

THE ART OF BEING GRATEFUL

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When are you *most* grateful for something? One day we were doing some last minute grocery shopping, when my husband, Brian, spotted an elderly lady having a problem starting her car. Half an hour later, and with a small gathering of men all offering advice from under her hood, the car finally responded. I saw the look on the old woman's face as she rested her head on the steering wheel in absolute relief. "You are a Godsend", she told Brian.

Gratitude is most readily expressed when some major discomfort has been diverted. However, we need to model gratitude to our children at the most basic level so they understand what the term actually means. We need to show them how and when to say, 'Thank you', for small things. I have often heard people in restaurants say to the waiter, "Give me some water," in a commanding tone rather than a request. There is no 'please', nor 'thanks' offered for the service. Kids learn from adults. We need to show them how to show gratitude for every kindness offered.

During the depression, when people barely had the money to survive, the value of their possessions rose dramatically in their own minds. One doll or one toy soldier became of utmost value to a child during those hard times because it was the only toy they had. It is very difficult for kids these days to understand value and gratitude when they are regularly showered with large quantities of 'stuff'. The message they get from this 'Santa Claus-style giving' is that money must grow on trees and that stuff has very little value when it is so readily available.

There are three sure ways to teach your kids how to be grateful. If you consistently *demonstrate* gratitude they will automatically follow your lead. Let them see you thanking others for their kindness or for services rendered. Let them hear you talk about your gratitude toward others.

Another way is to *show your kids* gratitude. They feel valued when you tell them how much you appreciate the way they looked after little sister in the market, or took the dog for a walk, or gave Mommy breakfast in bed, or did their homework without being reminded. Being recognized for doing a good job has a profound effect on anyone, big or small.

The third way is to *stop being Santa Clause*. Don't give kids stuff every time you go shopping or every time they ask. They learn to expect it. Cut the Christmas wish list down to 3 items each child. Have them buy little gifts for one another so they understand the value of the gift they paid for from their own pocket money. By giving to others they will also experience the pleasure of making someone else happy. This is teaching them to be outward focused.

Gratitude is a wonderful attribute to teach your family and one Jesus clearly taught us – ‘In all things give thanks’. (2 Thes 5:18).

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.