



Faith in Action ***"Entitlement"***

"...The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come" Matthew 22:8b

Lesson: Grace, gratitude and stewardship - you can't have one without the other two as the old saying *ought* to go. In other words, unworthy as we are, God still gives freely to us out of an abundance of love, which *should* trigger our thankfulness for such an amazing gift of unmerited grace, which *should* be ultimately manifested in our generosity towards God and each other... *should* until our feelings of entitlement kick-in and mess-up the entire cycle! After all, how can we be grateful for *anything* when we believe that we deserve *everything*?!!? It's no wonder that entitlement is one of gratitude and stewardship's biggest enemies! So, what *should* be done to help curb the beast of prerogative that dwells deep down inside of us? Start counting – counting your blessings, instead of chalking-up your privileges.

This week, put faith in action by...

The Taste of Gratitude

Gratitude has just gotten a little sweeter with this activity, thanks to a bag of M&M's (or Skittles) and your family's willingness to share their moments of thankfulness and entitlement, that is.

Before getting started, you'll need to purchase a bag of snack-sized M&M's or Skittles to give to each participant.

Next, assign a gratitude or entitlement statement to each candy color (i.e. orange - name a person you're grateful for and why. Red - name something you *think* you deserve and why). Make a color-coded chart for all of the players to see. Then gratitude on!

Have each of the participants pull one candy at a time from their bag and answer according to the color chart. Go around the table until all of the candies are eaten. (And remember...no one is *entitled* to nibble until a little *gratitude* is expressed!

It's the GRATITUDE Pumpkin, Charlie Brown!

Of course we're not entitled to having a pumpkin, even at this time of year! But having one sure does make a great way to publicly show—off all of our thanks for all of the things we know we don't deserve (including God's grace)!

But don't just take my word for it, grab your Sharpie pen, click on the following link and scroll down to activity #3 to see what I mean!
<https://coffeeandcarpool.com/celebrate-thanksgiving-with-gratitude-pumpkin/#:~:text=Start%20at%20the%20top%20of,1%2D3%20things%20every%20night>.

No time for a pumpkin patch this year? No problem! Not all gratitude pumpkins sprout from the earth. Some only require paper, a pen, a pair of scissors and a grateful heart! Follow this link to see how!
<https://www.kiwico.com/diy/Holidays-and-Events/2/project/Pumpkin-of-Gratitude/2520>

To add variety to your paper pumpkin patch, help your child look up small scripture verses about gratitude in a Concordance, then "carve" a few onto some of your strips of thanksgiving...as well as onto your hearts.

Rich Man, Poor Man, Entitled Man (or Woman)

If there's one biblical character who screams the essence of entitlement, it's the rich man who gets his kicks reminding poor old Lazarus how undeserving the privileged man thought he was (Luke 16:19-31). Spoiler alert: God sure does know how to turn the tables on our self-perceived privileges!

This week, help your child to learn to do the same by taking some time to read and discuss the plight of these men.

For older children, you might want to add to the discussion how our self-centered desires and sense of entitlement encroaches upon the basic needs and human rights of others.

The following link offers a poignant visual aide to assist you in this talk, a life-sized, glass sleeping figure of a genderless homeless person intended by the artist to represent the invisibility of this marginalized population – the Lazarus' of the 21st century.

<https://www.lukejerram.com/invisible-homeless/>

A Cookie a Day Keeps Privilege Away!

At least that's the goal of this activity anyway!

You can make a day of this exercise by first watching with your child, *The Princess and the Frog*, the *should be real-life* story of Tiana, the Princess who got what she wanted in life, not by entitlement, but through working hard for it and sharing food along the way (at least according to Disney). Or choose to cut the butter and to the chase, by fast forwarding your child and yourself to the kitchen.

Either way, let Princess Tiana's crown sugar or filled heart cookies provide the visual backdrop for your conversation (recipes available through this link <https://princess.disney.com/tiana>). Use your time together to reflect on how Tiana is fictitious but that there is a real *King of Kings* who is the real source of our gratitude (and who had a pretty amazing food ministry too!).

When you are done, share your hard with someone who doesn't deserve the fruit of your hard labor and sacrifice, but who would show a heart full of gratitude for your generous gift instead.

All You Need is Grace

You don't have to be a theologian to talk to your child about God's grace. In fact, you can start with something as simple as an unexpected hug! Take that time out of nowhere to explain that they didn't do anything to deserve or earn that sign of affection. Instead, it's an outgrowth of your unconditional love for them. Connect this to God's own grace for us, by explaining that we also cannot do anything to be worthy of God's love. God, like any good parent or guardian, gives it to us just because.

You can also show your child what grace in action looks like by showing your child a crucifix. Use the old adage, this is how much God loves you while pointing to Jesus' outstretched arms, saying he stretched out his arms and died on a cross so that you could be with God forever. Isn't grace amazing?!

God is Good ALL the Time!

So, why not help your child realize just how good God really is? Begin by making time each day to name one way that God showed grace to them. Then share your own moment of grace with them.

The work, however, doesn't stop there! Remember from today's lesson, God's grace begets gratitude which in turn begets stewardship. That means to keep the circle unbroken like God intended it to be, after naming God's grace you and your child need to brainstorm ways that your family can show and share God's grace with others, so that everyone can come to realize that God is really good ALL of the time!