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# Ways To Help Children Focus On The Real Meaning of Thanksgiving

*Lettie Kirkpatrick, Adapted from Christian Parenting Today*

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**C**hildren love stories. Take advantage of their natural interest by using Scripture stories to reinforce the importance of gratitude.

Act it out. Read the story of the 10 lepers (Luke 17:11-19). Remind the children that Jesus was pleased with the one man who returned to give thanks for being healed. Provide rags for bandages, and let your children play the roles of the lepers and Jesus. Let them dramatize the healing, with them all rushing off while only one returns.

## **Make Noise**

Look up the story of the Israelites' celebration after Jerusalem's walls were rebuilt (Nehemiah 12:27-47). Talk about the instruments they used and the two great choirs that marched atop the walls to the temple. Then put together a homegrown band using real or improvised instruments. Practice joyful praise songs, and march around the "walls" of your home or yard. Kids will love the idea of the joyous, active "thanksgiving" that could be heard "far away" (v. 43).

## **Think Differently**

Corrie ten Boom's book *The Hiding Place* teaches a great lesson in thankfulness. Share Corrie's story with your kids, pointing out her

struggle to be thankful in all things. She even thanked God for fleas in her barracks. She later learned the fleas kept the guards away and allowed her and others to study the Bible without interruption.

## **Create A Chain Reaction**

Help your children make a "God is good" chain. Gather scissors, stickers, pencils, crayons, glue, and construction paper. Cut the paper in strips, and ask the kids to think about the



many ways God is good. Have them write or draw these attributes on the strips. Connect the strips to form a chain, and hang the chain in a place where it will remind your family of God's goodness.

leaves things for which they are thankful, and then tape the leaves to the tree. Ask younger children: "What do you want to thank God for today?" Encourage your family to add to the tree daily.



### **Focus On Blessings**

Choose a family project for the month that will draw your focus to God's goodness.

### **Make A Blessing Basket**

Place a basket containing a pencil and pad of paper in an easy-to-reach location. Throughout the month, encourage family members to jot down ways God has blessed them. Younger children can draw or cut out pictures from magazines. Each day, read these together and give God thanks, or set aside some time for this activity on Thanksgiving Day.

### **Trim A Tree of Thanks**

Draw and cut out a large paper tree, then cut out lots of loose leaves in autumn colors. Mount the tree in a prominent place, and put the leaves nearby in a box with tape and markers. Ask your family to write on the

### **Serve Up A Memory**

Bring an eternal perspective to your Thanksgiving table. Consider adding these touches to the family feast.

### **Find Your Seat**

Help your children make a place card for each place setting. On one side, write names of guests and family; on the other, write a

Scripture verse about being thankful. Let each person read a verse before the blessing.

### **Encourage Participation**

Include a paper leaf at each place setting with an "assignment" written on it. Each person adds to the festivities by completing his or her assignment. Assignments might include:

- Read Psalms 100.
- Share a Thanksgiving memory (use this on several paper leaves).
- Say the blessing for our meal.

### **Set The Mood**

Give an unlit votive candle to each person. Light your own candle, and thank God for specific blessings. Then continue the process around the table until all the candles are lit. Lead your family in a candlelight service of thanksgiving.