



## **The Catholic Youth Community of St. John Neumann**



### *How to Develop Gratefulness in Your Teen*

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Have you ever had that moment when you have done something you feel is special for your family or personally for your teenager? Maybe it is a special meal or buying an item that your teen has needed for a while... In your mind, you picture a moment of excitement, a big hug, and a grateful thank you! Instead, you get a quick look and a grunt, barely acknowledging your effort.

It can be frustrating and often downright infuriating! As parents these are the moments, instead of reacting, you need to respond. Instead of a lecture, you need to have a conversation. Developing gratefulness in your teen is something that has to be “taught out” and not fought out. Here are a few quick ideas to understand your teen, the culture they are surrounded by, and also some steps to take to develop gratefulness together.

Teenagers, as we all know, are changing in every way, mentally, emotionally, socially, and of course, spiritually. While all these changes are happening, they are surrounded day in and day out by an “Instagram, photo-perfected world”. This world is not reality but rather freeze-frame moments of only the best of everyone’s lives. Add to that commercials, advertisements, and TV shows of celebrities giving them a perspective that everyone just has not only what they need, but magically what they want as well.

Here are a few simple steps to help your teen develop a Godly, Biblical understanding of blessings and thankful gratitude.

**Step 1: “The Response, not the Reaction.”** Instead of reacting emotionally to your teen through your hurt feelings, respond to them. Stop what is going on and have your own real-life “freeze frame” with your teen. Calmly ask your teen to stop as well and ask them what just happened. Work to make them positively self-aware of the situation and their own lack of gratitude. Talk about their response and help them to process both socially and spiritually.

**Step 2: “Start a Conversation, not a Lecture.”** Choose to begin an ongoing conversation about God’s blessings and provision, instead of making a momentary lecture. More than just a one-time, one-sided lecture where you talk at your teen, make your home a place of continual back-and-forth conversation about what your family has been blessed with, without negative comparison to others.

**Step 3: “Teach Gratitude, Instead of Fighting for a Thank You.”** Live and speak the example of gratitude rather than demanding a personal thank you. If you expect your teen to be grateful, you need to model that for them. Often you are thinking about the price you paid or hours you worked to provide for your family when you demand to see and hear gratitude. This attitude is just as wrong as the ungratefulness of your child. Your children need to see in you a Godly, humble attitude of stewardship of your schedules, abilities, and money. What you have and give them is not yours, but what God has entrusted to you. You share those things with them and others, without selfish intention or the need for a personal thank you.

I hope you find these three steps helpful for instilling an attitude of gratitude in your teens! Please reach out to me if you have any ideas for topics for future Online Parent Ministry emails!

Peace,



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# Parent Ministry!

**An online resource to support, educate, and encourage  
the parents of our teens at St. John Neumann!**