

DAWN TREADER

EQUIPPING FAMILIES FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

A KEEPING THE FAITH RESOURCE

ISSUE 1.11



Toward the end of November, Americans celebrate the holiday of Thanksgiving Day, with its connections to harvest time and fruitfulness. Whether or not we live in a country that celebrates this holiday, it's good for all Christians to focus on the gratitude we feel toward God, the Giver of all good gifts. In this issue of *Dawn Treader*, we will be discussing the overwhelming abundance of God's bountifulness to us, and how faith and obedience in our relationship with Him are inextricably bound up with gratitude.

Dawn Treader Moments

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: THANKFULNESS

Dawn Treader Moments are purpose-driven opportunities to engage children in important topics. We offer one key question per week, the answers to which parents can then explore with their children throughout the week.

THANKS BE TO GOD

Thankfulness is a key part of our relationship with God. As our Creator, Savior, and Father, God gives all of us more blessings than we would ever have thought to ask Him for: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). So it is very important to discuss how we are to thank Him for it all. *For week one, ask the first question below over an unhurried meal. Let the children think about it and then offer their own answers. The children should talk more than the parents. Throughout the week, offer the different reasons highlighted and let the children discuss them. (Parents, read through the relevant Bible passages in advance.) Challenge the children to look up other verses addressing the question. Do the same for the following questions each week for the month.*

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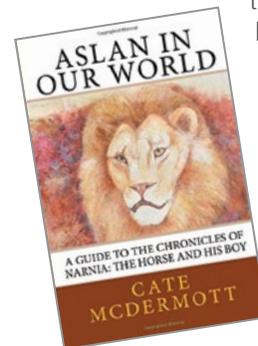
Resource of the Month

Aslan In Our World: A Guide to the Chronicles of Narnia: The Horse and His Boy – Cate McDermott

The fourth book in the *Aslan In Our World* series, this study guide on C.S. Lewis' *The Horse and His Boy* concentrates on the story's missional focus. The *Aslan in Our World Study Guide Series* is designed to lead readers into discovering the connections between the principles of

Narnian adventure and the truths of Christian theology. Through thought-provoking questions, Scripture references, and proposed discussion topics, study groups, families, or individuals may uncover the rich

Christian testimony of C.S. Lewis in the *Chronicles of Narnia* for themselves.



FOCUS OF THE MONTH: THANKFULNESS

Week One: What is thanksgiving all about? (Leviticus 7:11-15 and 22:29, Nehemiah 8:8-12 and 12:45-16, Ephesians 5:20)

- Discuss thanksgiving as “giving thanks”—what do we mean when we say “thank you”?
- Festivals for giving thanks to God are very important in the Bible and throughout the history of Christianity, including the modern-day Thanksgiving.
- Giving thanks is part of worshipping God.
- Every day can and should be a celebration of Thanksgiving.

Week Two: How can we thank God? (Psalms 50:14, 95:2, and 100, Luke 17:11-18)

- By recognizing the good things God has given us.
- By using His resources and our God-given talents wisely.
- By obeying His commands.
- By trusting He will always do what is best for us, since we are thankful that He has in the past.
- By remembering to say “thank you” in prayer.

Week Three: Why has God given us so much to be thankful for? (2 Corinthians 3:14 and 4:15, 1 Timothy 4:4, Revelation 7:9-12)

- Because He loves us.
- Because His Nature is overflowing with goodness and bountifulness, expressed in His marvelous works of creation.
- Because He wants to have a parent-child relationship with us; giving us everything we need as our Heavenly Father.
- Because as our Savior, He gives to us freely in order for us to receive His salvation and live with Him eternally.

Week Four: How can we show thankfulness to others? (2 Corinthians 9:6-15, Philippians 2:28-30 and 4:10-17, Timothy 2:1-2)

- By appreciating them and having good relationships with them.
- By helping them when they need help in their turn.
- By always having a happy, helpful, and considerate attitude, grateful for what we have rather than complaining about what we don't.

Theologian Theodore Conversation Corner

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WHAT DO I HAVE TO BE THANKFUL FOR?

Theodore: Good morning, Rita! How are you doing today?

Rita: Okay, I guess.

Theo: That didn't sound very convincing.

Rita: Well, to tell you the truth, Theo, I haven't been feeling very good about things lately—general dissatisfaction, I guess. And don't—

Theo: Don't what?

Rita: Don't tell me how much better I'd feel if I'd just count my blessings and realize how much I have to be thankful for. I get tired of hearing it—it always makes me feel guilty, somehow. I don't see what I have to be especially thankful for—I don't have any great opportunities that are so much better than anyone else's. And so since I *don't* feel thankful, when people tell me that I ought to, that makes me feel rather guilty.

Theo: You should, if you'll pardon me for saying so. How can you say you don't have anything to be thankful for? Look at all the blessings that surround us here in the Western world today—unprecedented luxury and technological advancement, access to education and health care, good jobs, no famines or plagues or invasions that our military isn't equipped to deal with, political and religious freedom, no artificial class barriers to making friends or following certain careers, every opportunity to enjoy cultural activities and entertainment—what *don't* we have to be thankful for, Rita?

Theologian Theodore (CONTD)

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WHAT DO I HAVE TO BE THANKFUL FOR?

Rita: Oh, I know—I'm glad we have all those things, too. But they bring along their own troubles, don't you think? And it's not like we didn't have to work to get them. People have labored for centuries to invent and discover new, better ways of living, and put into place better systems of government and increased civilization...

Theo: Exactly. So we might be thankful to our predecessors, as well as to God, for all the benefits we enjoy.

Rita: Well, but I don't like to feel as though I'm not earning them myself. I feel that if you make proper use of the education system we have, work hard to get a university degree and a good job, vote in elections and give money to the Red Cross and other organizations that send aid to less developed countries, you'll be a good citizen. And if I achieve success by hard work, I think I deserve it.

Theo: So do most of us. But we don't.

Rita: So, we don't all have the right, as they say, to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"?

Theo: Not because of our own merits. What the eighteenth-century theorists on human liberty were referring to when they wrote of "rights" were those given to us, *despite* our lack of merit, by our Creator. "Endowed" is the word used by Thomas Jefferson in America's Declaration of Independence, if I remember correctly, and a dower has the nature of a gift given to a family member, not something earned. We haven't earned any of the rights and blessings we enjoy; we can't say we *deserve* them, even if we think everyone should have them, and so we should be extremely grateful for them. And you really are, Rita, however much you try to deny it. Otherwise, you wouldn't be concerned with properly using the blessings you enjoy to do good yourself. Thankfulness is really all about actions, not feelings. As C.S. Lewis wrote: "people are often worried ... They cannot find any such feeling in themselves. What are they to do? The answer is the same as before. Act as if you did. Do not sit trying to manufacture feelings. Ask yourself ... what would I do? When you have found the answer, go and do it!"¹



Rita: Ye-es. But I'm still not sure I agree with you, Theo. After all, if I don't have myself to thank for the blessings I enjoy, who do I have to thank? Who gave them to me, really?.

Theo: God is the source of all blessings, whether we realize it or not. Think about it. As He is our Creator, Savior, and Father, we depend on Him for everything we have—every breath we take is only by His Will for us. The great things that people do are only because God has given them the ability and talents and opportunities and spiritual motivation to do them. There



QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WHAT DO I HAVE TO BE THANKFUL FOR?

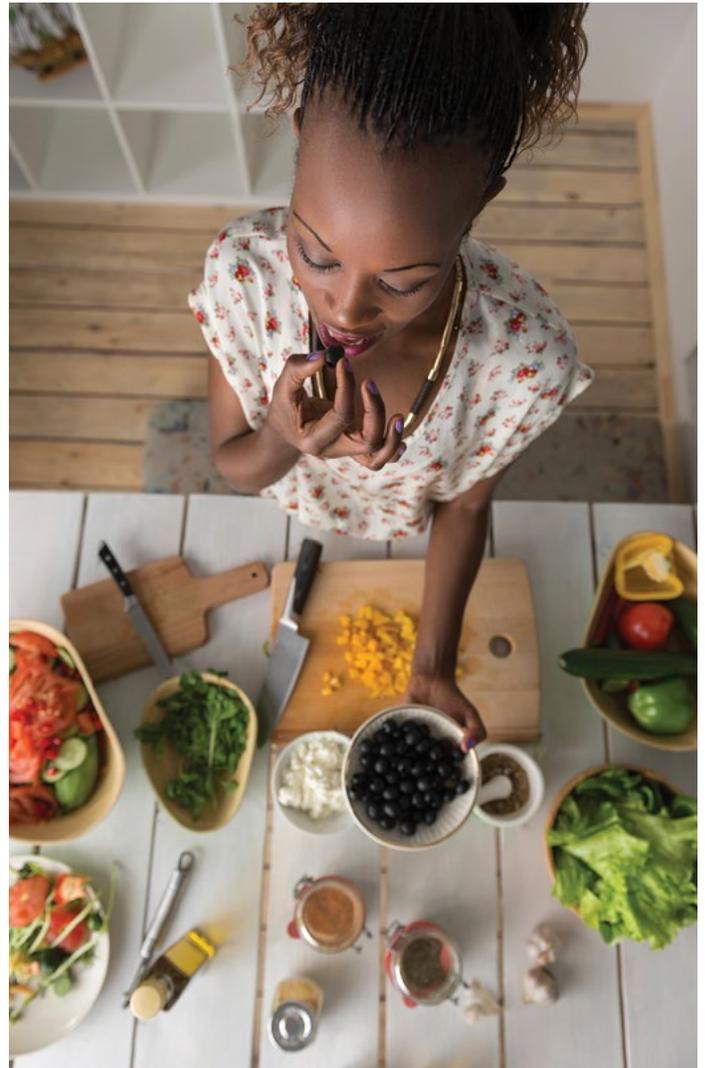
wouldn't be much point in doing anything in this world if it wasn't for our hope of eternal life, and we wouldn't have that without Jesus. And we can't *do* anything without Him, either. "Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or of moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already."² I once read about a successful pastor who prayed that God would preserve him from pride in his ministry by taking away all his abilities for a week, except those which he didn't need Him for. Abruptly, that pastor realized that he couldn't carry a tune, couldn't write a coherent sermon, couldn't organize a proper meeting, couldn't do *anything* without God's help. Not one of us can. And when you consider how much we all are doing all the time, we certainly depend on Him for a lot; and we should be thankful for every little bit of it. All the time, not just at Thanksgiving.

Rita: But maybe having a day off just to say thank you is a good thing, since the rest of the time we're so busy doing all those things that we need to be thankful for.

Theo: Or busy doing things in faith and obedience to show that we are already thankful to God, that too.

Rita: Right. Maybe you're right, Theo—maybe being thankful is the way to stop feeling sorry for yourself, after all.

Ask your children: What do you think about Theo's answers to Rita's questions? Do you have any other questions of your own that this dialogue has brought up for you? Challenge them to think up more responses they could give, if someone asked them a question like Rita's.



Prayer of the Month

DEAR LORD WE THANK YOU

The thanksgiving prayer below would be very nice to say before the big holiday meal, but it works for every time we need to thank the Lord – which should be at least once every single day!

CONTINUED →



¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50th Anniversary ed. (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), p. 132.

² *Ibid.* p. 143.

Prayer of the Month

(CONT'D)

DEAR LORD, WE THANK YOU

Dear Lord,

We thank You with all our hearts for all Your wondrous gifts:
For life, a mind to think with, a heart to love with, and a soul
to worship You;

For family, friends, good food to eat and clothes to wear;
For a roof over our heads and all the other blessings that make
life enjoyable.

But we especially thank You for sending Your Son Jesus to die
for our sins

And redeem us for eternal life with You.

Thank You for always forgiving and loving us,
Coming and searching for us to take us back when we have
gone wrong,

Our Good Shepherd.

Thank you for Your Holy Spirit to guide us in living and
understanding rightly,

And for protecting us against evil and temptation
All the days of our life.

And we thank You for this special day,

When we can gather to worship and celebrate with loved
ones yet again.

Help us to show our gratitude in our love and obedience to You,

And in our love and care for others,

And appreciation and wise use and stewardship of Your world.

In Jesus' Name we pray,

Amen



This is another little prayer, a verse from a hymn by Joseph Addison (1712):

Ten thousand thousand precious gifts

My daily thanks employ,

And not the least a cheerful heart

Which tastes those gifts with joy.

Amen

Activity of the Month

THANKFULNESS IN DEED



The best way to show that we are thankful for what we have is to use it to help others. This month, get together as a family and do

a special thanksgiving work of ministry for those in need. Operation Christmas Child, a ministry which collects shoeboxes of Christmas gifts for children around the world, will be collecting this month; this is a wonderful, delightfully straightforward and meaningful ministry for families to get involved in together. But perhaps there are other opportunities for giving right in your neighborhood—even simple things like cooking extra meals for a lonely elderly person, or helping a neighbor put up their Christmas lights! Be creative—it is the start of the holidays, after all, and giving to God can be really fun!



KEEPING THE FAITH

What is Keeping the Faith? The Keeping the Faith program is a unique study-plus-fellowship experience featuring the Aslan Academy Small Group model centered around the Keeping the Faith guidebook. It is designed to equip parents, grandparents and other caring adults for intentional discipleship of their children and teens. Dawn Treader is a monthly newsletter filled with activities and ideas geared to help you to disciple the children in your lives from preschool through the teen years. To learn more about the program, go to: www.cslewisinstitute.org/KTFResources