

Biblical Example

When you read of Paul and Silas imprisoned in Acts 16, you find out they'd just been severely beaten by a crowd and drug to prison. As they're in prison that evening, we see Paul and Silas doing two things; praying and singing hymns. We can learn a lot about gratefulness from the responses of these men. Upon a severe beating and imprisonment, we see them expressing adoration and gratefulness to God. Their attention wasn't fixed on their circumstances; it was fixed on God Himself.

So now that we understand that gratefulness isn't about being thankful for our stuff or our great circumstances, but rather an attitude fixed on God Himself, how do we instill an attitude of gratefulness in our children?

1. Live in the present. Living in the past keeps us tied to guilt and regret. Living in the future leaves us striving for things that we're not promised. Live for today.
2. Make sure when you express gratefulness that it isn't just for things. Be grateful for good attitudes, great friends, kind words, etc.
3. Develop an understanding of money with an allowance. While instituting an allowance, teach what it means to save, tithe, give and spend.
4. Expose your children to people from all walks of life. Help them see that what people HAVE doesn't define WHO they are.

Source: ministrytoparents.com

Helping My Child

Embrace Gratefulness



The Importance of Gratefulness

Gratefulness is something that we all know is in short supply in our society. In our conquest for better cars, bigger houses, cooler entertainment and the latest and greatest tech gadgets, we rarely slow down long enough to look around at all God has blessed us with and express gratitude to God. As adults we are rarely satisfied, maybe because we want better for our kids and for our future. Our kids have picked up on this, and it's often easier to see our lack of gratitude in our children than in our own hearts.

When it comes to helping your kids embrace gratefulness, the practice is caught as much as it is taught. You can't help your kids with being grateful if you are not willing to strive to model it for them. Gratitude is displayed when we are able to look around at what we have, who we know, and what has been done for us and express thanks. At the heart of gratitude is the understanding that other people have helped us get where we are. When I'm grateful, I let others know how much they matter to me and how blessed I am to have their help in my life.

As parents we want our kids to have grateful hearts and live grateful lives. It's so good to know that God wants the same thing from each of us. In Psalms 100 we are reminded of what God wants from us when it comes to gratitude:

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise. Give
thanks to him and praise his name.
For the LORD is good. His
unfailing love continues forever,
and his faithfulness continues to
each generation. Psalm 100:4-5 (NLT)*

What is great about this verse for parents and for kids is that every morning we open our eyes we "enter his gates" and we are in "His presence." What God wants from us and our kids is a simple heart of gratitude for every day that he gives us. God promises his love and faithfulness will endure when all the stuff we fight to hoard is long gone.

What we learn from this verse is that gratitude is a choice. Gratitude is a choice that parents and kids have to choose beyond circumstances. If our kids are going to see this lived out then they need us to model it for them. We need to choose gratitude when they can see it and experience it! What kids watch and experience will be what they will repeat when we are not looking.

How to Model Gratefulness

1. Express gratefulness to your spouse or other adults in front of your kids. When we tell each other as adults how grateful we are for them, kids pay attention. Being thanked feels great, so be an adult that is always looking for ways to give thanks away.
2. Catch your kids doing well and express how grateful you are. Did they clean their room, express gratitude! Did your child play hard at soccer, express gratitude that they are a hard worker! Find opportunities to bless your children with thanks.
3. Help your kids write thank-you notes after holidays. This is a great habit because it teaches kids the power of saying thanks when they receive!
4. Help your kids serve others. Kids learn so much about how blessed they are when we take time to serve others. Serve together at church. Serve at a homeless shelter. Serve at Christmas together, or ring the bell for the Salvation army.
5. Give away stuff as you get stuff. Help your kids see the joy of giving by actually purging that stuff in your house and giving it to other kids who will really be grateful for it!

Gratefulness is an attitude of contentment. It's when WE say I don't need more from God to follow Him completely. I'll follow NOW. Our children will learn gratefulness from us when they see it modeled through our grateful attitude.