

Alley SG - November 25 & 26, 2017

Bible Truth: Gratitude is with You . . . Always
(Give Thanks No Matter What) • *1Thessalonians 5:18*

Bottom Line: Always be grateful.

Key Question: What's keeping you from being grateful?

Memory Verse: "Give thanks no matter what happens. God wants you to thank him because you believe in Christ Jesus." *1 Thessalonians 5:18, NIV*

CONNECT TIME: Alley Photo Hunt (At service start)

Supplies Needed: Pens, Paper, and Clipboards (1 per group)

"What's up, party people? Welcome to *The Alley*! My name is [Your Name], and I want to thank each one of you personally for being here with me today."

"Thank you! Thank you! Thank you, and you, and you and . . . you know? This is an incredibly inefficient way to show my gratitude for each of your individual presences—instead, how about I show off how thankful I am by playing a game with all of you? I call it *Alley Photo Hunt*!"

"This is how it's going to work. I'm going to pass out a sheet of paper and a writing utensil to each small group. Once every group has their resources, I'm going to put a picture on the big screen. Upon first glance, this picture may seem totally normal . . . but upon second, third, and even fourth glance, you may notice that some things are not quite right. The job of each small group is to write down as many things that are wrong with the image as they can find. At the end of sixty seconds, each group will pass in their papers, and we'll determine the winner, and the victorious small group will get an extra dollar of Alley Cash."

Pass out paper and pen to each small group. Game starts once each group has its supplies. The game will last 60 seconds.

CG: Photo Hunt Image

"And that's time! Good hustle, everyone, good hustle! Let's pass up all those papers to the front, and I'll get someone checking them out ASAP!"

Dismiss to Small Groups

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1. Just For Fun

What You Need: 2 sets of "T-H-A-N-K-S" cups (per group), 14 ping-pong balls (per group), masking tape

What You Do:

- **Divide** the group into 2 teams.
- **Create** a line on the floor with masking tape and instruct teams to stand behind the line.
- **Line up** a set of T-H-A-N-K-S cups in front of each team, about 7 feet from the line. (Cups should be lined up so they spell the word "THANKS".)
- Each team tries to **bounce** one ball into each of the cups.
 - If a ball misses the cup, the student should go to retrieve it while his or her teammate takes a turn.
 - There should be a continuous flow of ping-pong balls bouncing toward the cups as teams try to be the first team to land a ball in all 6 cups.
 - To increase the chaos level even more, more than one teammate can be bouncing a ball at a time.

Note: Depending on the skill level required, you may need to adjust the distance of the teams to the cups.

1. Take a Snapshot

What You Need: Large piece of paper (1 per group), set of markers with red markers removed and set aside (1 set per group), red markers (3 per bin – keep separate)

What You Do:

- **Fold** a large piece of butcher paper in half (keeping it folded throughout the Take a Snapshot activity).
- **Gather** kids around the paper and give them the markers.
 - **Keep the red marker separate** to be used later.
- **Ask** kids to draw or write an example of when it would **be easy** to give thanks. Provide categories to spark their thinking.
 - At school
 - While competing in a game
 - A time with family or friends

- As kids draw/write, **encourage** them to share their examples with the group.
 - **Challenge** kids to pick one of the examples and think about how they would feel in the situation. Using a red marker to make it stand out, **ask** them to write those feelings on the butcher paper.
- Now, keeping the butcher paper folded, flip it over.
- **Ask** kids to draw or write a situation when it would **be hard** to give thanks.
- **Challenge** kids to pick one of the examples and think about how they would feel in the situation.
 - Again, using a red marker, **ask** them to write their feelings on the butcher paper.
- **Open** the butcher paper so kids can see all of it at once.
- **Review** the feelings described when it is easy to give thanks and when it is hard to give thanks.
- **Compare and contrast** the two sides of the butcher paper.
 - What are things that make it easy to be grateful?
 - What are things that make it hard to be grateful?
 - What are the differences between when it is hard and when it is easy to give thanks?
 - What if you don't feel like giving thanks? How can you still give thanks?

3. Discussion Questions

What You Need: Verse Cards (10 per bin)

What You Do:

- **Read** 1 Thessalonians 5:18 and **ask:**
 - What does it mean to believe in Jesus?
 - Why would believing in Jesus be a reason to thank God?
 - Why do you think God wants us to thank Him?
 - God asks us to always give thanks. What if you don't feel like giving thanks?
 - Can you give thanks without feeling grateful?
 - What does being grateful in the good and the bad and the ugly show others about God?

Note: Be aware of kids who may still have questions about what it means to believe in Jesus. Assure them it is all right to have questions about Jesus and that asking questions is a great way to learn who Jesus is and what it means to believe in Jesus. Encourage them, as they process information and come up with questions, that they can talk to you or to someone they know who is a believer, e.g. a parent or grandparent or friend.

4. Verses to Take with You

What You Need: Large paper from the “Take a Snapshot” activity, Bible

What You Do:

- **Read** today’s key verse out loud.
- **Place** the butcher paper on the floor in front of the kids.
- **Choose** two students to select an example of one of the times when it’s hard to show gratitude by slapping their hands down on one of the drawings.
 - Whichever drawing gets slapped first is the one you’ll go with.
 - **Challenge** the kids to give reasons they might have for being grateful in the example chosen. (Depending on the “artistic abilities” of your students, the one who drew the illustration may have to provide some clarity and details as to what’s happening in the drawing.) *For example: If the picture shows a team losing its game, the reasons for gratitude could be that the team had fun together, no one got injured, and there are still more games to be played in the season.*
 - For each reason the kids give, hold up a finger.
 - When you get to 3 fingers, select another example illustration and repeat.
- **Keep** the pace moving as quick as possible.

Pro Tip: *If kids struggle with reasons to be grateful, remind them to look at the bigger picture. What might they have been doing before the scenario? Or what might they get to do after the scenario? Does looking beyond the scenario help them find a reason to be grateful?*

5. “God Time” Take Home Sheets

What You Need: “God Time” Sheets (one per child), pens (one per child)

NOTE: *The God Time sheets are intended to be a closing time activity each week in The Alley. Children will begin working on their sheets, as well as be encouraged to bring their sheets back the following week for **\$3 in Alley Cash**. Children cannot turn in their sheets the same week. The goal is to keep the lesson on their minds and in front of them throughout the following week.*

Before parents arrive, pray a prayer of gratitude and thanks to God for the children in your group.