

November 2008



# theParentLink<sup>SM</sup>

## Children's Edition

## Help Children Be Grateful Prayers

There's an important significance to the fact that Thanksgiving comes before Christmas. It's tough to experience "Joy to the World" without first having had the opportunity to "Give Thanks."

Gratitude receives special emphasis as Thanksgiving nears, but parents can keep it at the forefront of children's minds year-round. A great way to start is by helping kids pray with grateful hearts.

Read on to discover ways to show children the value of thanking God for all he provides and does for us:

### **Make prayer a part of your children's lives by incorporating it into daily living.**

Model frequent prayer, showing children that requests aren't the only reason to talk to God. Use the "ACTS" model of prayer to get started: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

**Show thankfulness by saying spontaneous prayers throughout the day.** Remember to tell God thanks for life's "little things"—from pretty clouds to favorite foods. Also, thank God for your children's kindness and help.



**Direct children's gratitude toward the giver of "whatever is good and perfect" (see James 1:17).** Let children know that God deserves credit for all of our blessings. Recognize and affirm their feelings of gratitude, and point your children to the real source.

### Insights About Prayer and Gratitude

In a nationwide survey conducted by the Barna Group, only 34% of children ages 8 to 12 said that prayer is very important to them. Researcher George Barna said that poses a challenge to parents, who "must take the lead in establishing the centrality of faith experiences and practices for their children."

Some good news about gratitude: Researchers tell us that it's both a feeling and a habit of mind. In addition, the experience of gratitude motivates people to be kind, especially toward the giver of what we're grateful for.

PowerSource

### Ask God:

1. To help your children be thankful for their many blessings.
2. To give your children a desire to talk with God often.
3. To help your family keep an attitude of gratitude all year.

### Age-Appropriate Prayers

In *Children's Ministry Magazine*, Kathy Downs offers insights into children's perceptions of prayer—and some ways to help kids pray:

#### **Ages 2 to 3**

Children this age understand that Jesus is their friend. Say simple, conversational "sentence prayers" that relate to children's life.

#### **Ages 4 to 6**

These children want to know how God works in their lives. Help them think of other people to pray for. Point out examples of how God answers prayers.

#### **Ages 7 to 9**

Children this age feel a need for God's help and can verbally express thoughts. Offer examples of delayed answers to prayers.

#### **Ages 10 to 12**

Preteens understand that God is more personal but may doubt his love. Help kids express joys and fears, using the Bible to support their prayer lives.

## OpenTheBook

**"Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart."  
Colossians 4:2**

Prayer is a natural response to hearts that are overflowing with thankfulness. Talking to and praising God is the best way to express our gratitude for his endless love.

### Teachable Moments

- 1. Prayer Prompts**—To help children get started with prayers, write or say some sentence-starters. For example, "God, you are...." "I'm happy you made...." and "Please help...."



- 2. Prayer-and-Praise Journals**—Use an inexpensive scrapbook to keep track of ways God answers your family's prayers. Children also can color or paste in pictures of things they're thankful for.
- 3. Popcorn Prayers**—For a fun twist on prayer, have family members take turns saying one thing they're thankful for or one person they want God to bless.
- 4. Pray Without Ceasing**—Show children the value of prayer and gratitude during difficult times. Together, thank God for his constant care and for loving and forgiving us even when we mess up.



**"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD**, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

**The approaching holidays offer many opportunities to have conversations about gratitude and prayer. Use these discussion-starters to explore the topics with your children:**

1. What are some nice things people do for you? When you are treated kindly, what does that make you want to do?
2. What are all the things God has given you just today? Why do you think God does all that for us?
3. What are some good words we can use to show God that we appreciate his many blessings?
4. What are some ways besides praying that we can show God how thankful we are?

## Family Experience: "God, I'm Grateful For..."

**Thanksgiving is about more than just food. So give your family an opportunity to "feast" on the many blessings God provides each day. Try these fun ideas this year:**

- **Blessing Tree**—Start a new pre-Christmas tradition by setting up a small artificial tree during November. Together, cut out some colorful paper circles. Punch a hole near the edge, and thread yarn through it to make a hanger. Have everyone write on the circles things they're thankful for or recent answers to prayer. Throughout the month, hang the circles on the tree.
- **Thanksgiving Countdown**—Play this "giving thanks" game with your family to help them focus on all their blessings. You can do one per day as you count down the week before Thanksgiving Day. Take turns naming:
  1. One gift you've received this year that you're thankful for.
  2. Two things you've learned about God this year that have changed your life.
  3. Three things you're thankful for about our family's faith.
  4. Four things you're thankful for about our family.
  5. Five experiences our family had this year that made you happy.
  6. Six things in creation you couldn't live without.
  7. Seven people outside our family who blessed you somehow.





## What's Playing at the Movies

**Movie:** *Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa* (Nov. 7)

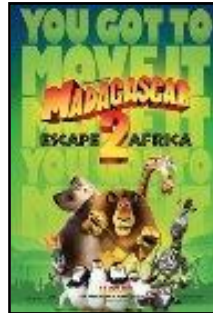
**Genre:** Animation/Comedy

**Rating:** PG (for some mild crude humor)

**Cast:** Ben Stiller, Chris Rock, David Schwimmer, Jada Pinkett Smith, Sacha Baron Cohen

**Synopsis:** In this sequel, four animal friends try to return to New York's Central Park Zoo. The crafty penguins try to help by building a plane, but that only gets the group to the African plains. There they meet animals like themselves and explore their different traits and homes. Then the friends must decide whether or not to stay in Africa.

**Discussion Questions:** What are some traits that make you unique? Why did God make everyone so different? Think about the range of characteristics and talents in your own family: How can we use that variety to give glory to God?



## What Music Is Releasing

**Album:** *Don't Forget*

**Artist Info:** Demi Lovato's career began at age 6 on "Barney & Friends." Eventually, she began playing piano and guitar and writing songs. Lovato played a regular role on Disney's "As the Bell Rings." Now 16, she's best known for her role as Mitchie in the Disney Channel movie *Camp Rock* and for touring with the Jonas Brothers.

**Summary:** Lovato's debut album tackles topics such as young love and relationships, staying true to yourself, and having a positive self-image. Compared to other Disney artists, Lovato is edgier. But her music is still appropriate for preteens. Lovato credits the Jonas Brothers with helping her lighten up her darker, personal lyrics.

**Discussion Questions:** In "Believe in Me," Lovato sings, "The mirror can lie; doesn't show you what's inside." What do you think she means? Read 1 Samuel 16:7. What matters most to God, and why?



## What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>De Blob</i>	Players use de Blob and the Color Underground to restore the gray city of Chroma to its original color. Contains mild cartoon violence.	E; Wii
<i>Dinosaur King</i>	This game, inspired by Pokemon, teaches knowledge about dinosaurs as you collect them. Contains fantasy violence.	E; Nintendo DS
<i>LEGO Batman: The Videogame</i>	This game is based on the TV series, not the blockbuster movie. Contains cartoon violence, with LEGO-block characters breaking apart as they fight.	E+; Nintendo DS, Wii, PS2, PS3

**GAME RATINGS KEY:** EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



## Culture & Trends

**What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:**

- Financial fears can trickle down from parents to kids. Assure children that your family will always take care of one another. Turn off the news and share stories of God's help during troubles.
- More kids are sharing rooms, even when separate quarters are available. Room-sharers may grow closer and become better problem-solvers, experts say.

## Quick Stats

- The flu hits hardest in ZIP codes with more children. Now doctors recommend that almost all kids get a flu vaccine.



- At FamilyEducation.com, 47,000 people were asked if it's OK to reward good grades with cash. The results:
  - ✓ 61% — Yes; it's a good incentive.
  - 39% — No; learning is its own reward.

# November 2008

						<b>1</b>
						All Saints' Day
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
Preschool/ Kindergarten 9 and 11 a.m. Mass All Souls' Day			Gr. 1-5 Faith Formation 5-6:00 & 6:30-7:30	Gr. 1-5 Faith Formation 4-5 & 5:30-6:30		
<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
Preschool/ Kindergarten 9 and 11 a.m. Mass  "Sermon on the Mount" with Frank Runyeon at 7 p.m.			Gr. 1-5 Faith Formation 5-6:00 & 6:30-7:30 <i>"Heifer Project" collection</i>	Gr. 1-5 Faith Formation 4-5 & 6:30-7:30 <i>"Heifer Project" collection</i>		Make your reservations for Dec. 6 <i>"Breakfast with St. Nicholas"</i> starting today email pmundy@saint- mikes.org!
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
Preschool/ Kindergarten 9 and 11 a.m. Mass			Gr. 1-5 Faith Formation 5-6:00 & 6:30-7:30 <i>"Heifer Project" collection</i>	Gr. 1-5 Faith Formation 5-6:00 & 6:30-7:30 <i>"Heifer Project" collection</i>		
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>NO PRESCHOOL/K CLASSES</b> "A WALK THROUGH THE CHURCH YEAR WITH JESUS" 1- 2:30 OPEN HOUSE EVENT!			<b>NO CLASS For Gr. 1-5</b>	<b>NO CLASS For Gr. 1-5</b>  THANKSGIVING BLESSINGS!		
<b>30</b>						
<b>NO PRESCHOOL/K CLASSES</b> Advent Begins!						