



## Divine services for children

Suggested at least once a quarter, on a local or regional basis, a children's service should use the special Divine Service Guide that is provided for that quarter. Children's service Divine Service Guides replace the Sunday morning Divine Service Guide and should not be used in addition to the Sunday Divine Service Guide for that day.

The purpose is to:

- give the children a special word that is understandable, memorable, and relevant
- clearly put them in the center of the congregation
- create opportunity to connect multiple generations within the congregation
- strengthen the value of the divine service and increase their knowledge of Christ and the Bible

In order to help build excitement and to ensure that the entire congregation is prepared for these unique services, they should be announced well in advance. It is encouraged to consider setting a consistent frequency of the services (i.e. the last Sunday of the first month of each quarter). Where possible, the children can participate in some of the congregational functions (ushering, greeting, as the choir, etc.). The person giving the children's message should be someone that has the capability to communicate and connect well with the children. For example, a Sunday school teacher, young adult, etc. that is dedicated to prepare for this responsibility.

### Liturgy

The divine service is opened in the normal way with the invocation, opening prayer, Bible verse, and response hymn. Thereafter, the minister at the altar can introduce the theme and a few thoughts, which should not exceed 5 minutes.

The person giving the children's message then begins in front of the altar, speaking directly to the children, who should be sitting in the first rows.

The unique children's portion is per the recommendations set out by the Children's Work Group that accompanied the Children's service Divine Service Guide for that given quarter. This section of the divine service can be anywhere from 15-25 minutes, depending on the number of students and their ages, and can include methods such as speaking, props, skits, demonstrations, and simulation. Questions and dialogue between the children and facilitator are encouraged.

During this time, the priests should sit in the congregation. The children's component can end with a congregational hymn, which allows the priest to return to the altar. The officiant can then summarize the children's component and prepare the congregation for Holy Communion, which should take no longer than 10 minutes. From then on, the service liturgy continues as normal.

It is also suggested that lunch or refreshments with the congregation be available after the service to highlight and celebrate these children services, and to provide additional opportunity for generations to interact with each other.



## Thanksgiving

### **Bible Text:**

*“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

*“Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” --1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NLT)*

**Message:** Give thanks for everything.

### **Introduction**

What kinds of things can you be thankful for?

Use a large white board or easel or a large piece of butcher paper and have the children raise their hands for a few minutes and share what they are thankful for. Use some volunteer “artists” at the white board/paper to draw pictures and write words neatly all over the space, filling it up.

### **Main Part**

It is easy to give thanks to God when things are going well in our lives. Our hearts overflow with thankfulness and gratitude to God for all (the good) that He has done.

There are also moments that come throughout our lives when things happen, causing feelings of sadness, despair and even anger. These feelings can easily hijack our hearts, and we suddenly forget all that we have to be grateful for and therefore we have little (if any) room for thankfulness. But Paul reminds us that we are to give thanks to God in every circumstance.

Our joy, prayers and thankfulness should not change with our circumstances or feelings. Obeying these three commands—be joyful, never stop praying and be thankful—will sometimes go against our natural feelings. However, when we make a conscious decision to obey God’s word and His commands, it becomes easier to be joyful and thankful, regardless of what is happening in our lives or how we are feeling about it.

In Paul’s letter to the people in Thessalonica, he was not teaching that we should thank God for everything that happens to us, but rather, we should thank God *IN every circumstance*. Even when bad things happen or challenges come, we can still be thankful for God’s presence and for the good that he will accomplish through the distress we are facing.





About 350 years ago, the Pilgrims came to this land they were looking for a better life. However, they faced very difficult times, and the winters were very cold. And yet, they took time to thank God anyway for keeping them fed during those cold winters. God continued to bless them and provide for them. Remember that we are to have a thankful heart in all circumstances and can pray and ask God to help us learn to be thankful in all circumstances, no matter what comes in our life.

### Conclusion

We may find it difficult to give thanks when we are struggling, however, we should take heart, because in all things God works for our good if we love Him and are called by Him (Romans 8:28). We can thank God, not only for our problems but for the strength he is building in us through the difficult experiences of our lives. We can be sure that God's perfect love will see us through, and that He will never leave us. We can also take comfort in Jesus's words: *"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)

### Didactic tips

When we are thankful to God for what He does for us or what He gives us or for what He WILL do for us in the future, our thankfulness will affect our feelings? Print out different pictures of real people faces – a sad face, an angry face, a face that shows no emotion, and an excited/happy face. Or have 4 volunteer teachers stand up front in a line facing the children, making the various faces as described previously. Examine each teacher's facial expression with the children and decide (or vote) which one is showing how we feel when thankful in our heart.

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### Supplemental Notes and Activity Ideas:

#### Thought-Provoking Questions

- What kinds of things can you be thankful for?
- When might it be hard or difficult to be thankful?
- What does the Bible verse (1 Thessalonians 5:18) tell us about when we should be thankful?





### Further Scripture Reading

- **Ephesians 5:20** – *“And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
- **Romans 8:28** – *“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”*
- **Philippians 4:6** – *“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”*
- **Colossians 3:15-16** – *“And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.”*
- **Psalms 107:1** – *“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.”*

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### Memory Verse Activity

**“Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” --1 Thessalonians 5:18**

Write each underlined phrase on a separate piece of poster board. Write the reference on its own poster board. (6 cards) Use masking tape to lightly tape each card in random order on a wall. Then have the kids take turns telling you to move one poster, or to exchange the place of two cards until the verse is in the correct order. Only one move or swap can be made for each turn. Even if one child knows the verse very well, this activity will involve everyone in the challenge. When the posters are put in the correct order, recite the verse together a few times, pointing to the words.

### BUBBLES Activity for after service

Lots of ways to do this – either have teachers stand strategically around the area where the kids are and have them blow bubbles on the count of three and give the children a few minutes to pop those bubbles and they shout out what they are thankful for.

