we see so many physical reminders of Your faithfulness to us. Thank you for each individual Ebenezer that is part of our personal story. Thank you for the rocks we’ve received today (tonight) as a reminder of what You’ve taught us about living the secret by having a thankful heart. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Notes

Light Up the Kingdom!

Verse: Colossians 1:10, 12

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Object lesson:

You will need a dark room, small candles, and matches.

Have the girl/boys sit in a circle. Give everyone a small, unlit candle, turn off any lights in the room, and say . . .

Message:

How is this dark room like the people in this world who don't know Jesus? Listen to responses. **Some people are lost in the darkness of sin and can't find their way to Jesus.**

What are some of the ways that your thankful heart can be a light for Jesus? Listen to responses. **We can be a light when we thank God for everything, when we show that we trust Him even when we're in sad or difficult circumstances, when we don't complain, grumble, or whine ...**

Those who don't know Jesus as their personal Saviour live in darkness. That doesn't mean they live in a dark room like we're sitting in right now. It means that the darkness of sin and evil has control of their hearts and lives. This is a terrible place to be and we should do all we can to show and tell people about Jesus, the Light of the World.

Colossians 1:10, 12 says, *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*

The kingdom of light is under Jesus' reign, control, and power. A life that is worthy, a life that is not wasted, gives thanks to our Heavenly Father! When you please Him, serve Him, grow to know Him more, and give thanks to Him, you will share in the kingdom of light .

Light your candle and then use it to light the candle of the girl/boy on your right (and to your left, if you have a large group so the name can meet in the middle). The girl/boys need to do two things, first light the candle of the girl/boy to her/his right and then say, “I’m thankful for you because _____” ...

When finished, say ... Do you see how even a small number of lights can brighten up a dark room? When you give thanks to God, you are like a candle that gives light in a dark place. Your thankful heart will provide the light for people to see the path to Jesus. Your flame of gratitude will point people to Jesus!

Let’s pray . . .

Father God, thank you for the privilege of being lights for Your kingdom. We pray that we may live lives that are worthy of You and please You in every way. Help us to do good works, to grow to know You more and more, and to give thanks to You now and forever. Thank you that You have qualified each one of us to share in the kingdom of light. Please let our thankful hearts bring light to this dark world. We want to shine for You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Notes



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