

What are you thankful for?

***“I am thankful for the gifts
God has given me today.”***

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB):

**“In everything give thanks;
for this is God’s will for you
in Christ Jesus.”**

What are you thankful for?

“I a_t_____ f_____ t_____ g_____ G_____ h_____ g_____ m_____ t_____.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB):

“I_e_____ g_____ t_____; f_____ t_____ i_____ G_____’_____ w_____ f_____ y_____ i_____ C_____ j_____.”

Week 1: September 11-16

“What are you thankful for?”

“I am thankful for the gifts God has given me today.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB):

“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Lesson: Story Part 1

1. Introduce Fall CT.
 - a. We are studying Thankfulness this Fall.
 - b. Our CT is titled “I Am Thankful”
2. Character Declaration and God’s Words:
 - a. Ask “What are you thankful for?” (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)
 - b. Instruct students that our CT Declaration is a chosen thought that we want to plant in our minds. If you say it enough, you can learn to believe it.
 - c. Make sure students know that 1 Thessalonians 5:18 is from the Bible. The Bible is God’s message to us about who he is and how life works. God’s Word is powerful enough to change us if we will choose to believe and obey him.
3. Question: What do you think comes first: Happiness or Thankfulness?
4. Read/Listen to Story Part 1 & Ask Questions:
 - a. How do you think YOU would feel if you had just become a national champion on your favorite event and then a few hours later broke your leg?
 - b. Was it wrong to be angry about what had happened? (*Feelings are neither right nor wrong. It is the behavior we choose afterward that is right or wrong.*)
 - c. What did Violet immediately think her summer was going to be like? Why? (*Horrible. She had narrowed her summer to include only running and wasn’t thinking about any other things she might do instead.*)
 - d. How did Violet show her anger when she got home? (*She hit the dogs with her crutch and yelled at them.*)
 - e. Did she solve any problems by acting that way toward the dogs? (*No. In fact, she may have made it worse by adding guilt to her already sour attitude!*)
 - f. **Do YOU give thanks to God when things go wrong or do you respond more like Violet?*

Planning Notes:

Week 2: September 18-23

“What are you thankful for?”

“I am thankful for the gifts God has given me today.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB):

“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Lesson: What is Thankfulness?

1. Review last week’s story points
 - a. Violet won the 100-meter race and became a national champion
 - b. When she got home her dogs knocked her over and she broke her leg.

2. Thankfulness in action is *gratefulness*. **Gratefulness happens when I value something freely given to me.**
 - a. *Value*: Can you be grateful for something you do not value (appreciate)?
 - i. *I can not really be grateful for something I don’t appreciate, or find no value in.*
 - b. What makes you value something?
 - i. *It fulfills a need I have*
 - ii. *It brings you joy*
 - iii. *It is useful*
 - c. What makes something a gift?
 - i. *You did not earn it; it is freely given*
 - d. Have you ever been given a gift you did not appreciate?
 - i. *Discuss why. (Was it something you did NOT value?)*
 - e. What’s the most meaningful gift you’ve been given? (Physical gift, gift of time, something done for you)
 - i. Why was it meaningful?
 - f. Have you ever had an experience that made you aware and grateful for something?
 - i. *Going on a missions trip and seeing people who don’t have nice clothes, electricity, etc.*
 - ii. *Being injured and then after being healthy appreciating your health much more.*

3. Application: Recognize that gymnastics is a gift in your life that you value, and being thankful!
 - a. Did you drive yourself to Emeth today? Did **you** pay your tuition and buy your competition apparel? Do all parents let their kids be on team? Would you agree this is a gift in your life?
 - b. What are your favorite things about doing gymnastics? Would you say you value gymnastics?
 - c. Does thinking about how gymnastics is a gift in your life, and about how you enjoy and value it help you to be more grateful?

4. Character Declaration and God’s Words:
 - a. Ask “What are you thankful for?” (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)

Planning Notes:

Week 3: September 25-30

“What are you thankful for?”

“I am thankful for the gifts God has given me today.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB):

“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Lesson: Story Part 2

1. Read/Listen to Story Part 2 & Ask Questions:

- a. What were Violet’s plans for the summer? (*Run with her friends or do summer training with her team.*)
- b. How did Violet’s mom answer her question about being thankful when she is injured?(*Giving thanks in everything is the opposite of what we normally want to do. However, nothing around you has to change in order to be thankful. What has to change is how you see it.*)
- c. How did Violet respond to her mom’s answer? (*She got angry and pushed away from the table but came back and apologized.*)
- d. What assignment did Violet’s mom give her to help her be thankful? (*Write out a list of ten things you are thankful for today.*)
- e. What happened to Violet’s feelings as she began to write her list? (*Joy began to replace anger and she was smiling and feeling relaxed by the end.*)

2. What does it mean to be attentive?

- a. *Being attentive means to carefully look for something*

3. What must you do in order to be attentive?

- a. *You have to focus*
- b. *You have to slow down*
- c. *You have to search*

4. When is it easy to find things you are thankful for? (*When things are going well for you*)

5. When is it most difficult to find things you are thankful for? (*When you are going through a struggle*)

6. Character Declaration and God’s Words:

- a. Ask “What are you thankful for?” (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)

Planning Notes:

Week 4: October 2-8

“What are you thankful for?”

“I am thankful for the gifts God has given me today.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB):

“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Lesson: Thankfulness Requires Attentiveness and Observation

1. Review last week’s story points.
 - a. Giving thanks in everything is the opposite of what we naturally want to do.
 - b. Violet sees the power of giving thanks and how it gives her joy

2. See if athletes remember what it means to be attentive.

3. Explain that this is a process we are going to practice to be more attentive: Stop, Pray, Look, Go.
 - a. **Stop** - Slow down and prepare to search for something you value in the situation you are in.
 - b. **Pray** “God, please show me the gifts you have placed in front of me. What are you trying to teach me right now?”
 - c. **Look** - Look for the opportunity in front of you - what gift might you find in this situation?
 - d. **Go** - use the gift in the moment and share it or use it to be thankful and happy.

4. Application - Make ‘Stop Signs’
 - a. Use paper and pencils, and draw stop signs!
 - b. Hang the stop signs up in various places around the gym.
 - c. Explain that you (the coach) will call out ‘STOP’ at certain points during practice. Then you will call on someone to share what they are thankful for!
 - d. *Do this enough times throughout practice that each person has a chance to share.*

5. Character Declaration and God’s Words:
 - a. Ask “What are you thankful for?” (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)

Planning Notes:

Week 5: October 9-14

“What are you thankful for?”

“I am thankful for the gifts God has given me today.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB):

“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Lesson: Story Part 3

1. Read Story Part 3 & Ask Questions:

- a. How did Violet feel about the weather today? (*She was NOT happy and began to complain.*)
- b. What was the weird phrase her dad told her? (*‘Carry weather inside you.’*)
- c. What did he mean by that? (*You can’t control the weather or all bad things that happen in your life, but you can control your attitude. You can choose to be sunny on the inside even if things are nasty on the outside.*)
- d. Was Violet happy about the fact she was able to choose how she was going to respond to the bad things that may happen to her? (*She was amazed at this fact, but also a bit frustrated. If she were the only one choosing her attitude, then she couldn’t blame it on anyone else. She wasn’t sure if she wanted to accept that responsibility.*)
- e. What was Violet able to give thanks to God for that she had never noticed before now that she was forced to slow down and look? (*The detail of the tulip and the great care God took to make it beautiful for her to enjoy.*)

2. Does your mood change based on the actual weather? (*This may be normal - do you want to be normal?*) Does your mood change based on how things are going on around you?

3. What are some things you often let dictate your attitude?

- a. *Other people’s moods*
- b. *How others are treating me*
- c. *My circumstances*
- d. *How my skills are coming along*
- e. *Ask for other options*

4. How does it make you feel that YOU are the one who controls your attitude? Do you like that responsibility or not? Explain.

- a. *The ability to choose our attitude in any situation is a gift that God has given us! Can you think of someone you know who has an amazing attitude in the midst of a tough struggle?*

5. Did the ‘Stop Signs’ help you last week to be attentive to things you are thankful for?

6. Character Declaration and God’s Words:

- a. Ask “What are you thankful for?” (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)

Planning Notes:

Week 6: October 16-21

Lesson: What Do I Focus On When Things Are Bad?

1. Review last week's story points.
 - a. Violet's mood is bad because of the weather
 - b. "Carry weather inside of you"
 - c. She is aware of her ability to choose her attitude
2. I Get to Choose
 - a. Discuss: What kinds of things throughout your day put you in a good mood?
 - b. Discuss: What kinds of things put you in a bad mood throughout the day?
 - c. Do you think that YOUR attitude is YOUR choice?
 - i. Why is it a good thing? *I get to choose what kind of attitude I want to have*
 - ii. Why is it a difficult thing? *I am responsible for my attitude all the time*
 - d. In the midst of challenges, what are some things that I should NOT focus on if I want to have a good and thankful attitude?
 - i. *"I am bad at climbing the rope"*
 - ii. *"I hate beam"*
 - iii. *"Everyone else can do their cast handstand, and I can't"*
 - iv. *"I am tired, and I don't feel like trying any more"*
 - v. *"I'm never going to get this."*
 - e. In the midst of challenges, what are some things that I SHOULD focus on if I want to have a good and thankful attitude?
 - i. *I have an opportunity to grow in my determination and strength.*
 - ii. *I get to learn more patience as I work through my challenges.*
 - iii. *I can't do this YET, what do I need to change to get where I want to be?*
 - f. God gave us the gift of choosing what we focus on and what kind of attitude to use. In Philippians 2:14-15 God commands us to do the following:
 - i. "Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation."Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life."
 - ii. God commands us to choose our attitude! And with his help we can choose joy.
 - g. According to the verse, how should followers of Jesus stand out compared to those who do not follow Jesus?
 - i. *They do all things without grumbling and complaining. They will shine as people who are joyful. Following Jesus should be changing us to make us more joyful because we are always recognizing and valuing what God has done for us.*
3. Character Declaration and God's Words:
 - a. Ask "What are you thankful for?" (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)

Planning Notes:

Week 7: October 23-28

Lesson: Story Part 4

1. Read Story Part 4 & Ask Questions:

- a. What was Violet's attitude when she got into the car to go to the doctor's? (*She had a negative mindset before she even got there. She was focused on only what might be bad news.*)
- b. What news did she receive? (*Her leg was healing well, she was getting a boot now and it would be easier to walk.*)
 - i. **Would you have been mad or happy if you had received that news?*
- c. What decision did Violet make when she was back home in her room? (*She was tired of feeling so glum. She didn't **feel** like taking responsibility for her attitude, but even more so, she was tired of being sad. She decided she would change.*)
- d. What was the special gift that God had given to Violet? (*She **gets** to choose. She realized what a great gift God has given to us when He made it possible for us to make choices.*)
- e. **Do you always feel like doing your chores? Going to school? Helping your brother or sister? What should you do when you don't feel like doing those things?*

2. Are you happy?

- a. Have you been happy this week, this Summer, this Fall, this year?
- b. Are you more often happy, or sad?
- c. How often do you feel truly thankful?

3. What is the opposite of thankful?

- a. *Dissatisfied, critical, miserable, depressed, gloomy, irked, maddened, disgusted, worried...*

4. How often do you hold onto those feelings? Do you live a grateful life?

5. Application: This week, ask yourself "how do I feel right now?", and "Why?"

6. Character Declaration and God's Words:

- a. Ask "What are you thankful for?" (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)

Planning Notes:

Week 8: October 30-November 4

“What are you thankful for?”

“I am thankful for the gifts God has given me today.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB):

“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Lesson: How Do I Choose To See *Life*?

1. Review last week’s story points.
 - a. Violet goes to Dr. and takes the news she’s getting a boot as bad news
 - b. She *chooses* to take action on being thankful despite not *feeling* like it
2. How do you live a thankful (grateful) *life*?
 - a. *Believe every moment is a gift. You did nothing to ‘earn’ the moment God has given to you.*
 - b. *Believe that there is a good opportunity in the moment you are in - even if you can’t see it.*
 - c. *Believe that your very LIFE is a gift from God.*
3. Acts 17:24-28
 - a. “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’”
 - b. The verses above explain that life is a gift!
 - i. Life is from God, your creator. He made you and put you at this time in his story.
 - ii. Life is a gift from your parents.
 - iii. *You* didn’t decide to be created - God thought of you, and gave you life!
 - iv. Every moment in your life is a gift.
 - c. What changes about your perspective when you recognize God gave you the gift of being alive today?
4. Application:
 - a. Get out paper and pencils and makes signs that have these questions on them.
 - i. “Are you happy?”
 - ii. “Do you want to be happy?”
 - iii. “How’s your weather today?”
 - iv. “What kind of attitude are you choosing right now?”
 - b. Hang them around the gym. Throughout the week read these signs out loud to each other.
5. Character Declaration and God’s Words:
 - a. Ask “What are you thankful for?” (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)

Planning Notes:

Week 9: November 6-11

“What are you thankful for?”

“I am thankful for the gifts God has given me today.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB):

“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Lesson: Story Part 5

1. Read Story Part 5 & Ask Questions:

- a. What would happen to Violet when she focused on the limitations her injury caused? *(She would get depressed and angry.)*
- b. When she focused on being thankful, what happened? *(She would experience joy and be amazed once again that she could create happiness.)*
- c. What problem did Violet encounter as she tried to practice thankfulness? *(One day she would choose to be thankful, and the next day she would be groveling in her self-pity.)*
- d. What advice did her dad give her to help her be thankful all the time? *(He told her she needed to renew her mind like it says in Romans 12:2. “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” It would help her to overcome her natural habits.)*
- e. What good idea did Violet come up with to help her feel thankful all day instead of complaining first? *(Everyday she would start and end her day by writing in a notebook things she was thankful for.)*
- f. *Can you think of other ways to keep a thankful attitude throughout the day?

2. Discussion / Application Questions:

- a. Do you struggle with being inconsistent in being thankful?
 - i. What do you lean towards more naturally? Being grateful or ungrateful?
- b. God’s word renews our mind - it makes us think the right way. How does God’s word get into our minds and hearts?
 - i. *By reading it daily, by memorizing it, by thinking about it*
- c. Can God’s word be in your mind if you don’t take time to read it daily?
 - i. *If we don’t take time to put God’s word in our mind - it won’t get there.*
- d. Why do we memorize God’s words as a base of our character training?
 - i. *God’s word carries great power to be able to change us - we can build character based upon God’s truth because God’s word is forever true.*

3. Character Declaration and God’s Words:

- a. Ask “What are you thankful for?” (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)

Planning Notes:

Week 10: November 13-18

“What are you thankful for?”

“I am thankful for the gifts God has given me today.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB):

“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Lesson: I Trust In God’s Goodness

1. Review last week’s story points.
 - a. Violet struggles to be consistently thankful.
 - b. Romans 12:2 says God renews our mind
 - c. Violet decides to start and end her day with thankfulness instead of waiting for the need for it
2. Read excerpt from Before Amen by Max Lucado (attached to last page of this CT)
 - a. How does Max knowing who the Pilot is effect him during the rough ride on the plane?
 - i. *He knew how much experience the Pilot had*
 - ii. *He knew the character of the Pilot*
 - iii. *He trusted the Pilots Skills and intentions*
 - b. How do you think Max would have handled the turbulence if he thought the Pilot had no idea what he was doing up there?
 - i. *He would have been afraid - and if that was true he should feel that way*
3. How can we know that God is good?
 - a. John 3:16 ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.’ *(God gave a costly sacrifice for us to be with him)*
 - b. Psalms 23:1-3 ‘The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake. *(God cares for our needs, just as a shepherd does for his sheep.)*
4. Romans 8:28-30 ‘*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*’
 - a. What would change in your life if you started to trust that God is good, that he really cares for you and that he is in full control of what’s going on? *(You may be able to give true thanks for situations that seem bad, because you believe God loves you and has a good plan.)*
5. Character Declaration and God’s Words:
 - a. Ask “What are you thankful for?” (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)

Planning Notes:

Week 11: November 20-Dec 2

Lesson: Story Part 6

1. Read Story Part 6 & Ask Questions:

- a. Where was Violet going today? *(To practice with the team and do whatever she could to regain strength.)*
- b. What was she choosing to focus on? What kind of *weather* was she carrying inside of herself today? *(Her inside weather was sunny because she was focusing on what she could do, not on what she couldn't.)*
- c. What question did Anna ask that Violet couldn't answer? *(How can you think God is good when something like this happens?)*
- d. What answer did her mom give her? *(She reminded Violet of God's great love which He proved by giving us Jesus. Everyone has done wrong things against God, but Jesus never did anything wrong. WE are the ones who should be punished but God let Jesus be punished for us instead. We can be sure God is good because of this great sacrifice of love!)*
- e. What did Violet realize Jesus had done which prompted her to write, "I am thankful for Jesus"? *(Violet thought of how Jesus had willingly stepped into agonizing pain and death so that He could rescue her from her sin and make a way for her to enter heaven.)*

2. Are you thankful for what Jesus did?

- a. What would it take for you to really value his sacrifice for you?
 - i. *One part is to truly understand that I deserve to be punished for the wrong things I do. I am the one who should be cut off from all of God and His goodness - but Jesus did that for me. Jesus took my punishment, God loves me enough to give up his own Son for me.*
- b. Was/Is it a gift?
 - i. *Remember - a gift is not earned or deserved. It is freely given.*

3. John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

- a. What is the biggest and best gift God has given you?
 - i. *HIMSELF. Jesus as our King and friend, Master and savior.*

4. Character Declaration and God's Words:

- a. Ask "What are you thankful for?" (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)

Planning Notes:

Week 12: December 4-9

“What are you thankful for?”

“I am thankful for the gifts God has given me today.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB):

“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Lesson: I Say Thank You

1. Review last week’s story points.
 - a. Violet is asked how she can trust God is good when things are bad
 - b. Jesus taking our punishment is the proof that God is good.

2. Luke 6:45 “A good man produces good out of the good storeroom of his heart. An evil man produces evil out of the evil storeroom, for his mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.”
 - a. According to this verse, what do our words tell us about our heart?
 - i. *Our words come from our heart - we speak what we think deep down.*
 - b. What do your words (all of them, not just the best ones) tell you about your own heart?
 - i. *What are things you hear each other saying a lot??*
 - ii. *What do you think these words are communicating about what you are thinking deep down?*

3. How can know that you have a thankful heart?
 - a. *If the words regularly coming out of your mouth are words are thankfulness then that should be a sign of your thankful heart.*

4. What have you learned this Fall about Thankfulness?

5. Application: How many times can you say thank you this week?
 - a. How many times can you mean it? (*In order to be truly grateful you must value it.*)
 - b. What will you need to remember in order to be sincere with your “Thank you?” (*I don’t automatically deserve this; What I have received is a gift.*)
 - c. WHO will you say “Thank you” to?

6. Character Declaration and God’s Words:
 - a. Ask “What are you thankful for?” (students repeat back Character Declaration, and follow it with verse)

Planning Notes:

EXCERPT FROM Before Amen

BY:MAX LUCADO

As I boarded a plane last week, the pilot called my name. He was standing in the cockpit entrance, greeting passengers. “Well, hello, Max.” I looked up. It was my friend Joe. My old friend. He is the Methuselah of the airways. He’s been flying forever. He flew transports in Vietnam and has logged a bookful of hours as a commercial pilot. He’s faced every flight crisis from electrical storms to empty fuel tanks. He is a good pilot.

And he is a friend, a good friend. He’s not my neighbor, but if he were, our property value would increase. If I were in the hospital, he’d keep a bedside vigil. If I were on vacation, he’d keep my dog. If I offended him, he’d keep his cool until we could talk it through. He could no more tell a lie than a mosquito could sing the national anthem. He never swears, gets drunk, cheats or swindles. He is that good.

He is good – good in skill and good in heart.

We chatted for a few minutes, and I went to my seat with a sense of assurance. “What more could I request?” I thought. “The pilot is experienced and proven. Even more, he is my tried-and-true friend. I am in good hands.”

The knowledge came in handy. An hour into the flight we hit a wall of winds. People gasped, dentures rattled and the attendant told us to check our seatbelts and rosary beads. I’ve had smoother roller coaster rides. Unlike the other passengers, however, I stayed calm. I didn’t have a death wish, but I had an advantage. I knew the pilot. I knew Joe. I knew his heart and trusted his skill. “Joe can handle this,” I told myself. The storm was bad, but the pilot was good. So as much as one can relax in a squall, I did.

Friend, it’s a stormy world out there. Every day brings turbulence. The question during these troubling times is this: Do we have a good pilot?

The resounding response of the Bible is yes! God is good – good in skill and good in heart.