



The Virtues and Character Development Project

The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

I Thessalonians 5:24

Gratitude – Composite of Activities Curriculum

Note – before reading the content in this module, it is important that the *Gratitude Pre-Activity Curriculum* has been reviewed.

The following list provides examples of activities that leaders will be able to do with their students. They are divided into Primary School, Secondary School, and Higher Education.

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Primary School (Kindergarten through 5th grade)

Cyndi Fannin

We see examples often around us illustrating ways in which to be grateful. Often, teaching this to children is not a new concept. The emphasis must be on being intentional and practicing gratitude often. Like all other character traits, knowing about them is not the same as acquiring the trait.

Scripture References:

- Psalms 107:1
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18
- Colossians 3:15
- Ephesians 5:20

- James 1:17
- Psalms 95:2
- Psalms 50:14

Short videos examples of gratitude:

- <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/w2CHrCvW31k> - How a rich boy learned gratitude.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5lZBjWDR_c - showing how expressing "thank you" can make you happier.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8Q0hvIeELM> - not being a complainer

Picture books which exemplify gratitude:

- *The Gratitude Jar* by Katrina Liu
- *Gratitude is my Superpower* by Alicia Ortego
- *So Thankful (Gratitude of the Heart 8 book series)* by Karen White

Activities

Activity 1: Gratitude prompts to start conversations.

- In a jar type, cut, and place the following gratitude prompts to begin a conversation. Here are just a few examples. Write your own to personalize to your family.
 - What was your favorite part about today? Why?
 - Did you thank someone today? Explain.
 - What skills do you have that you are thankful for? Have you used one lately?
 - What is a favorite part of your family?
 - What is a favorite activity that you have done recently?

Activity 2: Thankful Dice Game

- All those playing the game take turns rolling one die. The following are to be answered after a roll:
 - Name a person you are thankful for in your family and tell why.
 - Name a place you have been that you are thankful for and tell why.
 - Name a favorite object you have and tell why.
 - Name a person outside your family that you are thankful for and tell why.
 - Tell about a memory you are thankful for.
 - Tell about an ability you have that you are thankful for.

Activity 3: Memorize gratitude quotes or scripture.

- From resources provided through books, internet, or the Bible, choose a quote or Scripture that you feel helps you to be grateful. Memorize it then share it with your family.

Activity 4: Write a Reader's Theater script emphasizing gratitude.

- Even if the children have performed a reader's theater script before, it would be good for everyone to practice one together. Here is a free website to use that gives choice in scripts. Emphasize to children that there are characters and a narrator. Acting will be used primarily with the voices when the script is read.
- Children either together or individually, will write their own reader's theater that must include how a character developed into a person that is grateful. To show character development, it is best to show a character who is selfish or entitled, (or both) and the transformation.

Activity 5: Letter writing

- Brainstorm with the children a list of individuals that have made a positive impact in their lives. You can help add to the list people who helped when they were very little and don't remember. Over a week or two weeks, have children write thank you letters to individuals. Have children find their addresses, learn how to fill out an envelope, learn a letter format, and include specifics of why they are thankful for them.

Activity 6: Gratitude Prayer Bracelets

- Praying can sometimes feel boring or we easily lose focus:
 - Red – God's love
 - Blue – salvation
 - Yellow – God's provisions like food, clothing, homes, etc.
 - Green – God's Word, the Bible
 - Purple – people in our lives.
- More can be added or changed. Students make these bracelets with beads. Children then practice praying wearing their bracelets as reminders.

Sheri Nessmith

Note – the hyperlinks in the titles below will take you to websites that contain many other examples of activities.

Hands-on and creative projects

- **Thankful Tree**: Have students write or draw things they are thankful for on paper leaves and attach them to a tree-like structure. They can also write one thing they are thankful for on each leaf and string them together to create a garland.
- **Gratitude Jar**: Provide a decorated jar and small slips of paper. Students write or draw things they are grateful for and place them in the jar, creating a collection of happy memories they can read later.
- **Gratitude Collage**: Create a class collage on a bulletin board using pictures from magazines or drawings that represent things each student is thankful for.
- **Gratitude Chain**: Give each student a strip of paper to write something they are thankful for. They can then link the strips together to form a long chain that can be displayed around the classroom.
- **Thank-You Notes**: Have students write short, secret notes to people they are grateful for. They can then hide them for their family members or teachers to find in places like a backpack or on a desk.
- **Thankful Turkey**: During November, students can write what they are thankful for on paper feathers and glue them to a turkey cutout.

Writing and reflection

- **Gratitude Journal**: Give each student a notebook to write or draw about things they are grateful for, with prompts like "What is your favorite thing about school?" or "Name a friend and describe what makes them special".

- **Alphabet Gratitude**: Each day, focus on a different letter and have students think of something they are grateful for that starts with that letter. This can be a verbal activity or a written list on the board.

Interactive and group activities

- **Gratitude Walk**: Take a walk outside and have students identify and discuss things in nature they are grateful for, such as the sun, trees, or a place to play.
- **Morning Meeting Sharing**: Dedicate a few minutes during morning meeting for students to share one thing they are grateful for each day.

Gratitude Scavenger Hunt

- A *Gratitude Scavenger Hunt* involves searching for people, things, and activities that encourage being thankful. These can be done outdoors, indoors, and even online.
- Create a list of items that will be found.
- Complete the search.
- Discuss how you might express being grateful for each item on the list.
- For other examples, search online for *Gratitude Scavenger Hunt*.

Gratitude Video

<https://youtu.be/yA5Qpt1JRE4>



<https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-exercises/>



<https://calmahoykids.co.uk/2023/08/15/gratitude-ideas-for-kids/>

Gratitude Activities for Students

1. Gratitude book

Create a classroom Gratitude book for each student to take home and add a page of pictures and descriptions of what they're grateful for. Switch out each week so every student has the opportunity to add a page.

2. Thank-you gift for home

Take a picture of each student holding a large piece of paper with one thing they are grateful for written on it. Frame the picture and send it home as a gift to parents.

3. Classroom collage

Create a class gratitude collage or bulletin board with pictures of things each student is grateful for. Students may cut out magazine pictures, search for pictures on the internet, or draw their own to include in the collage.

4. Gratitude chain

Using strips of paper, have each student write down something they are thankful for. The strips can be used to create a gratitude chain that can be hung around the classroom.

5. Special friends day

Before Thanksgiving, hold a “Special Friends Day” in which each student brings someone special to class. Each student can explain why they are thankful for this person. Celebrate the gratitude with a special snack.

6. Notes of gratitude

Have students create gratitude surprise sticky notes. Students write down something they’re grateful for about someone else around the school and then “deliver” the notes to the person’s locker, mailbox, or classroom door.

- Check out the books on the *Resources* page.

Secondary School (6th through 12th grades – Middle School and High School)

Middle School – coming

Sarah Madtes – High School

1. Gratitude Journals

- a. Have your student/family write down 3 things every day that you’re thankful for
- b. You can use your own notebook, find prompts online, or buy gratitude journals with prompts
- c. End each week with a prayer of thanksgiving over what you wrote down that week

2. Where I Saw God Today Journal

- a. Have your student/family write down 1-2 times/places that you saw God at work each day
- b. Talk about it together as a family and how that increases your understanding of who God is

3. Biblical References to Thanksgiving/Gratitude

- a. You and your student can spend time finding every reference to thanksgiving/gratitude
- b. Over the next few weeks/months, you can spend time in devotions and discussion about what the verses say, context, what it is teaching you, and memorizing the verses

4. Thank-You Letters

- a. Have your student write thank you letters to people

- i. Examples: teachers, janitors, bus drivers, coaches, church volunteers, ministry leaders, pastors, first responders, etc.
- b. Start including those people in times of prayer to be praying over them

5. Blessings Wall or Gratitude Board

- a. Create a family board for everyone to post notes of things they are thankful for
- b. Go over it together as a family each week and pray together

6. Serving Others

- a. Have your student do regular volunteer work
 - i. You can have your student do this alone, with friends, or together a family
- b. Make sure to spend time talking with your student afterward about what it taught them about gratitude as well as how serving others impacted the people as well as the student

7. “Pay it Forward” Week

- a. Have everyone in the family do 1-2 small acts of kindness anonymously that week
 - i. Leave an encouraging note for someone
 - ii. Help someone without being asked
 - iii. Etc.
- b. End with group sharing
 - i. Focus should be on the experience for the person, how it felt, how it impacted them
 - ii. Keep focus off bragging or getting credit for doing something

8. Worship Night

- a. You can do this at home, do it with a small group or youth group, or see if your church would get involved
- b. Choose worship songs that focus on gratitude
- c. Between songs, read scripture about gratitude
- d. Have a time of prayer of thanksgiving at the end

9. Before/After Perspective Activity

- a. Have your student list things they often complain about
- b. Help them reframe these things into areas of gratitude
 - i. Example: complain about homework, but thankful for an education
- c. Discuss how gratitude can change your attitude
- d. Discuss how this can help in remembering to have an attitude of gratitude even in hard times

Higher Education (College and Professional School)

Cindy Bailey

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others. – Cicero

Activity 1:

- Reflection/Journal on Gratitude
 - Take time to reflect on what gratitude means to you.
 - Once you have your definition of gratitude, look up the meaning of gratitude.
 - Look at a few different perspectives on gratitude.
 - Go back and review your definition.

- Add to (or even take away) your working definition of gratitude.
- Now that you have a good working definition of gratitude, contemplate your life.
 - In what areas do you show gratitude easily and in what areas can you improve?

Activity 2:

- Become inspired.
 - Look up some of the numerous quotes on gratitude.
 - Write down the ones you find most inspiring (and reflect on why they are so good).
 - Hang those inspiring quotes around your living/workspace.

Activity 3:

- For whom are you thankful?
 - Make a list of those who mean so much to you. Send a text, letter, or call and let them know that you are thankful to have them in your life.
 - If your list is long, pick a person a week to express your words of gratitude to them

Activity 4:

- Wrap up your day.
 - Begin to train yourself to review your day and thank God for at least three specific things from your day. You may need to have a reminder (for example, put a sticky note on a mirror or a daily reminder on your phone) while you get into the habit.

Activity 5:

- What does the Bible say?
 - Many people can quote I Thessalonians 5:16-18 – *Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*
 - Do a search in the Bible and see what the Bible has to say on gratitude and thanksgiving.

Activity 6:

- Practice gratitude.
 - Each month, decorate a themed item with your areas of gratitude.
 - For example:
 - November is easily the month most people think of their blessings.
 - Purchase a pumpkin and write your blessing on the pumpkin throughout the month.
 - In December, decorate a tree with ornaments of your blessings.
 - You could write them on paper or decorate ornaments
 - You can be creative over the months
 - Write each day one thing you are thankful for and place in a jar.
 - At the end of the year, read all the blessings from the past year.
 - Keep all the Christmas cards sent to you and keep them handy.
 - Each night, pick a card and reflect on the blessing they are to you.
 - Pray over the individual/family.
 - While riding in the car with friends/family, continually go person to person and list all that you are thankful for.

General

Paul Madtes Jr.

Using technology to practice gratitude

- It is becoming common for homes to use technology to control devices.
- One of these is Amazon Echo (Alexa).
- Commands are given for Alexa to complete.
- When finished, the habit of saying *thank you* can be reinforced by saying *thank you* to Alexa.
- The response will remind each person of how this action impacts the community.

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