

THANKSGIVING EXCHANGE

This is a good discussion starter for Thanksgiving or for any time you want to teach a lesson on gratitude. It works best with a group that knows each other fairly well. Begin by having each person share one or two things that she is thankful for. These will usually be the kind of things that are most obvious to her.

Then have each person write his name on the top of a sheet of paper. Collect the sheets and redistribute them so that everyone has a sheet with someone else's name on it. Now have each person write on that sheet what he would be thankful for if he were the person whose name is on that sheet. He can list as many things as he wants. Following this, pass the sheets back to the person whose name is on each sheet and discuss the following questions:

1. What things are written on your sheet that you haven't thanked God for lately?
2. What things are written on your sheet that you have never even thought about thanking God for?
3. Is anything written on your sheet that you disagree with or that you don't think you should be thankful for?

This exercise helps young people realize that they often take for granted many things that they should be thankful for.

THANKSGIVING GRAFFITI

Have some of your young people hang up a large blank sheet of paper in a well-traveled area in your church. The pastor can announce that after the service people are invited to write, print, or draw something that represents what they are thankful for. The young people should be ready with markers or crayons for people to use. If this is done early in November, the resulting graffiti can be displayed in a prominent place to remind people of how much we do have to be thankful for.

THE THANKFUL LEPER

Use this exercise as a way to point kids toward recognizing the need for expressing thanks to God rather than constantly bombarding him with requests.