

Weekly Faith Formation Update

November 2-6, 2020

It's beginning to look a lot like Thanksgiving! The color of the leaves are changing, there's frost on the ground most mornings, and the local market is stocked with freshly picked apples. In the midst of the pandemic, where each day seems to blend into the next, I'm grateful for these visual reminders that along with the changing seasons, the whole world is in God's hands.

[How to Help Families Grow in Gratitude at Thanksgiving \(and Beyond!\)](#)

"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."

This Thanksgiving, our church buildings won't be filled with people and our family gatherings will be small, if they happen at all. That's hard. But we can still give thanks. And we can help families grow gratitude by mailing them a fun, simple tool to use at home.

Download, print, package and send each family the resources below:

- [5 Ways to Grow Grateful Kids](#)
- [A set of I AM GRATEFUL colored paper strips](#)
- An encouraging message explaining what to do. Here's mine:

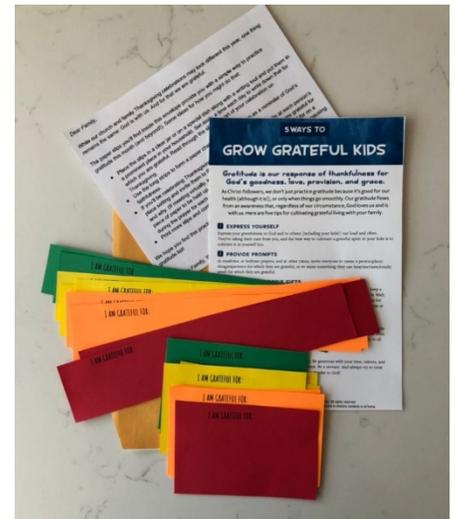
Dear Family,

While our church and family Thanksgiving celebrations may look different this year, one thing remains the same: God is with us. And for that we are grateful. The paper slips you'll find inside this envelope provide you with a simple way to practice gratitude this month (and beyond!).

Some ideas for how you might do that:

- Place the slips in a clear jar or on a special dish along with a writing tool and put them in a prominent place in your household. Set aside a time each day to write down that for which you are grateful. Read through the slips as part of your celebration on Thanksgiving.
- Use the long strips to form a paper chain garland. Hang it up as a reminder of God's faithfulness.
- If you'll be celebrating Thanksgiving with family or friends, place a slip at each person's place setting and invite them to fill it in. Share with each other what you are grateful for and why. (If meeting virtually, invite each person to print what they're grateful for on a piece of paper to be held up and shared.) You could pray your list popcorn style, pausing during the prayer for each person to 'pop' in by reading what they wrote on their slip.
- Print more slips and continue the practice well past this season.

We hope you find this practice helpful. And we also hope you know that you are on our gratitude list!



Dwell Story Reflections: Jesus and a Thankful Man

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.” (Luke 17:11-19 NIV)

This story of Jesus and a thankful man is one of my favorites, as it's so interesting and unique. It appears only in Luke, at the end of a string of passages that emphasize the demanding reality of life as a disciple of Jesus. The story begins by placing the scene somewhere between Samaria and Galilee. Then we meet the lepers. Ten of them call to Jesus from afar, not because they are too lazy to come and meet him, but because they have been banished from society. Their skin disease makes them both unclean and unwanted, and they are forced to live separately from their people.

So, they call out to Jesus rather than approaching him. Jesus, without touching them or speaking words of healing, sends them to the priests. As they go, they are healed. Now, this is where things get interesting. Nine of the lepers continue on to the priests, but one immediately returns to Jesus: “One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him.” Then for the big reveal: “and he was a Samaritan.”

Samaritans were despised by Jewish people in Jesus’ time. Those listening to the story would certainly never have imagined that the one man who returned to praise and thank Jesus could have been a Samaritan. But it’s no coincidence that this story features a Samaritan. His position in the story reminds those hearing it then and us reading it now that the Gospel extends beyond the Israelites.

The specific actions of the man who returned are also significant. As Joel B. Green explains in *The Gospel of Luke*, “Of his three actions—praising God, falling at Jesus’ feet, and thanking Jesus—the first is expected within the Lukan narrative, the second two quite extraordinary.” By throwing himself at Jesus’ feet, the Samaritan acknowledges Jesus’ authority, and in thanking him, he acknowledges the amazing gift he has been given. These are not typical responses to healings in the gospel of Luke, but are above and beyond the responses of others healed by Jesus.

Jesus responds to this thanks and praise by first wondering where the other nine lepers are, and then proclaiming to the Samaritan, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.” The verb we read here as “made well” is translated in other contexts as, “saved,” is best understood as someone being saved from a particular illness. This word points to the reality that Jesus is healing more than just the Samaritan’s leprosy.

In using the word “to save,” Luke reminds readers that the Samaritan was saved from his disease, but also that he was wholly saved by Jesus. This is a message that extends to us. We may not be suffering from leprosy, or living cast out from society, but we have been wholly saved by Jesus. Like the thankful man, our response must be praise, submission, and thankfulness. As the Dwell curriculum’s teacher devotional for this story observes, “Grace is like an electrical circuit. God gives it freely, but it’s only when the grace, the healing, the forgiveness, is returned in grateful living, that it truly transforms our lives.”

To read more reflections on this passage, check out the [Dwell teacher devotional](#), available to anyone for free.