



Thanksgiving Tree



A Simple Family Activity to Grow Gratitude in November

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
His love endures forever.

Psalm 136:1



Dear Families,

If your home and heart are like mine, this season of unrest, disappointment, and uncertainty has made negative attitudes and complaints easier than gratitude. In ways that are both big and small, things have not gone according to plan. Many of us feel overwhelmed by roles and responsibilities we wouldn't have chosen for ourselves. We are tired and feel justified in grumbling and grouchiness.

While God encourages his people to lament, to grieve, to present their requests honestly to him throughout Scripture, he also commands his people to give thanks not just in the good times, but always.

*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's
will for you in Christ Jesus.
1 Thessalonians 5:18*

*Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything,
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Ephesians 5:20*

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
Philippians 4:6*

During the month of November, we'd love your family to join us in a simple activity to grow gratitude in your home.

1. Create a Thanksgiving Tree by gathering dead branches from your yard or make an artistic version out of paper on a wall in your home.
2. Set aside a consistent time (before school, at dinner, before bed, etc...) to have everyone add a daily or weekly leaf of something they're thankful for.
3. Pray and thank God for these things together.

We hope that this intentional time will remind all of us to find the gifts given to us even in this difficult season and to give thanks to the giver of all things.

The Crossing Kids Staff Team

**This devotional was written by Emily Pilkington.*

Day 1: Build Your Tree

Materials Needed: Vase, twigs and branches, hole punch, yarn or string, crayons or markers, scissors, leaf ornaments from devotional, Bible, device to play music

Directions:

- Gather twigs and branches from your backyard and place them in a vase.
- OR
- Create a large tree trunk out of construction paper on a wall in your home that you can add the attached paper leaves to throughout the month of November.

While you make your tree, listen to *Forever* by Chris Tomlin using the QR code.



Ask/Explain:

Today is the first day of November. Does anyone know what makes the month of November special? (*We celebrate Thanksgiving.*)

Throughout the Bible, God tells his people to remember everything he's done and to give thanks. Let's read a few of these verses together now. As we do, I want you to think about what this verse tells us about how we should live and why we should give thanks.


Read/Ask:

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

What do these verses say about how we should live/pray? (*We should be joyful, always pray, and give thanks in all things. It is God's will for us to give thanks and pray always, not just in the good times or when life is going the way we want it to.*)

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever. To him who alone does great wonders, His love endures forever. Who by his understanding made the heavens, His love endures forever. Who spread out the earth upon the waters, His love endures forever.
Psalm 136:1-6

What does this passage say about thanking God? (*We can thank him for his creation, his wonders, and all the things he made. We can thank him because he is good and his love endures forever.*)



And brought Israel out from among them His love endures forever.
With a mighty hand and outstretched arm; His love endures forever.
To him who divided the Red Sea asunder His love endures forever.
And brought Israel through the midst of it, His love endures forever.
But swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea; His love endures forever.
To him who led his people through the wilderness; His love endures forever.
Psalm 136:11-16

What does this passage say about thanking God? *(We can thank him for who he is and what he's done for us in the past. We can thank him for the ways he has saved us and taken care of us.)*

Sometimes God's people would thank him with their words like they did in these passages, but sometimes God's people would also make something as a way to remember all of the ways that he had taken care of them. This happened in 1 Samuel 7:12. It says,

Then Samuel got a big stone. He set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer. He said, 'The Lord has helped us every step of the way.'

An Ebenezer is a stone that helped God's people remember his goodness and trust him in the future.

This November we're going to make our own Ebenezer. We're going to write or draw what we're thankful for on paper leaves and stop to pray and thank God for it. Each time we walk by or look at it, it will remind us of all the ways God has taken care of us and all of the reasons we can trust him even when things aren't going the way we had hoped or planned.

Add Your Leaf

Have each family member cut out leaf one and write/draw something they are thankful for. Attach it to your Thanksgiving Tree with ribbon/string or tape.

Pray

God,

We give thanks to you because you are good and your love endures forever.

Tonight we thank you for: ***list off the ideas each person added to your tree.***

Help us to rejoice always, to pray continually, and to give thanks in all circumstances.

Help us to remember your past goodness to us and to trust you with our today, our tomorrows, and our forever. We love you. Amen.

Days 2-29: Add Thankfulness Leaves to Your Tree

Directions: Choose to add thankfulness leaves weekly, daily, or as time allows using the attached leaf templates. If you need additional copies of leaves, pick up sets at the Crossing Kids registration desk or e-mail christine@thecrossingchurch.com for a digital copy to print at home.

Add Your Leaf

Have each family member cut out a leaf and write/draw something they are thankful for. Attach it to your Thanksgiving Tree with ribbon/string or tape.

Pray

God,

We give thanks to you because you are good and your love endures forever.

Tonight we thank you for: ***list off the ideas each person added to your tree.*** Help us to rejoice always, to pray continually, and to give thanks in all circumstances. Help us to remember your past goodness to us and to trust you with our today, our tomorrows, and our forever. We love you. Amen.

Additional Ways to Incorporate Gratitude

- Memorize Psalm 136:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Ephesians 5:20, or Philippians 4:6. Copy the words down to make a poster and display it where you see it often. Create your own motions and practice together each night.
- Read Psalm 136 before breakfast or dinner each night.
- Write a weekly thank you note to someone you love/appreciate.
- Have reoccurring dance parties to Forever by Chris Tomlin using the QR code.





Day 30: Finish Your Thanksgiving Tree

Add Your Leaf

Have each family member cut out their final leaf and write/draw something they are thankful for. Attach it to your Thanksgiving Tree with ribbon/string or tape.

Explain:

Today is the last day of November. Let's look back at our Thankfulness Tree and remember all of the ways that God has provided for us and taken care of us. We're going to praise God the way that the author of Psalm 136 did. I'll list off some of the things we're thankful for from our tree and then I'll point to you and we'll all respond, "His love endures forever."

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. *(Point to your family.)*

All: His love endures forever.

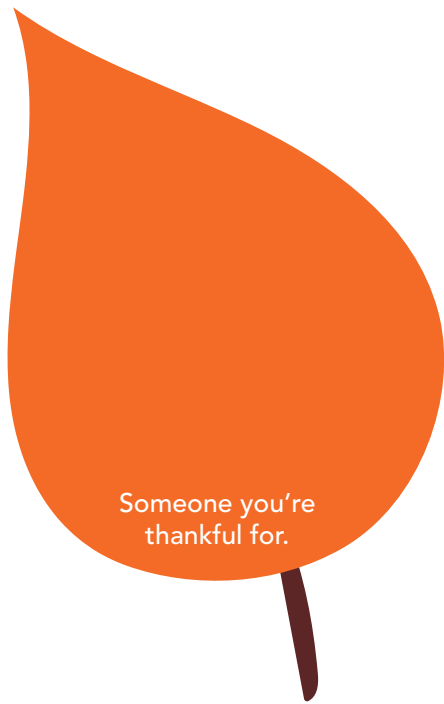
Leader: God, we thank you for *(list of 5-6 items from your tree.)* Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. *(Point to your family.)*


All: His love endures forever.

(Repeat as many sets as is appropriate for the attention spans of your home or until you've listed all of the things from your Thanksgiving Tree.)

Leader: He gives food to every creature, he takes care of us, forgives us, loves us, and provides for us. Give thanks to the God of heaven. *(Point to your family.)*

All: His love endures forever. Amen.






Something
outside
that you're
thankful for.




Something that
makes you laugh.



Something inside that
you're thankful for.




Free Choice (Anything
you're thankful for.)



Something you're
thankful for about
someone in your family.



Someone that
you're thankful
for.



Something you're thankful for
that is yellow or orange.



Something about fall you're
thankful for.



