

Teaching my kids to be thankful

By Kate Ward

It's good to teach our kids to be thankful. But as the saying goes, "you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink." The same is true of a child. You can teach them about thankfulness, but you can't make them be thankful. So how do I teach my kids about this important topic?



First, I pray that my kids would be grateful people. God can do way more in my boys, through the Holy Spirit, than I ever could. I ask Him to give them a heart that appreciates what they have and wants to give freely back to others. There is no greater joy than to see your kids serve and give willingly to those around them.

I also model thankfulness to my kids. I say thank you to others when we are out in public but I also try to be deliberate about thanking their dad. It is easy to take your spouse for granted. I slip into the mindset that he owes me all the things that he does for me. But if I am really modeling thankfulness in front of my kids, I should be overly grateful for the daily way John serves our family and me.

Finally, I ask them. Every night for the last several years, before John and I pray with our boys, we ask them, "So what do you want to thank God for today?" It is not ground breaking or anything, but it reminds us that at the end of the day we need to remember where everything comes from. Sometimes their answers are silly, but sometimes it clicks and they share a sincere item or moment that meant something to them.

David understood this concept when he prayed: "Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand" (1 Chronicles 29:13&14)

I think the key to thankfulness is in recognizing that everything comes from God and ultimately belongs to Him. It helps me not only recognize His blessing, but hold it with open hands so that I can give generously to others. As we celebrate Thanksgiving, I am praying my kids are so blown away by God's abundance that they can't help but bless others by giving their blessings away.