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Character Development

Lesson 9: Gratefulness

Lesson Keys

- Introduction
- Definition
- Indicator Results
- Biblical Example
- The Odds
- Going the Distance
- Conclusion

Preparation

The gratefulness indicators will most likely point out the lack of gratefulness in most kids. Don't let the kids get discouraged, but encourage them through the lesson that they *can* develop this trait.

Supplies

- Dimes
- Indicator Cards
- Pens

Scripture Guide

Luke 17:11-19

James 1:2-4

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Teaching Coach

Be sure not to give anything away about this lesson. Let the kids answer and react honestly. If they know that this lesson is about gratefulness, they will all show gratitude since children

Introduction

Gratefulness Indicator 1:

Stand in the front of the room but a little further back than normal so that everyone does not hear what is said between you and each child. Go down the role calling the names of each child. Have them come forward, one at a time when their name is called. When they get to the front, hand them a dime (try to not let anyone else see what you gave them) tell them to put it in their pocket and ask them to sit back down. If the child shows gratitude by saying thank you, put a check by their name. Go through the list until everyone has gotten a dime. Try your best to not give away that you are looking for "thank you"s. Total up the number of people who were grateful and the number of those who were not. Once you are done, move on to the next indicator without explaining why you just gave everyone money.

Gratefulness Indicator 2:

Pass out indicator cards. Tell the kids to not write their names on the paper. Instruct the kids to fill out the cards as completely as they know how. In the top section have them list as many good things that have happened to them in the past seven days that they can think of. In the bottom section, have them write down all the bad things that they have had happen to them in the past seven days.

When done, ask the kids if they specifically thanked God for each one of the good things that happened. If they did, tell them to put a check mark in the box right beside the good thing that happened.

Now ask the kids if they thanked God for each one of the bad things that happened. If they did, tell them to put a check mark in the box right beside the bad thing that happened. Collect them to see how they did.

Introduction

If you have not figured this out already, gratefulness is the character trait that we are learning about today. Gratefulness is a trait that can be developed, just like humility or patience. The two activities that we did will

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Often will give the answer or response that they know we *want* to hear.

The indicator results will always vary. If your group did really well, commend them for their gratefulness and encourage them to continue developing this trait. If your group does poorly on the indicator, show your concern (don't let them see disappointment on your face-you don't want them to get totally discouraged) and let them know that this indicator has shown how much they need to work on this character trait.

It is not really in people's nature to be thankful for the bad things that happen. The whole point of this side of the lesson is to show how we need to see God's will in all areas (including the bad) of our daily lives and thanking him for all the opportunities to grow.

actually show how grateful of a person you really are. Before we get to the results of those first two activities, let us look into the definition of gratefulness.

Definition

Recognizing the things that God and others have given to you. And using appropriate ways to express appreciation. Accepting difficulties as part of God's loving provision.

Indicator Results

Sometimes it is really easy to be grateful when the thing given to you is really big. It is very easy to take little things for granted and not show genuine appreciation. Sometimes we may even fall into the trap of failing to believe that appreciation is even needed.

In the first activity you were each given a dime. Obviously a dime is not very much money and by itself, it cannot purchase much. However, it was given to you at someone's expense and when all the dimes are added up, it comes to a little bit more of a significant gift. In most cases, it is the very small things that are the proof how grateful you are.

With the second activity, you will see how grateful you are by how many things you specifically gave thanks for. There is no excuse for not giving thanks for all the good things. Not showing appreciation for these things is simply wrong. However, not many people take time to thank God for the bad things. A truly grateful person sees that even though God does not cause bad things to happen, he does allow them to happen. If God allows them to happen, then they are part of his plan for our lives, the very things that help us to grow as a person. A grateful person thanks God for all circumstances knowing that it is a part of God's plan for us.

Biblical Example

Luke 17:11-19

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

14 When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

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15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him-and he was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

In this biblical story, there were ten who were healed, yet only one thought to give thanks. To be a leper was a total disgrace. A leper had to leave the city. They were not able to see their family very much and were considered outcasts. You would think that someone who was healed of this would be incredibly grateful. However, only one returned to show gratitude.

The Odds

According to this Bible story, the odds are not in your favor to being a grateful person. Out of the ten lepers that were healed, there was only one who was a grateful person. The others were selfish and ungrateful. What kind of person will you choose to be? The odds say that most of you will be selfish and ungrateful. Will you choose to defy the odds and exhibit this character trait?

Going the Distance

Like we discussed earlier, it is easier to be grateful for when the really big and good things happen. However, it takes something really special to be grateful when things are not going well. Understanding that God uses every circumstance for our good and being thankful for what his will is for your life is truly being grateful.

Consider Paul's example. He endured many bad things including being stoned, shipwrecked, flogged and put in prison. This is what he had to day:

James 1:2-4

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

Throw this out as a challenge. You might want to even have one out of every ten kids in the room stand up. Tell the kid that according to the odds, these people will be grateful and the rest will not. Challenge them to defy the odds.

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Again Paul gives instructions concerning gratefulness.

1 Thess 5:16-18

16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Gratefulness includes thanking God in all circumstances. This does not mean that we are to always wear a fake smile and say that everything is perfect. It means that when things are difficult, we need to acknowledge God and his desire to see us grow through the situation. He allows us to go through the difficult times simply because he loves us and wants us to be all that we can potentially be.

Conclusion

Do you dare to defy the odds? Will you choose to develop gratefulness as a part of your character? Being grateful means never taking the little things for granted but always being thankful. It also means that you will not complain during hard times, but give thanks and glory to God. To develop this trait it will take sacrifice and a total change of your mindset; however the rewards are eternal. Most of all, it brings us closer to becoming more like God, developing the character of Christ.

Close in prayer.

Allow God to speak to these kids at this part of the lesson. Perhaps you can give them a minute to bow their heads and be quiet while they think about this lesson. You might want them to raise their hands if they want to commit to develop this quality. Take a few moments to pray over them at the end.