

GROW GRATEFUL KIDS

Gratitude is our response of thankfulness for God's goodness, love, provision, and grace.

As Christ-followers, we don't just practice gratitude because it's good for our health (although it is!), or only when things go smoothly. Our gratitude flows from an awareness that, regardless of our circumstance, God loves us and is with us. Here are five tips for cultivating grateful living with your family.

1 EXPRESS YOURSELF

Express your gratefulness to God and to others (including your kids!) out loud and often. They're taking their cues from you, and the best way to cultivate a grateful spirit in your kids is to cultivate it in yourself too.

2 PROVIDE PROMPTS

At mealtime, at bedtime prayers, and at other times, invite everyone to name a person/place/thing/experience for which they are grateful, or to name something they can hear/see/taste/touch/smell for which they are grateful.

3 TAKE NOTE OF GOD'S GIFTS

Keep track of God's good gifts using a format that works for your family. Some ideas: keep a family gratitude journal; jot your thoughts on sticky notes and post them on a Gratitude Wall; express your thankfulness on paper strips placed in a Gratitude Jar; write or draw things for which you are grateful on a paper tablecloth. Save your lists and drawings and revisit them at Thanksgiving, on New Year's Day, or anytime you'd like a reminder of God's provision.

4 REMEMBER GOD'S GOODNESS

During challenging circumstances, remind your kids that God is with them. Wonder about the ways in which God may be at work behind the scenes. Express gratitude for the fact that even though we may not fully understand God's plan, we can trust that God works for good in all situations and that our destiny is safe in his hands.

5 LIVE GRATEFULLY

Your practices should overflow into your community. Be generous with your time, talents, and resources. Show appreciation to others in tangible ways. Be a servant. And always try to treat others in ways for which they can be grateful and give thanks to God!

PRACTICE GENEROSITY WITH KIDS

Generosity is freely sharing with others the many gifts God has given us.

Our God is an abundantly generous God! When we feel gratitude for God's many gifts to us, that gratitude overflows in generosity. Here are five of God's wonderful gifts, along with suggestions for how you and your kids can share these gifts generously with others.

1 THE GIFT OF CREATION

God gifted us with an incredible world to care for! Find ways to share it with your kids and help them care for it in service to others. If you have a family garden, share what you grow. Invite others to spend time with your family enjoying nature outdoors. Organize or participate in a neighborhood cleanup; volunteer at an animal shelter. Pick up trash at a local park.

2 THE GIFT OF SACRIFICIAL LOVE

Jesus gave all that he had for others. In your family, do everything you can to model and share that kind of love! Assure your kids daily of your love for them. Care for the people around you who are hurting. Share your possessions without complaint, and encourage your kids to do the same. Look for ways to tell others about God's abundant love.

3 THE GIFT OF UNIQUE ABILITIES

Make a list of the unique gifts and talents with which God has gifted each member of your family. Now add to the list ways to share those abilities with others. What are you doing already? What might you do in the future? Ask the Holy Spirit to nudge you when there are opportunities to share your family's gifts.

4 THE GIFT OF MATERIAL RESOURCES

Sharing your stuff can be hard for kids—and for adults too! Talk about the fact that all we have comes from God. Give kids ownership in the practice of generosity by asking, "Is there something you could share?" or "I wonder how you could bless [name] with something you have?" Help young children practice generosity by giving them extra snacks or other items to share on playdates. Involve older kids in choosing organizations to support with donations.

5 THE GIFT OF TIME

God has given each of us a lifetime in which to serve God and our neighbor. Talk with kids often about how God might be calling them to spend their days, both now and in the future. Volunteer enthusiastically with your kids. Take time to listen deeply to each other and to people in pain. As a family, make space for regular sabbath rest.

5 WAYS TO

PRACTICE HOSPITALITY WITH KIDS

If you've ever entered a home as a guest and left feeling like you're family, you've experienced hospitality. People who practice hospitality make space for guests, visitors, and strangers, extending to them the privileges of family.

God calls all of us to practice hospitality! Here are five ways to cultivate a spirit of hospitality in your kids.

1 LEAD BY EXAMPLE

In daily life, show your kids what it means to be a fully present and gracious host. Invite people into your home, making a point to often include people who aren't close friends or relatives. Let your kids know that your home is always open to their guests too.

2 TALK ABOUT EXPERIENCES

As a family, talk about how each of you has experienced hospitality. Share stories about times when you felt welcomed and about people who have made you feel like family. What helps you feel welcomed? Whom might you make space for in similar ways? Have you ever felt or experienced the opposite of welcome? What was that like?

3 PRACTICE WELCOME

Brainstorm with your kids about ways to lovingly welcome all sorts of people: guests in your home, visitors at church, new players on a team, neighbors on your street, refugees in your community, and so on. Then make plans to do some of those things.

4 PROVIDE OPTIONS

Like adults, some kids can be energized by interacting with people, while others can find it exhausting. Smiling, offering your seat on the bus, and holding a door open for someone are all examples of simple but important everyday acts of hospitality. Encouraging your kids to expand their comfort zones is important; so is working within the context of their God-designed personality.

5 BE SUPPORTIVE

There will be times when your child's act of hospitality means setting another plate at the dinner table, or going an extra mile to drive a friend home. Model a willingness to set aside your schedule to extend hospitality, and embrace the messiness that comes with a "hospitality first" attitude in your home.

5 WAYS TO PRACTICE SABBATH WITH KIDS

Sabbath, God's gift to us, is a time we set apart to rest from work, to worship God, to tend to our spirit, and to bless others.

Knowing how much people need rest in order to flourish, God created (and modeled) a weekly time of sabbath rest.

Here are five actions that will help you and your family build a life-giving sabbath practice that your kids will look forward to each week.

1 RECEIVE

Sabbath is a wonderful gift from the God who loves us. So start your sabbath practice with gratitude! Set aside part of your sabbath day to remember all the good gifts you received from God in the past week. Pray a prayer of thankfulness for them.

2 REST

Experience the presence of God as you enjoy the presence of one another. Determine how to spend your time by talking about family activities that bring each of you joy, and about family activities that make you feel weary or anxious. Some families find it helpful to create a sabbath-time jar filled with paper strips containing ideas of things to do; others prefer a wide-open day in which to go with the flow. Do what works for you.

3 WORSHIP

Gathering for worship with God's family at a local church forms a firm foundation on which to build the rest of your week. When you worship at home, a devotional guides such as *God's Big Story cards* or *Everyday Family Faith* (available at FaithAliveResources.org) are helpful tools.

4 CELEBRATE

Remember God's goodness in ways that are festive and joyful. Eat a special meal; listen to music; share where you've seen God at work this week or what you're grateful for; spend time outdoors; laugh out loud together; and enjoy God's good gifts.

5 RESTORE

God restores our mind, body, and soul through rest. Look for ways in which God might also be calling your family to extend restoration to others; perhaps by inviting people into your sabbath celebrations or easing someone else's burden.



5 WAYS TO CELEBRATE WITH YOUR FAMILY

As followers of Jesus, we celebrate to remember and anticipate God's abundant goodness, creativity, faithfulness, beauty, and love. This practice invites families to cultivate joy with the God who rejoices in us (Zeph. 3:17).

Here are five "delight-full" ways to do so.

1 CELEBRATE OFTEN

God's great love is new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23); that's worth celebrating each day! Look for ways to incorporate joy into daily routines and annual events. Laugh. Dance. Play. Praise. Cheer. Sing. Be silly. Create. And at those times when life is hard, celebrate the assurance that, unlike happiness, the joy of the Lord is present in every circumstance.

2 CELEBRATE BIG THINGS AND LITTLE THINGS

Mark holy days, holidays, birthdays, and other special days with meaningful objects (colored tablecloths, candles, special dishes, favorite foods, old photos, etc.) and make time to retell stories of God's faithfulness both from Scripture and in your own lives. Rejoice in ordinary events too, by paying joyful attention to lost teeth, first days of school, passing tests, learning skills, making friends, visiting family, and more.

3 CELEBRATE GOD'S WORK AND GOD'S WORLD

Look for glimpses of God at work in your life and in the lives of others; share and receive those sightings with joy. Ask: "What can we thank God for today (or this week)?" Wonder: "How is God working in the highs and lows of our life (my life)?" Model using your senses to fully (and daily!) note God's abundant creation: smell fresh flowers, taste cool water, hear birds singing, feel warm sunshine. Notice the beautiful diversity that God has built into our world.

4 CELEBRATE EACH OTHER AND YOUR NEIGHBORS

Participate in local festivals and community events. Get to know your neighbors so that you can celebrate their special occasions too. A card signed by your family and/or a delivered (or shared!) meal are simple ways your family can join in their joy.

5 MAKE FAMILY CELEBRATIONS FAITH-FORMING EVENTS

Take every opportunity to weave stories of God's faithfulness into your celebrations of milestones in your life and in the lives of your family members. Use special days to name all that you love about the person you're celebrating, and describe the ways you see God at work in them.

Want to dig deeper? Check out the Faith Practices Project's family resources on listening at crcna.org/FaithPracticesProject.

5 WAYS TO

PRACTICE JUSTICE AND MERCY WITH KIDS

Justice and mercy are the tangible expressions of loving our neighbors as God has loved us. They are the ways that we live like Jesus here and now, affirming the goodness of God's image in others. Raising kids who practice justice and mercy is some of the most faith-forming work you'll ever do as a parent. The 5 "L"s that follow are designed to help.

1 LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Nurturing a heart for justice and mercy in kids means modeling those qualities daily. Talk with your kids about God's desire that all people will flourish. Let them see you actively loving people in need. Practice mercy in your conversations with and about others. Invite your kids into decisions about the things you buy and the causes you support.

2 LISTEN AND LEARN

Seek opportunities to hear the voices of people who experience injustice and people who work to bring about justice. Nurture diverse friendships. Select books and other media created by people from a variety of backgrounds. Work to identify and resist your own biases. Teach your kids the importance of researching issues well.

3 LAMENT

Pray together about the brokenness of the world. "Mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). Seek God's forgiveness for the ways in which you have acted unjustly. Ask the Spirit to show you where your heart needs to change and how you can work for justice and show mercy.

4 LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES

Have regular conversations about injustice. Ask questions like "How does this go against God's plan for the world?" and "What might God want us to do about that?" Equip kids with the words and courage they need to speak up when they encounter injustice. Participate in justice-seeking events in your area. Be an encourager when your kids find an issue about which they are passionate.

5 LOVE ALL

Look for the threads of justice that run throughout Scripture as you read it together. Make Matthew 22:37-39 part of your family motto. Talk about what it means; make a list together of what living that love looks like in your daily life. Revisit that list often, adding to it and sharing stories of your experiences as you try to live in tune with God's love for all.

Want to dig deeper? Check out the Faith Practices Project's family resources on justice and mercy at crcna.org/FaithPracticesProject.



5 WAYS TO PRACTICE LISTENING WITH YOUR FAMILY

As a faith practice, listening involves training our attention to recognize God's voice (John 10:1-6) in the midst of all the other voices calling for our attention.

It involves learning to be fully present with God and with our neighbor.

The ideas below will help your family practice listening, even in the busyness (and noise!) of everyday family life.

1 TALK ABOUT LISTENING

Kids may equate "listening" with obedience. Broaden their understanding by explaining that one way we show love for God is by listening for and to God's voice. Doing that helps us learn more about who God is and who God wants us to be. We also show God's love to our neighbors when we listen well to them so that we may love and serve them better.

2 MAKE ROOM FOR SILENCE

Silence is countercultural in North America, so be intentional about helping your kids (and yourself) become more comfortable with it. Turn off the background noise of TV, music, and games for a while each day. Take a walk in a woods or park, using your eyes and ears more than your words. Try having a family "quiet hour" whenever you can.

3 FIND STILLNESS

It can be challenging for kids (and adults!) to slow down our bodies, hearts, and minds so that we can listen to God. Here are some ideas to try: Place your hands on your heart as you deeply breathe in and out several times. Repeat the verse "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Draw or write in a prayer journal. Light a candle. Lie on your back and watch clouds go by. Find what works for you and your family.

4 BE ATTENTIVE TO GOD'S VOICE

God speaks to us through the Word, through other people, through creation, and more! Model listening for God in these ways. Read the Bible together and talk about what God is saying and doing. Include listening pauses during prayer. Point out to each other how the beauty of creation praises God. Listen for how God might be speaking to your family.

5 LISTEN TO ONE ANOTHER

When someone needs a listening ear, show you care by giving them your full attention: turn off devices, take a seat, make eye contact, reflect what you're hearing rather than first offering solutions. If appropriate, pray for God's guidance together.

Want to dig deeper? Check out the Faith Practices Project's family resources on listening at crcna.org/FaithPracticesProject.



5 WAYS TO HELP KIDS WORSHIP

“Children learn through observation, but they learn best through participation.

We take them to church so that being part of a church family and gathering regularly to worship God in community with others becomes part of the fabric of their lives” (Karen DeBoer, *Home Grown Handbook for Christian Parenting*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, p. 187). Here are five ways to help kids worship.

1 BE POSITIVE

Instead of saying, “We have to go to church” say “we get to go to worship.” Teach your kids that worship isn’t just a place we go, it’s something we *do* with God’s family, and when we’re not there, God’s family isn’t complete.

2 TAKE ALONG WORSHIP TOOLS

Bring along tools that will involve your children in worship rather than simply keep them busy. Some ideas: a children’s storybook Bible, a small notebook and colored pencil for drawing/writing questions, impressions, and prayers.

3 LET KIDS CHOOSE THE SEATS

Parents with young children often sit toward the back of the worship space so they won’t be embarrassed by their children’s behavior and can exit easily. But often children prefer the front because they can see, hear, and participate better.

4 BE A “CHURCH WHISPERER”

Help kids stay engaged during worship by asking questions and making observations. During a song, whisper, “My favorite verse of this song is the third one. Which part do you like the best?” As Scripture is read, ask your child how it would feel to be living in that story.

5 TALK ABOUT WORSHIP ON THE WAY HOME

Ask kids about what they saw and heard in worship. Affirm their insights and encourage them to learn more. Ask if they wonder about anything that was said. As you talk, use the language of worship to build your children’s vocabulary.

5 WAYS TO

HELP YOUR FAMILY GROW IN FAITH

Family faith formation is a journey, not a destination.

Here are five ways to grow in faith together with kids.

1 EXPLORE GOD'S STORY

If it's hard to gather the whole family for after-dinner devotions, find other ways and times to explore God's story together. Read a Bible story at bedtime or while enjoying a special snack. Ask your child to tell you about one person, place or thing from their weekly Dwell take-home resource. Pick up a pack of the excellent *God's Big Story* cards (FaithAliveResources.org) and use them as discussion starters.

2 SHARE YOUR STORIES

Sharing faith stories with each other reminds us that God is at work in our lives every day. To get the ball rolling, ask questions like these:

- Where did you see God today?
- Tell about a time when you felt that God was really close to you.
- What is your favorite Bible story, and why?

3 CELEBRATE MILESTONES

Baptisms, birthdays, graduations, and personal "firsts" such as learning to ride a bike, losing a tooth, and completing a project at school, are all milestones that families can mark together in ways that point to God. Include in your celebration a prayer of thanks and a conversation about God's faithfulness in the life of your child and family.

4 FIND YOUR "FAITHFUL FIVE"

Your extended family, your friends, and your church family can have a profound impact on your children's faith. In fact, according to the folks at Fuller Youth Institute, the involvement of at least five nonfamily adults is key to kids' faith formation. Who are (or who could be) your kids' "faithful five"?

5 REACH OUT

Weave service and hospitality into your family life. Volunteer together for causes you care about. Get to know the people in your neighborhood. Care for those who are hurting. Talk about injustice and advocate for change together.

5 WAYS TO

BRING CHILDREN'S MINISTRY HOME

Kids participate in children's ministry programs for just a few hours each month, but those hours can be valuable stepping stones to a lot of growth for your family. Here are five ways to build on what your child learns at church.

1 WIN BY DOING A HARD THING

Let's be honest: it can be really hard to commit to regular attendance at *anything*. But participating in weekly worship and children's ministry helps kids meet the God who loves them, see how God's salvation plan unfolds through the Bible, develop solid faith habits, and build friendships. That's a win-win-win-win. (So is asking your children's ministry coordinator to save extra take-home papers for you when you do miss a week.)

2 BE A DETECTIVE

Ask your children's ministry coordinator to share with parents the list of Bible stories your child will be exploring each week. Knowing the story topic ahead of time makes it much easier to talk with your kids about it.

3 LET YOUR KIDS BE TEACHERS

Kids may feel like they're on the "hot seat" if you grill them one-on-one about what they learned in Sunday school. But if you talk about the story as a family, you give kids a chance to teach what they have learned. Set aside time each week to look through and talk about the take-home resources your child receives in church. Mark "Storytime" on your calendar in advance as a reminder.

4 ASK ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

After you read the story together, ask questions that get at the *meaning* of the story, not just the *content*. You can ask questions like these:

- What does this story tell us about God?
- What does this story tell us about people?
- What do you wonder about this story?

5 PRAY TOGETHER

Talk about what the Bible story means for us today. How might it change the way we love God, love our neighbor, and care for God's world? Pray together that God will help your family do those things in your daily life.

5 WAYS TO PRAY WITH KIDS

Prayer is an anytime and anywhere conversation with God—no fancy words required! The five ways to pray listed below are easy and meaningful to do. Use them with your family to encourage ongoing conversations with God.

1 KEEP A PRAYER JOURNAL

Write prayer concerns in a notebook, on a calendar, or on paper “leaves” that you hang from a branch in a vase. Then go back and look at the ways God answers those prayers over time.

2 TRY CIRCLE PRAYERS

Hold hands and take turns praying one sentence at a time for each “round.” You may find it helpful to focus your prayer by using this kid-friendly version of the “ACTS” model, replacing Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication with these prompts:

- “God, you are . . .”
- “I’m sorry for . . .”
- “Thank you for . . .”
- “Please . . .”

3 BUILD YOUR PRAYERS

Have each person create a shape that represents what they’d like to pray about. LEGO™ bricks, play dough, or pipe cleaners work well! Then pray about those things.

4 TAKE PRAYER WALKS

Name and pray about the things and people you see while walking in your neighborhood. Broaden your child’s sense of community by also praying for the people and places you locate together on a map or globe.

5 JUST BREATHE

Teach your kids a simple prayer verse or phrase to silently repeat while inhaling and exhaling. This is a great way to calm their spirit and/or help them focus as you enter into prayer together. For example, “When I am afraid, / I put my trust in you” (Psalm 56:3) or “Be still, and know / that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

5 WAYS TO

RETELL A BIBLE STORY WITH KIDS

A great way for kids (and adults!) to remember God's story and to experience it more deeply is to retell it in ways that engage their head, heart, and hands.

Get inspired with these easy ideas for retelling a Bible story.

1 BUILD

Use building blocks or play dough to recreate scenes from the story. Work together or build scenes individually and then show and tell each other about what you've made.

2 DRAW

There are lots of ways to use art to tell stories: Have each person draw a picture of a different part of the story; then put the pictures together and tell the story again. Pick a word from the story and illustrate it. Make a cartoon strip. Sketch pictures of what you're imagining as the story or text is being read; then compare your thoughts.

3 SING

Make up a tune (or use one that's familiar), and turn the story into a song. Or look for a version of the story that's already been recorded, and learn it together. (We love the Bible story songs written and recorded by *Rain for Roots*.)

4 ACT

Use puppets (socks, dolls, or utensils will do!) or yourselves to act out the story. Consider taking photos of each scene and printing them as a book or comic strip. Another fun idea is to assign readers to read the dialog and/or assign sound effects to particular words, and to reread the story together.

5 WONDER

Ask open-ended questions that have no "right or wrong" answers. For example,

- **I wonder what . . .** (I wonder what Jonah thought about inside the fish . . . ?
I wonder what you would have thought about . . . ?)
- **I wonder how . . .** (I wonder how it felt to cross the Red Sea . . . ?
I wonder how this story makes you feel . . . ?)
- **I wonder who . . .** (I wonder who the shepherds told first about meeting baby Jesus . . . ?
I wonder who you would have run to tell . . . ?)
- **I wonder why . . .** (I wonder why Jesus told stories to people . . . ?
I wonder why we don't always do what God asks us to do . . . ?)

5 WAYS TO WONDER WITH KIDS

Encouraging curiosity in kids helps them want to learn more. A sense of wonder is an important part of their faith development too! Here are five ways to promote curiosity and wonder in your family life.

1 SLOW DOWN

Walk at your child's pace and try to physically get on their level when possible. See the world through their eyes and wonder together at the things they're experiencing. Use a magnifying glass to look even closer at God's amazing creation.

2 ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS

Questions are a good thing! They come from a place of curiosity as children try to make sense of day-to-day life. Try your best to react positively to questions, even if you've already answered *hundreds* of them today.

3 EMBRACE THE UNKNOWN

If your child asks you a question that you don't know the answer to (and can't look up online), admit that you don't know. Wonder along with them what the answer might be and remind them that part of the mystery of God is that we don't know all the answers.

4 DEVELOP EMPATHY

Wondering is a great way to help your kids walk a mile in other people's shoes. When something amazing or difficult happens, ask questions like "I wonder what she thought when that happened . . . ?" or "I wonder how that made her feel . . . ?"

5 PAUSE AND REFLECT WHEN EXPLORING GOD'S STORY

Take time to wonder together about the people, places, and events in the Bible stories your child hears in children's ministry. Ask your child, "What do you wonder about this story?" Their answer will give you insight into their thinking, and it will probably deepen your own understanding too.