

Gratitude

Vision

This is a part of the College Readiness Curriculum: Grit, optimism, gratitude, timeliness, passion, self-advocacy, and social intelligence.

Objectives

- To train our students in our College Readiness values, including gratitude, which we define/explain as:
 - Gratitude is the act of pursuing a lifestyle, which recognizes and honors the blessings in one's life – whether it is a person, a set of circumstances, an opportunity or a material blessing.
 - Gratitude is thanksgiving that is expressed. It is the skill of valuing and appreciating the people, events, and material blessings around you. Scripture is full of God's command for us to be thankful not only because of our circumstances but regardless of our circumstances.
 - It is a skill because it is not our natural tendency, and requires development and practice to demonstrate and live gratefully. Harvard Graduate School of Education has launched a "Caring Schools Initiative," which has researched students in middle school and high school, and has identified a deficit in our students' ability to show care and gratitude for those around them.
 - This unhealthy focus on self and achievement leads not only to selfish living, but also undue pressure and unhealthy obsessions with success and achievement (Caring Schools Project).
 - Developing gratitude in our students focuses them with a foundational attitude for service to others, as well as prioritizing the Gospel in their lives. This value is especially significant in a generation that is increasingly described as "entitled." As with many of these character traits, it is evident that all truth is God's truth, as secular research echoes the truth of Scripture that gratitude is a key value to grow in our students.
- Make students aware of the impact of gratitude on our lives (health benefits, reflects the call on our lives from Christ, blesses others, develops humility)
- Help students focus on things in their lives for which they can be thankful and to begin to develop gratitude as a habit that students practice on a regular basis

Implementation

Part 1: Defining Gratitude

OPTION 1—Ask students to discuss as a group or with a partner:

- What is gratitude?
- What do we do to demonstrate gratitude?
- Is it important to be grateful? Why or why not?

OPTION 2—This article can be shared with students, or just read for context, but it is interesting to note that research shows being “grateful” has health benefits:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/22/how-gratitude-affects-kid_n_4310927.html

- This might be interesting to ask students why they think gratitude leads to better health?

OPTION 3—Ask students to think about how we see gratitude expressed in Scripture—some passages can be found by using Bible Gateway to look up the word “thank,” or looking at the story of Jesus healing the 10 lepers (Luke 17:11-19) and only one who returns (interesting to think about why so few people are thankful).

Key points to consider from all three introductions:

- Gratitude is not transactional. We should not be thankful to simply get something in return
- Gratitude comes from a sense of humility, which acknowledges that we cannot do everything on our own
- Gratitude cannot and should not be faked

Part 2: Personal Gratitude Assessment

Ask students why it is so difficult to be someone who lives a “grateful” life?

- What hinders gratitude?
- Why are so few people thankful?

Have students take the “How grateful are you?” quiz. Discuss their results:

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/6

Part 3: Privilege

Privilege is often a reality that clouds gratitude. Talking points about privilege:

- Show students this one minute video where people from the developing world read “first world problems” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDLqafWub_o

- As students what they think when they hear the phrase “first world problems”
- What strikes you as you watch the video?
- Think about the last week of your life, what are five things you complained about? What are five things you expressed gratitude for?
 - What do you notice?
- What is the difference between a right and a privilege? How do we often confuse the two in our lives? (Example - it is a right to have water, a privilege to drink special Starbucks drinks...)

Part 4: Application

From here, you need to assess your individual group, but the purpose for the end of the lesson is to have students reflect on:

- What they are grateful for? Help students to see all of the small blessings in their lives that are actually blessings that we often overlook.
- Think about how they can work to become more aware of expressing gratitude in their own lives

Options:

- Have students write a journal entry on things in their lives for which they are thankful. They could choose a theme – what are you thankful for in your family? At school? etc.
- Have students write a thank you note to someone who has blessed them today – this is a valuable exercise to begin to help students acknowledge ways that people bless them. Expressing gratitude does not need to be an event but rather an everyday habit.
- Have students think of a situation that they view as “bad or undesirable” – ask them to find three good things that could result from that situation. Ask them to reflect on how perspective is significant when viewing our lives.
- Look at this article on the habits of grateful people – this is a secular article but is very interesting and might provide for some good discussion:
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_habits_of_highly_grateful_people

NOTE: Feel free to add your own ideas of ways to begin to shape student thinking on being grateful and why that is an important habit in your life both as a disciple of Christ and as a healthy adult.