

DAWN TREADER

EQUIPPING FAMILIES FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

A KEEPING THE FAITH RESOURCE

ISSUE 2.11



For this month's *Dawn Treader*, our ship arrives bearing gifts of gratitude. How do we give back to the One Who gives us everything? We will be discussing this question in the context of defining gratitude, showing gratitude and exercising gratitude as followers of Christ.

Dawn Treader Moments

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: GRATITUDE

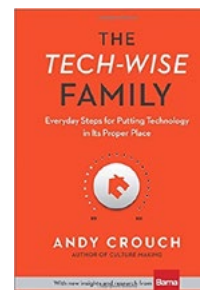
Dawn Treader Moments are purpose-driven opportunities to engage children in important topics. We offer one key question per week, the answers to which parents can then explore with their children throughout the week.

Gratitude is a positive identifying virtue for any follower of Jesus Christ. However, it is sometimes difficult to know how to demonstrate grateful feelings practically, especially for gifts that can never be fully repaid (such as salvation). How, then, can we teach our children what gratitude means in a practical way? *For week one, ask the first question 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

The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place – Andy Crouch



Making good choices about technology in our families is more than just using internet filters and determining screen-time limits for our children. It's about building character, wisdom, and courage rather than accepting technology's promises of ease and instant gratification. It's about developing our heart, mind, soul, and strength when we're tempted to settle for entertainment and consumer satisfaction. And it's definitely not just about the kids.

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FOCUS OF THE MONTH: GRATITUDE

- Week One:** What does it mean to be grateful? (Numbers 12:3, Psalm 18:49, Luke 17:15-18, Philippians 4:6)
- Gratitude is recognizing that we have not done everything for ourselves, but that we depend on others (especially God), and need to appreciate them for what they do for us.
 - Being grateful is, in its simplest form, saying “thank you”: acknowledging that we recognize that something kind has been done for us which we did nothing to earn.
 - Gratitude is the opposite of selfishness: being grateful requires one to realize that he or she is not the only important person in the world.
 - Being grateful for the kind things done for us leads us to do kind things for others in turn.

- Week Two:** What is God’s Kingdom like? (Matthew 13:44-46, Luke 17:20-21, Romans 14:17, Revelation 19:1-22:21)
- By saying “Thank you.” Whether we speak it out loud or write it in a note, those simple words can be a great blessing to someone who has blessed us.
 - By honoring God and our parents, who have sacrificed for us and have given us everything we have. If we are truly grateful to them, we will want to please them and to put them before ourselves, as they have done for us.
 - By helping others as we have been helped. Loving our neighbor is a wonderful way to show gratitude to God for His blessings to us.

- Week Three:** How does giving to others connect with being grateful to God? (Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 10:25-37 and 14:12-14)
- We can’t show God how grateful we are to Him by giving Him things in return, because He doesn’t need anything, so we must show it in some other way.
 - God loves and cares for everyone, and He wants all of us to care for each other in the same way that He cares for us. Therefore, He has set up the world so that we can take care of each other, even as He takes care of us.
 - When we give to someone who can’t give back to us, we show that we are grateful for all the things God has given us without expecting anything in return, following the example of Christ.
 - Giving to others often gives us an opportunity to share the Gospel and to tell others about the wonderful God we are serving through helping them.

- Week Four:** How do we find opportunities to show gratitude through giving? (Mark 14:7, Acts 4:32-37, 1 Timothy 2:1-4)
- There are always people around who can use our help; the start of showing gratitude in this way is by addressing those needs instead of focusing on our own.
 - Sharing is a good form of showing our thankfulness for our gifts: when we get something for which we are grateful, we can share its benefits with others in some way.
 - “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Switching our attitude to think more about what we can give to others rather than about what we can get out of life is a great foundation for grateful giving.
 - Think about all the things you are grateful to have. Many of them will be things that a lot of people in the world don’t have, so you can show your gratitude by giving to ministries that try to supply those needs, such as food and water and hospital care, just for a start.
 - Sharing the Gospel is the greatest gift we can give to others in gratitude for the greatest gift that God gave to us, His Son.



Resource of the Month (CONT'D)

The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place – Andy Crouch

Alongside in-depth original research from Barna Group that shows how families are wrestling with technology's new realities, Andy Crouch takes parents beyond the typical questions of what, where, and when to show us that in a world full of devices, there's a way to choose a better life than we've imagined.

This book was awarded Christianity Today's 2018 Book Award in the category of Christian Living/Discipleship.

<https://amzn.to/2QrJyak>

Apologist Polly Conversation Corner

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WHY SHOULD I GIVE TO GOD?

Polly: Good morning, Grant! How's it going?

Grant: Pretty well. How are you?

Polly: Oh, I'm all right. Busy as usual. I'm trying to raise money for a mission trip our church youth group is hoping to go on next year. I say, would you be interested, Grant? Either in donating or coming along? Or both, I'm not particular.

Grant: Well, I'm not sure, Polly — I always have trouble figuring out what I should give to, or get involved in, as a Christian disciple. I mean, how am I supposed to show that I'm following Jesus by what I give or do? Sometimes I just can't help thinking... I'm afraid this is going to sound pretty shocking.

Polly: Go ahead. I really want to hear what you're thinking.

Grant: Well, I've never talked about this with anyone before, Polly, but I've always wondered — why do we have to give to God? He has everything, and gives us everything we have. It almost seems backwards, and a little sacrilegious, even, to think God could need us for anything. Why does He even need us to share the Gospel, like the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 seems to imply? Some people have come to know Jesus directly through dreams and visions. Why doesn't God always do it that way? And why do we have to give to the poor and suffering. Now that Jesus has died and risen again, conquering death and sin and all the hurts it causes, why haven't all the problems in the world stopped? Why does God want us to give, when we can't really give anything except what He gives us?

Polly: Well, because He wants us to be involved. You're right, Grant, we can't give anything to God, or to anyone else, that isn't really God's gift to us. C.S. Lewis wrote:

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. So that when we talk of a man doing anything for God or giving anything to God, I will tell you what it is really like. It is like a small child going to its father and saying, 'Daddy, give me sixpence to buy you a birthday present.' Of course, the father does, and he is pleased with the child's present. It is all very nice and proper, but only an idiot would think that the father is sixpence to the good on the transaction. When a man has made these... discoveries God can really get to work. It is after this that real life begins. The man is awake now.¹

Grant: Awake to what? I don't get it. If God isn't getting anything "to the good," as you put it, from us, why give anything at all?

Polly: Well, think about the father-child analogy for a minute more, in more detail. Even though the father has really paid for the present himself, wouldn't he rather get it from his child than go out and buy it himself?



¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50th Anniversary ed. (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002), p. 143.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WHY SHOULD I GIVE TO GOD?

Grant: Yes, I suppose so.

Polly: And why would he? Because it's not only about the giving of the gift, it's about the giving of oneself. Would you say, in a sense, that that child belongs to its father, that the father could claim it as his own?

Grant: Of course he could. But it won't do him much good unless his child wants to be claimed as his father's child!

Polly: Precisely! You've put your finger right on it, Grant! Not only does everything we have belong to God, but we also belong to God ourselves, as His created children. But in order for God to have the relationship with us that He wants to have, we have to participate, just like that child with its father. We have to show God that we love Him and appreciate everything He has done for us, that we are glad to call ourselves His children in obedience and gratitude. And that's where giving comes in.



Grant: How does that connect with being grateful?

Polly: Again, it's about participating: *doing* and not just *feeling* gratitude. We have to show that we're grateful.

Grant: But how do we do that?

Polly: Well, in some cases, giving something to someone who has done something nice for you is a simple way to show you're grateful. But sometimes that can just seem like you're "paying them off," especially in more complex situations. So the best way to show gratitude to someone who has taken care of you is to go and take care of someone else.

Grant: But why? Why don't we just take care of them back?

Polly: Sometimes it just doesn't work that way. As C.S. Lewis explained, God didn't create the world to work on a debt-paying mindset of "he did this bit and I did that."² Often our relationships are not perfectly reciprocal, but complementary, especially our relationship with God. There's a wonderful story by Dan Murdoch that illustrates this point called "Why the Old Man Planted Trees."³ In the story, a young man asks an old gardener why the gardener continues to plant trees when he will not live long enough to enjoy their fruit. The old man replies that, just as he enjoyed the fruit of the trees planted by his forefathers, it is only right for him to plant trees to be enjoyed by later generations. So, the only way we can thank God — and our parents and other people who are in a position to take care of us — is by taking care of others, whom we are in a position to care for. And in turn, they won't take care of us, but of others still. So it all works out to make everyone grateful and giving, and brings us all closer to God and our neighbors in the love that God wants us to fully display in our lives.

Grant: So I guess it all really ties in with the two Greatest Commandments: loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself. And that leads into the Great Commission again — maybe, Polly, I'll sign up for that mission trip after all, just to say "thank you" to God myself!

Ask your children: What do you think about Polly's answers to Grant'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 Grant's.

² Ibid. p. 149.

³ Dan Murdoch, "Why the Old Man Planted Trees," *Salute to Courage*, ed. Laurel Hicks et al. (Pensacola, FL: A Beka Book, Pensacola Christian College, 1997), pp. 269-271.

Prayer of the Month

THANK YOU FOR GIVING US ALL THAT WE POSSESS

The prayer for this month is a petition rooted in thanksgiving. We request God's guidance in doing His Will by doing good to others, in gratitude for what He has already done, and will do, for us.

Dear God,

Thank you for giving us all that we possess.

Help me to remember that it is my duty to use your gifts to honor You

And to love my neighbor as myself.

*Give me wisdom to know where and when I may best help,
And please bless all those whom I cannot help, as I release them to your care.*

I pray for the hurting, the poor and homeless, the friendless, and the oppressed.

*Help me to remember and recognize all those in need,
And give me grace to love and give.*

In Jesus' Name,

Amen



Activity of the Month

THE "BLESS-ME, BLESS-YOU" GAME



The Bless-Me, Bless-You Game demonstrates the contagious nature of blessing, as one person is motivated to bless someone else by their gratitude for the generosity of another. Here is how it works.

Create simple "gift tags" by writing the words below on a number of index cards. (Start with four per family member and add more if needed.) Decorate the cards with festive stickers, etc., and place them in a prominent spot in the house. For a period of time (a day, a week...it's up to you), your family will look out for ways in which they are blessed by one another. When one family member recognizes a blessing and its source, he or she will find a way to pass on a blessing to someone else. They will address a "gift tag" to their target "blessee," acknowledging the initial blessing and describing the follow-on blessing. The chain reaction of giving will be fun to follow. Meet together when the game ends to compare notes and trace the paths of blessing between participants' names on a poster board.

BLESS-ME, BLESS-YOU

Dear _____,

Because _____ blessed me, I would like to bless you by

Love,



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