



Showing Thanks: Taking a Posture of Gratitude

Welcome to our special Thanksgiving week devotional! This devotional aims to explore how a heart filled with gratitude is both (1) an orientation God calls for in us and (2) how it can impact our lives and the lives of those around us, much like ripples spreading across a pond from a single stone.

Our prayer is that through this devotional, your family will not only understand the power of gratitude but will also experience its transformative effect in your walk with Christ and with each other.

Opening

Prayer: Pray God uses this devotional time draw your family closer to each other and closer to God. Pray the Holy Spirit opens minds, opens eyes, and moves hearts. Here's a sample prayer you might use:

Dear Lord, as we gather to learn about the power of gratitude, help open our minds and our hearts to Your teachings. Help us see the many blessings You bestow on us every day of our lives. Let us be thankful, always showing appreciate to You for Your work, Your provisions, and Your love. It is all this I pray in the name of Your holy Son, amen.

Exercise: Take some time to go around the room and have everyone share something they are thankful for.

Reading: Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

A pebble

Imagine for a moment a small, seemingly insignificant pebble. Now, imagine dropping this pebble into a still pond. What happens? You see a ripple, right? But it's not just one ripple; it's a series of expanding circles that stretch far beyond where the pebble first touched the water.

This is a lot like gratitude. Often, it seems small – a quick “thank you”, or saying “hey, I appreciate you”. Other times, we might do bigger things – buying a meal, sharing time over coffee, or giving a gift. But even in those bigger things, our gratitude can seem temporary or even shallow. We might even wonder how big of a difference it can really make.

Here's the thing – it matters. Even when our gratitude seems small, God sees it as big. Like the ripples in a pond when that pebble is dropped, our gratitude can radiate out – becoming visible and experienced by more people than we might ever know.

In fact, a posture of gratitude is so important, we see this in 1 Thessalonians 5:18:

18 give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

God wants us to have a posture of gratitude – and not just when someone has done something for us. He wants us to **give thanks in everything**.

And notice like so many other times in scripture, this isn't a thing we do passively. Just 'feeling' gratitude isn't enough. We must **give thanks**, something that is an action. Gratitude isn't just a feeling, but a choice that can transform our perspectives, our hearts, and our lives.

That act of gratitude draws us closer to God, but also helps us make God's glory known in the world. It has a very real impact on others, and even small acts of gratitude can ripple out and help draw people to Christ.

Discussing

- Can you recall a time when someone else's gratitude shown to you had a real impact on you?
- Can you recall a time when being grateful changed your perspective on a difficult situation?
- How can we practice rejoicing and giving thanks in our everyday lives? What does this look like as something we *actively* do?

Applying

- **Practical Steps:** Challenge each family member to write down three things they are grateful for each day of the week. Note: consider coming together again a week after doing this devotional and asking everyone to share a few of the things they've written down.
- **Activity:** Create a "Thankfulness Jar" where family members can drop notes of gratitude, to be read together at the end of the week.

Pointing to Christ

As we come to the close of our devotional, it's essential to turn our hearts toward the greatest gift of all, the foundation of our deepest gratitude: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we see the ultimate expression of love and the very reason for our thankfulness. Romans 5:8 declares, "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Our gratitude flows not just from the blessings we can see and touch but from the profound, life-changing reality of what Christ has done for us. He took our sins upon Himself, offering us grace, forgiveness, and eternal life. This gift is the source of all joy and all gratitude.

As we go forward, let's not only be thankful for the blessings we see every day. Let's also be deeply grateful for the eternal gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. May this gratitude not just be a feeling in our hearts but a driving force in our lives, leading us to love others, to share the Gospel, and to live each day as a reflection of Christ's love for us.

Closing Prayer

Close this study in prayer, asking God to help embed a spirit of gratitude in your hearts. Here's a sample prayer you might use:

Father, we ask You to cultivate in us a heart of gratitude. Let us see Your hand in every part of our lives and help us to give thanks in all circumstances. In Jesus' name, Amen.