

FAMILY MATTERS

Tis the Season to be Thankful!

Stephanie Wolfe

Thanks = Expressions of gratitude; grateful acknowledgement.

Thankful = Deeply sensitive of favors received; grateful. Manifesting thanks.

Manifest = To show, display, reveal or exhibit.

Unthankful = Ungrateful, greedy, selfish, and unresponsive, or unfeeling.

Tis the season to express gratitude by gratefully acknowledging favors received, and manifesting by showing, displaying, revealing and exhibiting thankfulness!

What do you have to be thankful for? How about your children? Are they thankful? Do they express an attitude of gratitude? Do they acknowledge favors received? Do you have to prompt your child, "Say, thank you", "Tell the lady thank you", "Come on now, what do you tell the nice lady?" Oh, I know, give the kid a break. After all, what do you *expect*? Maybe the problem is what do *they* expect? I see many kids who seem to have been taught to *expect* things or that they have a *right* to receive something. I find that I am drawn to a thankful child, but those who *expect* to receive something from me, or those that *demand their rights* are often repellent in character.

Teaching our children to be thankful is very important when you look closely at the definition and characteristics that display its description. It seems even more important when we look closer and find that the opposite of thankfulness is unthankful, ungrateful, greedy, selfish or at best unresponsive and unfeeling.

So how do we help our children to be thankful? Here are some thoughts to consider: **Do not give your children everything they want.** If you have trouble seeing the value of this one, just watch an episode of "Leave it to Beaver" and see how Ward Cleaver handled this delicate issue with "the Beaver". **Show appreciation for the little things.** A hug, a kiss, a back rub. If you focus on the big things you will miss all the daily blessings of life! **Model respect for God, self, others, and things (in that order).** Whatever you value, they will value. **Communicate and encourage positive emotions.** I'm sure you've heard that with kids, more is "caught" than "taught". Each Christmas our family enjoys sharing "Love Stories." Emotionally expressing what we love about each member of our family. Tears are commonplace and no one holds back. Our tears are a part of the *display* of grateful affection. **Correct unacceptable attitudes and behavior immediately.** What a parent tolerates in moderation, he will later be forced to live with in excess. **Model a thankful lifestyle. Be thankful yourself!** Kids learn thankfulness from parents that are thankful! You may be able to teach what you know, but no matter how good of a teacher you are, you can only reproduce what you are. That reminds me of a story: *After the christening of his baby brother in church, little Johnny cried all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father kept asking what was wrong. Finally, Johnny replied, "That priest said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I want to stay with you guys!"* **Decrease expectation and increase generosity!** Teach your child the value of a dollar but be sure to teach them WHO gave them the dollar! (Hopefully you know.) Maybe you find yourself saying things like, "I *expected* a raise." Or "I *deserve* more." If so, now may be a good time to learn to be

thankful for what you have, so you can teach your children the true meaning of “Thanksgiving”. I don’t know about you, but I’ve found that what I have is already more than I deserve. Plus, being generous is a way of giving others the opportunity to *display* their thankfulness! (Just don’t *expect* it.)

’Tis the season to be thankful! Express thankfulness to those around you. Gratefully acknowledge the favors you receive. Model an attitude of gratitude, and very soon you may see something in your children (and others) that you haven’t noticed in a while – Thankfulness.

Your *Family Matters*,
Stephanie Wolfe