



## November 2010

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## Nurture Grateful Young Servants

November is the perfect time to transform our gratitude to God into acts of generosity toward others. These don't always have to be "big" acts. William Wordsworth said "the best portions" of a good person's life are his or her "little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love."

With some support from you, the little children in your life can make a big difference in the lives of other people. Here are some ideas to encourage gratitude and service:



**Make serving fun.** Spend an afternoon raking up leaves for elderly neighbors or church members. Afterward, dump a bag of the leaves on your own lawn, and throw some individually wrapped candy into the pile. After children search for the candy, discuss what makes helping others feel so "sweet."

**Enlist children in the Christian Secret Service (CSS).** Deploy kids for undercover operations by having them serve others covertly. For example, they can leave sidewalk-chalk messages for neighbors, deliver cards at a local nursing home, or pick up trash at their favorite park.

**Share your adventures in serving.** During November and December, challenge family members to perform acts of giving and kindness. Then report the activities every night during dinner or family devotions. These can range from shoveling snow and delivering cookies to leaving a close-to-the-door parking spot open at the mall or helping someone carry his or her packages.

### Thoughts About Thankfulness

- In a poll conducted last Thanksgiving, 41% of American adults said that after family and health, they're most thankful for their religious faith. Adults over age 40 are more thankful for their religion than younger people are.  
 (Rasmussen Reports)
- 78% of Americans think the actions of one person can improve the world. The same number also believes they're more involved in making a difference than their parents were.
- (Parade)

### PowerSource

#### Ask God:

1. To give your children grateful hearts for all their blessings.
2. To provide opportunities for your family to serve together.
3. To make service a joyful, regular habit in your home.

#### Parenting Insights

In *The Five Love Languages of Children*, Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell note that "parenting is a service-oriented vocation." They offer tips for parents whose kids feel loved through acts of service that others perform for them:

1. **Set a model of servanthood and responsibility.** Don't use acts of service to manipulate children or to offer them things that aren't best for them or your family.
2. **Keep acts of service age-appropriate.** Don't do things for children that they should be doing for themselves. As kids become ready, teach them how to serve themselves and then others.
3. **Perform an attitude check.** Remember that loving service is a gift. Daily, "mundane" tasks that parents perform for children are expressions of love that have long-term effects on children.

## OpenTheBook

**"Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith."  
Galatians 6:10**

God wants us to act out our gratitude every day through "thanksgiving," an attitude of gratitude that shows itself through service to others.

### Teachable Moments

1. **Read Up**—For babies and toddlers, read aloud picture books about thankfulness, such as *Thank You, God, for Everything* by August Gold and *Thankfulness* by Cynthia Roberts. Talk about ways we say thank you to God and other people.



2. **Pop Up**—For preschoolers, play a game to express thankfulness. Have all family members crouch down on the floor. Then have people pop up randomly—and often—to say what they're thankful for. Play another round, popping up to say how you can help others.
3. **Sing Your Thanks**—Visit [www.group.com/groupmusic](http://www.group.com/groupmusic) for free music downloads and more fun, simple activities to increase your family's thankfulness. Also check out the "GroupMusic" Facebook page to suggest your own ideas for easy family activities about gratitude and Thanksgiving.



**"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**

### **Start a conversation with your children about gratitude and servanthood by asking these discussion-starter questions:**

1. What are some blessings God has given you? What blessings do you sometimes take for granted or forget to thank God for?
2. How do you show God that you appreciate his gifts? How can we thank someone we can't see?
3. When you're thankful, how does that make you want to act?
4. Why does God want us to help and serve other people? What are some ways we can do that as individuals? as a family?

### **Family Experience: Service With a Smile** **Try these activities from Group's Hands-On Bible to help your family members explore ways to put thankfulness into action:**

- **Food From Heaven**—Use spoons to launch small marshmallows into one another's mouths. Say: "We just fed each other in an amazing way. God fed his people in an amazing way, too." Read aloud Exodus 16:11-21. Talk about how God provided for the Israelites and how he provides for your family. Add some leftover marshmallows to dried cereal, nuts, raisins, or pretzels to make a tasty "manna mix." Ask: "What would it be like to gather your food off the ground each day? How can we help people who need food or other necessities?" Assemble a bag of nonperishable groceries and deliver it to a local food bank. Or make another batch of manna mix and give it to a family who needs encouragement. Tell this family you're praying for them and that God cares about their needs.
- **Follow His Example**—Have everyone take off their socks and shoes. Read aloud John 13:1-15, about Jesus washing his disciples' feet. Say: "In Bible times, servants washed the dirty feet of guests. It was a lowly job, but Jesus did it to show that we should serve others." Take turns giving one another foot massages. Ask: "Why was Jesus willing to be a servant? How can we encourage each other to remember to serve?" Have family members use permanent markers to write on a light-colored towel the name of someone they'd like to serve. Hang the towel in the bathroom as a reminder to follow through on your service ideas.





## What's Playing at the Movies

**Movie:** *Megamind* (Nov. 5)

**Genre:** Animated comedy

**Rating:** PG (for action and some language)

**Cast:** Will Ferrell, Brad Pitt, Tina Fey, Jonah Hill

**Synopsis:** Über-villain Megamind gets bored after defeating all his enemies. When he creates a new foe, the plan backfires. Megamind ends up having to save the day, setting him on a path of redemption.

**Discussion Questions:** Do you feel like you have more friends or enemies, and why? What are some ways to turn an enemy into a friend? Read aloud Romans 5:10-11. Why were we God's enemies before Jesus came to save us? How can we show God that we are now his friends?



## What Music Is Releasing

**Artist:** Willow Smith

**Single:** "Whip My Hair"

**Artist Info:** Smith, who turns 10 on Halloween, is the daughter of Hollywood power couple Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith. She was recently signed to Jay-Z's Roc Nation Records. "When you have that sort of talent, there is no such thing as too young," says Jay-Z. Smith, who's been compared to Rihanna, is often critiqued for her edgy fashions.

**Summary:** Since Smith's saucy, swaggering R&B anthem "Whip My Hair" appeared on YouTube, it has received more than 2 million hits. She sings, "Don't let haters keep me off my grind. Keep my head up, and I know I'll be fine."

**Discussion Questions:** What do you think a life in the spotlight would be like? How is this similar to being a Christian? Read aloud Matthew 5:11 and 1 Timothy 4:12. How do you react when "haters" make fun of or judge you? What kinds of great things can kids accomplish?



## What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Kirby's Epic Yarn</i>	An animated ball of yarn changes into a variety of forms. The scenes are composed of arts-and-crafts materials.	E; Wii
<i>NBA 2K11</i>	Players can step into Michael Jordan's shoes, reliving some of the superstar's most memorable games. The soundtrack may contain some inappropriate lyrics.	Rating pending; PSP, PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, PC
<i>The Sims 3</i>	In this popular character-creating series, players can now unleash "karma powers" on their Sims. Contains comic mischief and mild suggestive themes.	E; PS3, Nintendo DS, Wii, Xbox 360

**RATINGS:** 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:

- Children are swearing earlier than ever, due to a rise in vulgarity among adults. Swearing "really takes off" between ages 3 and 4, says researcher Timothy Jay. ([www.livescience.com](http://www.livescience.com))
- Almost all (92%) of U.S. babies and toddlers now have a "digital footprint," thanks to photo-sharing and social-networking sites. (CNN.com)

## Quick Stats

- Two-thirds of adults with no-swear policies for children break their own rules. ([www.livescience.com](http://www.livescience.com))
- Today's children have 12 fewer hours of free time a week than kids did in the 1980s. (Univ. of Michigan)



- Physically fit 9 and 10 year olds have bigger brain volumes and out-perform out-of-shape peers on memory tests. (Brain Research)