



November 2009

St. Mark's UMC

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**Ask God:**

1. To show your children the many reasons they have to be thankful.
2. To help your children express gratitude through their words and actions.
3. To help your family be grateful at all times.

**Encourage Year-Round Gratitude**

November may be the month when we focus on being thankful, but that's an attitude we can express each day. Even during tough economic times or family hardships, we all have many blessings for which to be grateful. God gives us life and takes care of us. He loves us and sent his Son, Jesus, to die for us. He puts many special people, including our children, into our lives.

Let your children know you're grateful for them—and also that they can show gratitude to you, to other people, and to God. Here are some ideas for cultivating thankfulness throughout the year:

**Live out your thankfulness.** Gratitude is contagious. When your kids see you giving thanks in all circumstances, they'll learn to do the same. Remember to thank your children for everything from helping around the house to helping you grow in your own faith.



**Highlight biblical examples of thankfulness.** Scripture is full of "great gratefulness." Hannah was grateful that God blessed her with a child (see 1 Samuel 2:1). Jesus forgave and healed many people, most of whom were thankful in return. Paul's letters often begin and end with thankful messages, and many psalms overflow with gratitude to God. As you worship with your children, point out all the ways that God's people give thanks.

**Lead children in thank-you activities.** Together, brainstorm people in your community or church who'd appreciate an unexpected thank you. Then come up with creative, meaningful ways to say thanks joyfully. Children can deliver thanks with cards, a prayer, a skit, a song, or even a PowerPoint presentation. Be sure to thank kids for their enthusiasm and contributions.

**An Abundance of Thanks**

In a survey at smartgirl.org, more than 400 preteen girls spoke up about what they're most thankful for. Top responses, in order, were parents, friends, health, siblings, grandparents, and pets. Girls said they chose those people and things because they make them feel happy and safe. Girls then completed the statement "I feel guilty for being thankful for..." with these answers: money, Internet, television, clothes, makeup, music, and video games.

**Parenting Insights**

Turn on children's "gratitude lights" with these tips from *Children's Ministry Magazine*:

1. **Encourage the language of thankfulness.** If children neglect to show gratitude, prompt them with words such as "What can you say to your friend for sharing?"
2. **At unexpected times, give small gifts.** Let children know you think of them often and always thank God for them.
3. **Affirm children's feelings of gratitude.** When you observe physical demonstrations such as eyes that light up, say, "I can see how much you're thankful for that."
4. **Model thankfulness in the little things.** Thank your children for picking up something you drop or for being patient with a sibling.

## OpenTheBook

**“Enter his gates with thanksgiving.... Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.”  
Psalm 100:4-5**

God deserves our praises not just because he blesses us but because of who he is: our good, mighty, just, and loving God.

### Teachable Moments

- 1. Cornucopia of Thanks—** Together, choose some items that remind your family to be thankful (an apple, a toy car, a stuffed animal, a key, a school paper). Place them in a cornucopia or basket so family members can think about God’s blessings often.
- 2. Thankfulness Makes “Sense”—** Serve a special snack while playing soft music and using potpourri. Then have children use their five senses to notice some blessings that they usually take for granted.
- 3. Don’t “Leaf” Anything Out—** Cut out leaf shapes on colorful construction paper. Then have family members write about people or things for which they’re grateful. Tape the stems onto string to make a festive garland filled with reminders of gratefulness.



**“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**

**Most of us have so many blessings that we often take them for granted. Ask these questions to help your children consider all the ways that God meets their needs:**

1. What people and things are most important or special to you? How would your life be different without them?
2. Name 10 blessings or gifts God has given you since this morning. Which ones are easiest to remember to thank him for, and why?
3. Why is it important to express gratitude to people who do nice things for us? Describe how hearing “thank you” makes you feel.
4. How often do you thank God for his blessings? What are some ways we can let him know we appreciate what he does for us?

## Family Experience: Pictures of Thankfulness

**Use these creative ideas to provide a “snapshot” of what your family is thankful for this Thanksgiving.**

- **Gratitude Newsflash—** A week before Thanksgiving, give each family member a disposable camera (or take turns using a digital camera). Then have them take photos of people or things they’re thankful for. (A parent or older sibling can help young kids.) Try to take photos when no one is looking. Come up with creative ways of doing this, such as taking a picture of a person’s photograph. Develop the pictures and then share them with one another after your Thanksgiving meal.
- **Memorable Montage—** Create table decorations to use as a Thanksgiving discussion starter. First, have family members each select several photographs for a place mat. (To protect originals, make copies ahead of time.) For each place mat, you’ll also need one 12x18-inch sheet of construction paper, scissors, glue, and clear Contac paper. Have family members cut and arrange their photos to create a collage on one side of their construction paper. Glue the photos to the paper and allow to dry. To protect the place mats, carefully cover both sides with Contac paper. At your Thanksgiving meal, use the place mats to share memories you’re thankful for, to reminisce about fun family activities, and to let family members know how much you appreciate them.





## What's Playing at the Movies

**Movie:** *Disney's A Christmas Carol* (Nov. 6)

**Genre:** Animated Drama, Fantasy

**Rating:** PG (for scary sequences and images)

**Cast:** Jim Carrey, Gary Oldman, Robin Wright Penn

**Synopsis:** Carrey tackles multiple roles in this 3D version of the Charles Dickens classic. The ghosts of Christmas past, present, and yet-to-come visit old miser Ebenezer Scrooge and take him on a journey of self-redemption. His cold heart gradually defrosts, and he becomes kinder to others.

**Discussion Questions:** Describe your personality: How do you usually feel about other people, and why? How does Christmas bring out the best and the worst in people? Read aloud 2 Corinthians 9:7. Explain whether you're a miser or a cheerful giver. Think of a time you've felt like a scrooge: What, if anything, convinced you to change your attitude?



## What Music Is Releasing

**Artist:** Kris Allen

**Album:** *Kris Allen*

**Artist Info:** This 24-year-old singer-songwriter from Arkansas won season eight of *American Idol*. He's a Christian who served as his church's assistant music director and has done overseas missionary work. Auditioning for the TV show was Allen's "last hurrah" before he got "a real job."

**Summary:** Allen's music has a folk sound. He plays piano, acoustic guitar, and electric guitar. The first single from Allen's debut album is "Live Like We're Dying." The lyrics include, "If your life flashed before you, what would you wish you would've done?"

**Discussion Questions:** What impact can Allen have on the music industry? If you were in his shoes, would you sing only Christian songs? Why or why not? Read Psalm 39:4-5. How does life seem long or short? What does it mean to live like you're dying? How can we do that?



## What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Our House Party</i>	Players race to design, build, and decorate a custom house. Then they show it off to the neighborhood.	E; Wii, Nintendo DS
<i>Scribblenauts</i>	In this unique puzzle game, players use a vast word library to create and use real-world objects.	E10+; Nintendo DS
<i>Uncharted 2: Among Thieves</i>	A hero's quest to discover a lost city unfolds like a summer blockbuster in this treasure-hunting adventure game.	T; PSP3

**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:**

- Today's parents keep their children on a tighter "leash" in public but give them more freedom at home, studies show. This may explain why many grandparents complain that their grandkids are out of control. (msnbc.com)
- Interactive toys and video game systems top the list of hot holiday toys. The hardest-to-find toy may be Zhu Zhu Pets and accessories.

## Quick Stats

- 72% of preschoolers receive praise from their parents at least three times a day. By grade school, though, the number of kids who get this amount of parental praise drops to 51%. (U.S. Census Bureau)



- 15% of Americans now identify with no religion. Experts predict this group could surpass the largest denominations. (USA Today)

# November 2009

**Sunday, November 8<sup>th</sup> – Families with children in kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade worship together in the sanctuary. Our Children's Worship Team (CLAP) will be sharing a song with our congregation at both the 9:15 and 10:45 worship services.**

**Sunday, November 15<sup>th</sup> –**

**Sunshine Alley Small Groups (9:15 Service)** Children will continue to study Bible stories that demonstrate God's love for us. Each age group focuses on different stories. Each Sunday, ask your child's teacher for a "Bible Buzz At Home" Card that suggests a follow-up activity related to that day's story.

**SHINE Worship (10:45 Service)** We will conclude our study of the Beatitudes. Through this "Storm Chasers" unit, we encouraged children to rely on God's presence with them when responding to difficult situations.

**Sunday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> –**

**Sunshine Alley Small Groups (9:15 service)**

**SHINE Worship (10:45 service) – We'll talk about being thankful and create favors to hand out at the Community Thanksgiving Dinner served at St. Mark's on Thanksgiving Day.**

**Sunday, November 29<sup>th</sup> –**

**Sunshine Alley Small Groups (9:15 service)**

**SHINE Worship (10:45 service) – "A Night in Bethlehem" begins! This special series will help us experience what Bethlehem was like when Jesus was born. We'll visit the Census Taker for a story, make a craft in the Marketplace, and discuss what we're learning with our tribes.**

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