



Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



Giving Thanks

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!” (PS. 107:1).

One day, 10 lepers approached Jesus outside a village and pleaded with Him to heal them. Jesus’ response was to restore the health of every one of them. Only one returned to give thanks (LUKE 17:11–17). Sadly, ingratitude and thanklessness are still all too common today. Children (and adults) forget to thank their friends and family members for all that they do, and they often take for granted the many ways others have reached out to help. Teaching children to give thanks in all things is of great importance.

This month, our talented *School Mailing* authors focus on the way children are nurtured to give thanks in all things in Lutheran schools. Dr. Drew Gerdes expands on this topic in *Time Out for Directors* and speaks of the importance of sharing thankfulness and gratitude to show Christ’s love in a JOY-filled way.

In *Early Childhood Devotions*, Dr. Judith Christian talks about helping children to give thanks for material blessings with a celebration of God’s ongoing provision for children and the world. By modeling praise and thanksgiving, children begin to recognize the need to care for those with less and to share their own blessings with Christ-like concern for others.

Thanking God while experiencing trials and disappointment is difficult for all. In *Parent Pages*, Dr. Kim Marxhausen emphasizes that gratitude is about continually looking for the joys of life, even in the face of challenges. Her premise that “gratitude is an attitude” is a lesson for young and old alike.

The Rev. Robert Riggert emphasizes the importance of giving thanks to God for the individuals who support the ministry of a church and school in this month’s issue of *School Shepherd*. “Joyful and productive ministry does not take place in isolation,” he writes, while emphasizing the importance of publicly



sharing thanks for ministry team members.

“Thankfulness and gratitude stem from knowing that we have been gifted with blessings that are undeserved,” Dr. Steven Christopher observes in *Family Matters*. He shares the beautiful Gospel message, “the most underserved being the gift of a Savior in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross in our place. Pure grace!”

Children who attend Lutheran schools are blessed to continuously hear the message of Christ’s love and to experience this precious love through teachers, classmates and school community members every day. What a blessing for children of all ages to thank and praise God, the giver of all good gifts!

“Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things” (PS. 107:8–9).



Computer File



What is Next in Technology: Interactive Whiteboards

Reflect on these two questions related to this month's topic before you read the article to start thinking about how the topic has been and continues impacting you, your classroom or your school.

Question #1: What led to this topic's relevance in education? Why was it assigned value in the classroom or implemented in the way it was?

Question #2: How are you using or implementing this topic in your classroom or school at present? If you are not directly interacting with the topic at hand, how is it impacting you in other ways?

From the beginning of education, there has always been a need to present information to students in a manner that is visible to an entire classroom. Individual resources such as textbooks, workbooks and computers are helpful and needed in every classroom, but the information they contain is restricted to reaching only one or two specific students at a specific time. Thus, over the years there have been many different strategies and technologies utilized by educators to present information to large groups of students in order for learning to take place at the "class level."

One of the more recent technologies utilized has been a device commonly known as the Interactive Whiteboard or IWB. Developed by the Palo Alto Research Center in the late 1980s and early 1990s, interactive whiteboards combined the concepts of a digital projector and a whiteboard. Instead of simply being able to project images on a screen or the wall, and instead of only being able to write on a whiteboard with no way to save or share the content,



through the use of an interactive whiteboard teachers were now able to both display content and also "write" digitally over what was projected. Students were able to collaborate at the front of the room and then save what they had created for later sharing or display. Teachers were able to create interactive activities for their students such as review games, shape activities and math manipulatives.

However, for all of their uniqueness and new functionality, IWBs came with limitations. Most IWBs only allowed for one student or teacher to work with the screen at a time. The hardware itself was problematic and boards were often in need of calibration in order to have a high degree of precision. The technology itself was not suited for bright classrooms with many windows or for classrooms without additional structural wall space. Teachers were not given effective professional development or the tools they needed in order to effectively leverage the technology to enhance student learning, and, in many cases, IWBs turned into expensive and glorified overhead projectors. Along these same lines, although IWBs took many forms from many different companies such as Smart, Promethean and



others in the years following their initial development, the only major changes to interactive whiteboards were improvements such as size, clarity of the display projection, multiple touch inputs and durability.

So where is the technology and idea of IWBs headed in education in the coming years? Interestingly enough, the future of and discussion around IWBs in the classroom are currently focused on two different areas. On one hand, the question of where the physical technology and hardware are going in the future is an obvious point to address. However, more importantly, how educators are actually *using* these devices is continuing to drive the conversation and investigation in a different direction.

Speaking first to the hardware, many schools at this time are choosing not to replace their aging IWB infrastructure with new versions of the same device. Instead, schools are going one of two directions. Some schools are replacing their IWBs with a simple, high-lumen projector mounted on the ceiling or in a short-throw mount projected on a standard whiteboard. This option utilizes existing infrastructure but frees up wall space in classrooms that can be used for other multi-use applications. Many other schools are in the process of updating their IWBs with flat-panel displays similar to what you would find as a television in your living room. This option is currently gaining traction as it addresses the main complaints of IWBs in that they are able to be seen in bright rooms, there are no projector bulbs to constantly replace and wireless connection capabilities are integrated into the display solution by the manufacturers. More importantly, the price point for screens and flat panel displays has dropped drastically in the

past few years, allowing schools to replace their IWBs with a better solution at a greatly reduced replacement cost.

Interestingly, both of these routes remove the “interactive” functionality which was inherent to IWBs. This retreat from being able to touch the device is directly related to how teachers are teaching and actually using the devices in their classrooms. As it was mentioned earlier, many teachers were not well-equipped to effectively integrate IWBs into their classroom or method of teaching, thus relegating the devices to simply be used to project information in a teacher-driven classroom. Changes in today’s educational methodology have made schools and teachers rethink the manner in which they are presenting information to and, more importantly, *with* students. IWBs made the classroom “front-focused” while simple projectors and displays allow students to show their mastery while not having one focus on the teacher in the room. Many schools realized the need to display student work. IWBs were not well suited for this, and their additional functionality has been discarded in many locations.

All of that said, IWBs will continue to have a major presence in many schools and classrooms, especially at the early childhood level where they have found a unique implementation environment alongside student motor development. Investing in a new or replacement technology is time-consuming and also not financially sustainable in many locations, and there are many other technologies to upgrade and replace at this point in today’s educational landscape. However, do not be surprised in the coming years if you see more and more IWBs consigned to the scrap heap of technologies of a previous age.

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Matthew Bergholt Designer: Erica Schwan

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Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7



JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN 1 THESS. 5:16-24

FOCUS: Jesus. Others. You.

Manna in the Wilderness

(EXODUS 16)

Before You Teach

An early American hymn [“Brethren, We Have Met to Worship,” George Atkins (public domain, 1819)] has this refrain: “Brethren/sisters, pray, and holy manna will be showered all around.” Manna is the biblical symbol of God’s provision for His people, both physically and spiritually. Children who learn this story can begin to celebrate God’s ongoing provision for themselves and the world, even as they begin to recognize the need to care for those people with less and to share their own blessings with Christlike concern for others.

Greeting

Greet each child upon entry into the classroom: *Good morning child of God! I am so very happy you are here!* These critical first five seconds set the tone for the day.

Gathering

Following your routine, signaling the children to gather in your worship area

Say: Today is a special day. Do you know what makes this day special? YOU! I am thankful for all of you, and the love God has for you and me every day!

Sing: Sing “God Is So Good” (LOSP, p. 57).

Tell the Story

Signal children to repeat the word “grumble” three times, each time they hear the word.

We read in the Bible about people of God who **GRUMBLED** and complained. God’s people were slaves in the land of Egypt. They were made to work very hard and were treated badly. God rescued His people, promising them freedom in a new land. God chose Moses to lead them. The people began their long journey to the Promised Land. They hadn’t walked very far when God’s people began to **GRUMBLE**. Although God had rescued them and was guiding them to a better life in a new land, the people **GRUMBLED** about tired feet, they **GRUMBLED** about being hot and they **GRUMBLED** about being hungry. God loved them even when they



GRUMBLED! God said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven. Each day the people are to go out and gather *only* enough for that day. On the sixth day they are to gather twice as much as the other days, and on the seventh day they are to rest.” Moses said to the people, “The Lord has heard you **GRUMBLE**. In the morning you will find bread, and in the evening you will eat meat. You will know that the Lord is your God.” That evening quail birds came. In the morning a layer of bread called *manna* covered the ground. The people knew that the Lord God was with them and would care for them.

Ask: What do you grumble about? God *promised* to care for the needs of God’s people. We are God’s people! God *promises* to give us what we need. God does not promise to give us everything we want. We can trust God to love and care for us all the time! Let’s give thanks for God’s gifts to us, especially the gift of Jesus.

PRAY TOGETHER

Guide children to repeat each phrase after you.

Loving God, Father in Heaven,
Please help me to always be,
Thankful for Your gifts to me. Amen.

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K: “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good”
(PS. 136:1).

Gr. 1 & 2: “Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!”
(1 CHRON. 16:8).

ACTIVITIES

Create: “Give Thanks to the Lord” bulletin board. You will need: shoeboxes (1 per child), tempera paint and brushes. Guide children to paint the inside of their boxes. Secure dried, painted boxes to a bulletin board with box sides touching one another. Have each child bring a small, lightweight item from home or choose a classroom item for which they are thankful. Place these in the pre-hung boxes.



Do: Create two columns on chart paper, one titled “needs” and the other “wants.” List things children name as “needs” and things they name as “wants,” under the appropriate heading.

Say: God promises to provide us with all that we *need*. This does not mean we get everything we *want*. God promised to send a Savior. God sent Jesus! God keeps promises!

Sing: “I’m with You” (LOSP, p. 32); “It’s Good to Give Thanks” (LOSP, p. 61).

Sending

YOU WILL NEED: A beanbag or cross to pass.

Gather in a “sending circle.” Pray, inviting children to offer words of thanks for someone or something as a beanbag or cross is passed and received, or to quietly pass it along. Dismiss, saying to each child, *I’m thankful for you!*

Live the Story

The importance of delivering on a promise cannot be underestimated. We must be certain that we can live up to, and deliver on, our promises. Not to do so negatively impacts the trust relationship we have with the children we teach. Teach trust by being trustworthy.



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Early Childhood Devotions

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Writer: Dr. Judith Christian Designer: Lisa Moeller

NOTE: You will need the songbook: *Little Ones Sing Praise (LOSP)*, copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.

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Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN Thanksgiving Joy

It's easy to be joyful when we have much to be thankful for. It's not as easy to be joyful when we don't have all that we want, or perhaps even that feel we deserve.

The idea of thankfulness can be considered in the following ways:

- **Reluctantly Thankful** – this is when we feel that we have an obligation to be grateful. This type of attitude of thankfulness seems forced, sometimes from within and sometimes expected publicly. We express it and show it because we “have to.”
- **Reflectively Thankful** – this is when we are genuinely grateful. Whether we have received much or little, we honestly appreciate all that has been given to us. We feel thankfulness in the depths of our heart and desire to express it in a personal way to the provider.

Many times in this life, we don't need all the things we get. Then there are times that we feel like we should get all the things we want. Life is confusing for many of us in this culture, who enjoy first world comforts, are blessed beyond measure and live a life of abundance. There are those times when we feel like we want more, but when we truly look at all that we have, we can realize how truly blessed we are in comparison to the rest of the world.

Thanksgiving is a time to reflect and express our gratitude. How does one express thanksgiving joy? If we are going to honestly respond with true thankfulness, it is good to know where the root and the source of our gratitude originates.

Thankfulness and gratitude stem from knowing that we have been gifted with blessings that are undeserved — the most undeserved being the gift of a Savior in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross in our place. Pure grace! We have been rescued from sin, from eternal death and from the grasp of the evil one. What a reason to be thankful!

Children who attend a Lutheran school continuously hear this message about Christ's love. They will experience and interact in that love with teachers, fellow students and staff. What a blessing for children to be able to give credit to the Giver of all good gifts — God — and to do it every day as they are in school.

Our humble recognition of this truth, of God as the Giver of all things, allows us to receive and experience all the worldly gifts and blessings AND to give Him all praise, honor and glory!

Have a joy-filled Thanksgiving!



JOYFULLY UPLIFTING FAMILY ACTIVITY //

Gather the family together in a comfortable space, with no electronic distractions, and enjoy the family activity outlined below.

PROJECT TITLE: THANK-YOU NOTES



PURPOSE

To engage family members in an activity that allows them to express their gratitude and appreciation for people in their everyday lives.

PROCESS

- 1 Have someone obtain a number of blank thank-you notes, as well as some colorful pieces of construction paper.
- 2 Have pens, pencils, markers and crayons available for use by family members.
- 3 Sit as a family and begin to make a list of all the people you are thankful for. Have a family member record these ideas in categories such as: family, neighbors, friends, people at church, coaches and team members, teachers and people at school, and even locally elected officials and public servants.
- 4 Narrow down the list to perhaps 8–12 people whom you want to send thank-you notes to this Thanksgiving season. Assign or ask for volunteers to write a short note of thanks to these chosen few.

- 5 Write things in the notes about what you appreciate about the receiver — things that may be obvious to others, but also mention personal experiences that members of your family have had with them that you are grateful for. If children are unable to write, have them draw pictures!
- 6 Once the notes are written, have family members sign them, seal them in envelopes and address them.
- 7 As a family, hold the cards as you pray the “echo prayer” printed below.
- 8 Have an adult in the family stamp the envelopes and place them in the mail the very next day.



PRAYER

As the family is holding the thank-you notes in their hands, have an adult or older sibling read the following prayer, phrase by phrase, with the rest of the family repeating the words.

Gracious God. You are the Giver of all things. Thank You for Jesus Christ, our Savior. Thank You for these wonderful people to whom we have written these notes. Bless the messages of these notes, bless the people who receive them, help them continue to be a blessing to many. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.



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Family Matters

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Writer: Dr. Steven Christopher Designer: Lisa Moeller

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Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



Special Education Throughout the School Year: November



The time for parent-teacher conferences has arrived! This may cause a mixture of emotions. You think about those students who are doing well, and you're excited to share those successes with parents. However, you're also thinking about those students who are struggling and the best way to discuss those concerns with parents. These conversations can be tricky and stressful for both you and the parents, but there are some tips to keep in mind while planning for these conferences.

If you have been noticing a student struggling, hopefully you've had communication with the parents prior to conference time so they have some idea about what the difficulties have been and the strategies you've already put in place. Even with this good prior communication, make sure to spend time talking about the student's

strengths after opening with prayer. Often parents are used to hearing the negative, so emphasizing the positive things you've noticed and learned about their child can diffuse possible nervousness and tension on all sides. Also, ask them to share positive things they see at home before moving into areas of concerns.

When discussing concerns you have, make sure you have copies of anything documented so far this year, such as accommodations or observations about the student's learning. If you have recorded observations, make sure these include only factual observations, not interpretations of behavior or why you believe that student is having difficulties. Stating that Jimmy is out of his seat 10 times during a 40-minute class period rather than recording that Jimmy is distracted and not trying his best can alleviate what parents may take as judgment. Often, when parents perceive judgment about the actions of their child, whether that judgment is intended or not, it can make them feel defensive for the rest of the conference and hinder productive conversation. Sticking to facts can set the stage for a more productive conference and discussion of possible solutions to the difficulties the student is having.

You may be documenting and discussing objectively, yet still encounter disagreements during the conference. Parents may see things at home differently than what you see at school. This can sometimes make teachers feel they are on the defensive when parents do not think there is a problem because they have a different experience at home. If this is the case, stick to your objective and documented observations, but ask the parents what



they see at home and discuss the differences. It is not about one party being right or wrong, but about working in collaboration to help the student be more successful.

Parents may also be very open to your concerns and share those concerns as well. In these cases, it may seem like you're being helpful by suggesting a possible diagnosis or saying, "I think this could be ... (insert diagnosis here)." Parents may even ask your opinion on a certain diagnosis, but please refrain from putting a potential label on the difficulty yourself. You may be 99.9 percent certain the child has a disability, and you may be correct, but unless you are a qualified diagnostician with formal evaluation results in hand, that diagnosis needs to come from someone with the credentials to diagnose. Even throwing out potential diagnoses can create problems. Stick to those factual observations you've recorded. If parents ask, tell them that you're not qualified to diagnose, but you're willing to talk to the public-school district about what you have observed or to give the parents notes to take to a private diagnostician if that is the route chosen.

During a contentious conference, there may also come a time when you realize continuing the discussion may not lead to potential resolution. Rather than continue to talk in circles or try to persuade the other party, reiterate that you want the child to be as successful as possible in the classroom and that you are willing to continue

implementing strategies to make that happen. Suggest that each of you take a week or two to think about the information presented at the conference and the discussion that occurred, and meet again at a different time to continue finding ways to support the student. Allowing more time for thinking about the situation can allow for emotions to settle and both sides to see some of the discussion points more objectively. This may not mean everyone agrees after that time, but hopefully it sets the stage for continuing productive conversation. Make sure to end even the most difficult conference with prayer, thanking God for the gift of this student and remembering that he or she is "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" (PS. 139:14).



For further recommendations or support for your students with learning needs, please reach out to us at lsem@luthsped.org or visit our website at luthsped.org and let us know how we can support you in your ministry!

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Kara Bratton Designer: Lisa Moeller

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Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Cultivating an attitude of gratitude

As parents, when we think about instilling a spirit of gratitude in our children, we tend to focus on the actions of gratitude. We encourage our young children to be brave enough to say thank you for a gift, and we cringe when our older children forget. I worked on this with my children in a formal way by requiring them to write thank-you notes after birthdays and Christmases. When they were younger, we created crayon or watercolor pictures and practiced writing “thank you” in our best pre-school script. When they were older, they fell into the routine of writing notes themselves quite easily. I was interested in how this process helped them to develop empathy as they thought about what their gift-giver would like to hear. As an adult, my daughter even thanked me for teaching her to write thank-you notes when she was young. I think she recognized that the discipline found in writing thank-you notes is a reminder of God’s blessings.

Learning to say “thank you” is an essential skill for parents to teach children. However, gratitude is about more than saying these words. It is an attitude, or perhaps a mindset. A family that values gratitude is one that teaches children to recognize the good things in life — even in the face of challenges.

Gratitude does not necessarily prevent children from feeling angry, sad or frustrated, but it can help them to regulate those emotions with the reminder that each situation has its good side too. In this sense, gratitude is more of a discipline than a group of actions. It is about continually looking for the joys of life without denying what makes us sad, angry or frustrated.

Children who recognize that there are sources of help in their lives will navigate problems with more success. The feelings of gratitude cultivated through the recognition of life’s blessings support the confidence that future help is available. When we nurture gratitude, we reduce anxiety and increase confidence. For example,

imagine a young child falls and incurs a minor injury. He might find this frightening because he may not remember enough falls to realize that the pain will go away. Once he is comforted by a friend or the scrape is cleaned and a bandage applied, he begins feeling better.

At this point, a child can be reminded that loved ones care and God heals. Feeling grateful for these blessings becomes a part of the memory of that experience. The next time a fall causes a scrape, the reaction



will likely be a bit more tempered because the brain knows that help is available.

Research tells us that gratitude impacts physical health and emotional health. People who practice gratitude have stronger immune systems, tend to sleep better and have a reduced risk of depression and anxiety. This benefit is especially true for adolescents undergoing much change and turmoil. Perhaps focusing on the blessings in your life is like taking a daily vitamin — it seems like a small thing to do, but it has big potential benefits.

A gratitude attitude also promotes healthy humility. Humility is not about putting yourself down or neglecting to speak up for yourself. Humility is being able to focus on other people because you understand your own needs are met. A humble child does not have to brag or indulge in self-ridicule. A humble child is content, and this enables her to look to others who may need encouragement. This same kind of healthy humility prevents a child from growing into a sense of entitlement. If a child grows up grateful for what God provides through family, school, church and friends, he will be less likely to demand to be given whatever he

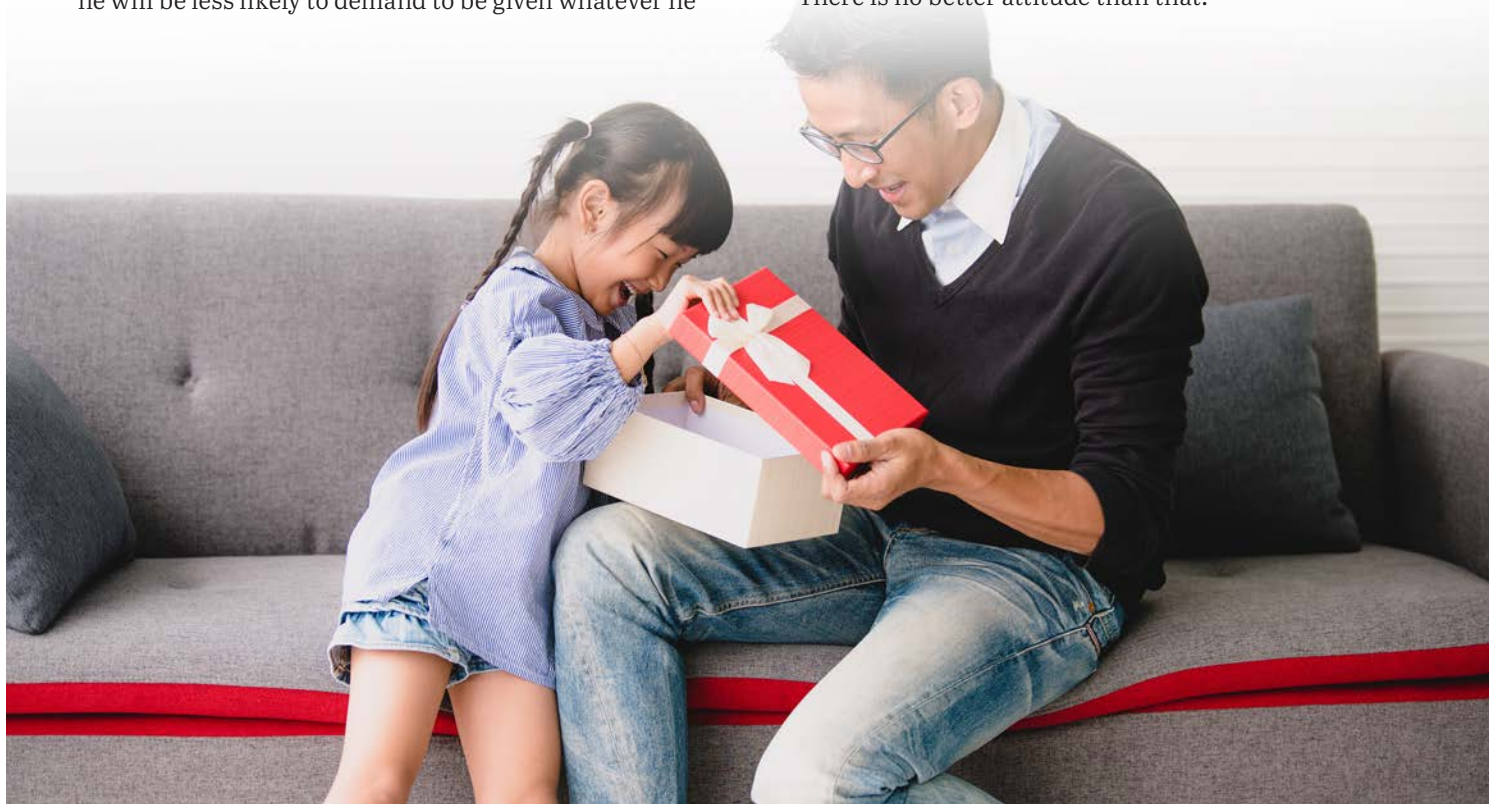
wants regardless of need. Gratitude helps us to see our place in God's plan.

The healthy humility that often results from practicing gratitude is an essential factor in the development of prosocial skills. Prosocial skills are those that help children develop relationships, and they are a factor in both emotional and academic health. Children who get along well with others get along better in life.

Most importantly, gratitude focuses on God — not only on what He has done for us but also on how powerful and loving He is. Consider this verse of thanks:

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!” (Ps. 107:1).

This verse talks about thanking God, but the emphasis is on God's goodness and steadfast love rather than on the gifts received. This is how gratitude is a source of comfort. Gratitude reminds us that because of His steadfast love, God has helped us in the past, God is helping us now and God will certainly help us with future needs. Gratitude turns our hearts toward God. There is no better attitude than that.



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Writer: Dr. Kim Marxhausen Designer: Frank Kohn

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Professionally Speaking



SCRIPTURE: 1 Thess. 5:16–24

Giving Thanks

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 THESS. 5:18).

Throughout the Bible, there is an expectation of thanksgiving. However, soon after time began, Cain’s ungrateful heart turned very evil and he killed his own brother. Time continued, and Paul gave an amazing confession of thanksgiving during his times of imprisonment, of trial and of calamity.

In this month’s *Professionally Speaking*, consider giving thanks “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus” as an administrator and educator.

Was Paul sharing the secret sauce of life in Christ? Thankful for whatever the circumstances? We rejoice? We pray? We give thanks?

No, the secret is no secret. Paul said it all the time. Luther spoke to it all the time. Actually, it’s baptismal language: “in Christ Jesus.” *That’s* our secret sauce. In Christ, a life attuned to Christ, we rejoice, we pray, we give thanks. Thankfulness is the natural outflowing of a heart that is turned toward God. Psalm 147:1 says, “Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.” All mankind owes all it has to the Creator of this world. Paul wrote “be thankful” (COL. 3:15), demonstrating that a spirit of thanksgiving is always the mark of a joyous Christian.

Old Testament followers of God set up physical examples, altars and the like, as reminders of thanks and to give thanks. Our nation’s national day of thanksgiving can be one of our markers to be sure we give thanks. The pictures in our hallways and homes can be reminders to give thanks. Obviously the prayers in our classrooms, with parents and within the breadth of



school ministry, are opportunities for thanks to God. We need those reminders of our need to give thanks.

As this November *Professionally Speaking* is read, here are some reminders from Scripture that serve us well to give encouragement and that give topics for thanks:

“Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you” (1 CHRON. 29:12–14).

Who am I? Humble leadership is a hallmark of Lutheran schools. We know and act on the calling that God has set before us in leading schools. As important, we thank God for the resources God makes available to us in our schools. Buildings, teaching materials, programs and so much more — they all come from the



One who does “give strength to all.” So we pray with confidence “give us this day our daily bread” (Lord’s Prayer, *LSB*, p. 162).

“I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus” (1 COR. 1:4).

Paul consistently modeled thanksgiving for people. He was thankful for congregations, for colleagues and for every gift. But note also his thanksgiving for grace. How often do we take the time to give thanks for the greatest gift of all — undeserved love through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus?

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (JAMES 1:2-3).

Thanks for trials? Not normally. But James let us know that if trials come our way, we can be sure God is using them for faith building. We can accept those trials with confidence knowing that Jesus’ promises, His words,

even these words, are true: “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (JOHN 16:33).

“For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (PHIL. 2:13).

God is working in you and your staff for His good pleasure. We’re not working for self. We’re not working for bigger schools and fame. We are faithful to His will and purpose, all for *His* pleasure. So as we give thanks for all He is doing through us, we also are sure to pray “Thy will be done” (Lord’s Prayer, *LSB*, p. 162).

“Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (EPH. 5:19-20).

It really helps to remind and encourage each of us to be thankful when we gather for devotions, for prayer and for worship.

Professionally Speaking // NOVEMBER 2019

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Mark Muehl Designer: Chrissy Thomas

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Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



“Rejoice always ...” (1 THESS. 5:16–24)

Bible Story: Manna in the Wilderness (EX. 16:1–18, 31)

Focus: God provided food for His people as they journeyed to their new home.

What it teaches us: God provides the food we need. The psalmist reminds us:

“Oh, give thanks to the Lord ... sing praises ... tell of all his wondrous works ... he ... gave them bread” (PS. 105:1, 2, 40).

Prepare to teach:

› **Read** the story in Exodus and, if possible, the notes in a study Bible.

› **Think:** In our Bible story, God’s Old Testament people were on their way from Egypt, where they had been slaves, to their new home. It wasn’t long before they ran out of the food they brought with them. God heard their call for help and, from that day until they arrived in their new home, God provided manna; read Ex. 16:31 for a description. This is a reminder that Jesus, speaking in a spiritual sense, calls Himself the “bread from heaven” (JOHN 6:32). Jesus lived, suffered, died and rose again to make it possible for us to become God’s people today. He continues to feed us spiritually in His Word and the Lord’s Supper.

› **Pray:** Dear God, You provided food for Your people to eat long ago. You provide food for us today. Please help to respond with joyful thanks. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



WORSHIP TIME AND BIBLE STORY PRESENTATION

You will also need

- › *Little Ones Sing Praise (LOSP)*, copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House
- › *Wiggle and Wonder*, copyright © 2012 Concordia Publishing House
- › Picture of Jesus (find one doing an internet search)
- › Picture of God's people gathering manna (find one online)

Gather for Worship

Invite the children to the worship area. Sing (tune: "Are You Sleeping?"), **Come and sit down** (repeat) **on the floor** (repeat). **We will learn of Jesus** (repeat) **sing and pray** (repeat).

Invocation: Use the same melody and sing: **We begin now** (repeat) **in God's name** (repeat) — **Father, Son and Spirit** (repeat). **Amen** (repeat).

Opening Song

Show picture of Jesus. **Jesus loves each of us. We learn about Jesus' love in the Bible** (show Bible). Sing, "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know" (*LOSP*, p. 42).

Bible Story

Show the picture of God's people.

God's people were moving so long ago; through a desert they had to go. (walk in place)

The sun was hot and the nights so cold; and pretty soon they had no food. (shake head no)

They asked God for something to eat; He decided to give them a special treat. (smile and nod head "yes")

They woke the next morning and looked around; something like snow was on the ground. (shrug shoulders, hands out and have a questioning look)

They picked it up and started to eat; it tasted like bread and honey — a special treat. (smile, nod head and pretend to eat)

God's people were thankful to God for food to eat. It certainly was a tasty treat.

What the Story Teaches: God showed He loved His people of long ago. He provided the food they needed. God loves us. He provides food for us today, through people like farmers. God loved us so much He sent His Son Jesus to be our Savior. What a wonderful God we have. Let's say "Thank You."

Time to Pray:

Invite the children to pray with you: **Our hands we fold, our heads we bow. For this good food, we thank God now. Amen** (traditional).

Closing/Benediction

Sing (tune: "Are You Sleeping?"), **Time to go now** (repeat) **Time to play** (or what you do next) (repeat). **God is always with you** (repeat). **Loves you too** (repeat).



CURRICULAR MATERIALS //

IDEA STARTERS for integrating the Bible story and theme into STREAMS (curriculum)

S Science and Nutrition

- > **Sense of taste:** have a tasting party; use words to describe various tastes.
- > **Serve** “oyster crackers” with honey butter or sweetened cereal.

T Technology

- > **Contact parents electronically;** ask them to share mealtime prayers used in the home. Compile and send home with the newsletter.

R Reading and Language Arts

- > **Read**
 - *Baby, Let's Eat*, board book by Amy Pixton and Stephan Lomp, copyright © 2018 Workman Publishing Company;
 - *Eat Your Colors*, board book by Amanda Miller, copyright © 2016 Children's Press;
 - *Mealtime*, board book by Elizabeth Verdick and Marieka Heinlen, copyright © 2011 Free Spirit Publishing.
- > **Snack Time Finger Plays:** *Wiggle and Wonder*, copyright © 2012 Concordia Publishing House, p. 29.

CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

As we shared the Bible story in Ex. 16:1–18, 31, the children learned about the manna (bread) God provided for His people. God provides food for us too. At each meal, take time to joyfully thank God.

E Engineering

- > **Set tables** with utensils needed for eating (e.g., plates, cups, forks).

A Arts (art, music and physical education)

- > **Invite toddlers** to pick red, yellow or green paint or markers and color a page. Cut out into food shapes and laminate. Identify foods.
- > **Sing**, “It’s Good to Give Thanks” (*LOSP*, p. 61).
- > **Invite children** to pick up small balls and put them in a basket.

M Mathematics

- > **Sort “play” food items** from Housekeeping Center by color; identify; count.

S Social Studies

- > **Invite to the children** to prepare food for families to eat in Dramatic Play/Housekeeping center.



Rattles & Prattles

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Judy Williams Designer: Chrissy Thomas

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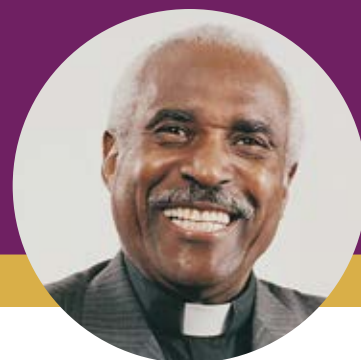
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School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN

Thank:fully

“But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it” (NUM. 14:24).

Because Lutheran school shepherds are blessed with the Spirit who has called and equipped them, they, like Caleb, respond FULLY. The monthly *School Shepherd* newsletter invites a Christ-led FULL response to this unique ministry. Previous months’ themes have included RESPECT:FULLY and FAITH:FULLY.

THANK:FULLY

The Thank FULL Good Shepherd

“Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated” (JOHN 6:11).

Jesus, the Creator and Provider of all, gives thanks. Certainly Jesus’ words and actions are a model for us. We who are dependent on our God for every earthly blessing and even more dependent for the spiritual blessings of the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, offer our thanks to Him in our hearts, homes, churches and Lutheran schools.

Thank FULL School Shepherds

The Apostle Paul is the thankful “shepherd” of the flock at Philippi:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (PHIL. 4:6).



The school shepherd gives thanks with the Apostle confidently entrusting every care and concern to God. Even in the most challenging situations, the love of Christ is constant (ROM. 8:31-39).

Martin Luther invites us to join him each morning in giving thanks: “I thank You, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night” (*Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*, copyright © 1986, 1991 Concordia Publishing House, p. 33). The thankful heart energizes the response to all activities during the day.

The school shepherd humbly gives thanks for God’s grace as he serves. Jesus shares the parable that condemns the self-righteous Pharisee who gave thanks that he was “not like other men” (LUKE 18:11). Jesus’ story lauds the tax-collector who simply prayed, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (LUKE 18:13). The school shepherd, who is blessed to share the mercy of God in Word and Sacrament, rejoices that he himself has received mercy. The shepherd, who is called to share, “as a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins” (LSB,

p. 151), gives thanks for the Savior who has forgiven all his sins.

Joyful and productive ministry does not take place in isolation. A supportive wife and children are God's gifts. Ministry team members who assume their roles responsibly and effectively allow the school shepherd to focus on spiritual leadership. Board members who lead effectively relieve stress and shape productive school and church life. Thanks is given to God and to the individuals for their vocations in support of the ministry, which bring contexts of thankfulness to the shepherd and his ministry.

While the school shepherd first gives his individual thanks to God, he also verbally and publicly shares his thanks for being part of a Lutheran school ministry: "I am thankful for getting to work with such a great ministry team; with such a supportive board; with such great children ..."

Shepherding Thank FULL School Ministry

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 THESS. 5:16-18).

The school shepherd is the thanks-giver and thanks-leader in the Lutheran school. Giving thanks openly and frequently is part of the culture of a healthy Lutheran school. Responses and activities which make for a thank-FULL setting may include:

- › Give prayers of thanks in Sunday worship and school chapel worship for specific ministry areas or specific ministry servants.
- › Make a commitment to send at least one letter or note of thanks each week to a volunteer, donor or other ministry partner.
- › Share thanks with the congregation for their support of the school ministry.
- › Share thanks with the school children and staff for the support of the congregation.

“ All praise and thanks to God,
The Father now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns
With them in highest heaven,
The one eternal God,
Whom earth and heav'n adore;
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be evermore.”

(LSB 895:3)

- › Have a "Thankful for ..." bulletin board in the school where children and staff can add notes of thanks.
- › Organize "thanks" coffees, lunches or dessert times for volunteers.
- › Thank community servants (firemen, policemen, etc.) for their service.
- › Host a "thanksgiving" service and fellowship event in the school.

Dialoguing Thank FULLY

- › What's on your personal thanksgiving list?
- › What's on your pastoral thanksgiving list?
- › What's on your church/school thanksgiving list?
- › How do you, the school principal and other ministry leaders publicly share "thanks"? How could you be more proactive and specific in sharing thanks?



Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



Gratitude!

Thank you. *Gracias. Merci. Grazie. Danke schoen. Khop khun mak kha.* No matter what way you say them, the words “thank you” are powerful! These powerful words have the ability to change a person’s outlook and inspire better health and happiness. When words of thankfulness and gratitude are shared, a person begins to internalize the precious meaning of something that has been given or offered as part of a relationship. A “thank you” need not be glamorous. It can be as simple as a smile, handshake or nod of the head.

Far too often today a “thank you” may be shared more as a routine part of dialogue rather than something genuine. And, on the other end of the equation, the receiver of the “thank you” may not necessarily even hear the words being shared. Consider how you might be able to put a little more meaning into the “thank you” words of appreciation that you share. How can you ensure that the thankful words you speak really show a meaningful attitude of gratitude?

Why is sharing words of gratitude important? What does such an exchange of words really mean in regard to leading and teaching in a Lutheran school? Actually, these words and the relationship that the words are grounded on are a way to show Christ’s love in a JOY-filled way to your neighbor.

Showing gratitude is an investment in someone else. Gratitude is recognizing another person’s work or response that has been meaningful to you. Being grateful is a manner in which you can connect with a person and recognize kindness received, as well as kindness being offered.



In 1 Thessalonians, Paul shares the importance of giving thanks in all circumstances. Think of how you can show gratitude in a JOY-filled way so you can share the love of Jesus. As you show gratitude JOY-fully, you are “wearing love” so that all may see the goodness of Christ that lives in you. In addition, when you show gratitude, people often respond positively, which increases your own happiness and makes you feel even more thankful! It is amazing how God uses emotions and responses of JOY to “fill our buckets” and encourage us to continue in ministry-filled vocations.

While it may be easy to ponder the ways you show thankfulness and gratitude to God (prayer, serving those in need, songs of praise, etc.), think of how you can praise Him in new ways. It is also true that God has already shown the greatest level of perfect love to His people. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, all have been chosen to be special members of the Christian family. Through Baptism, you are recognized as a significant member of the Church here on earth. Knowing you are baptized, forgiven and loved by an

almighty and everlasting Father is certainly something to be grateful for.

As a leader of ministry to young children, you likely see the many ways children show their gratitude and love each day. By sharing smiles of friendship, words of endearment or acts of kindness, children are warmly open to demonstrating their thankfulness and JOY! As a faith-filled servant in a Lutheran school, an attitude of gratitude is important to have and daily model. The interactions you have in the morning with faculty, staff and parents can either share your gratitude or create a displeasing feeling in the hearts of others. Be careful to model a JOY-filled life and disposition, even when challenges are present. The smile, body-language and words you present each day tell a story — so let it be a story of gratitude and blessings!

A few ideas for more fully incorporating a life of JOY-filled gratitude include:

› **Gratitude Walk**

Use time during the day to walk around your facility or, if the weather permits, outside. Do what is best for you as you engage in physical activity and reflect on the blessings that are with you each day. As you walk, take special note of these blessings (co-workers, flowers, delicious food, music, etc.) and rejoice they are part of your life. Spend part of your Gratitude Walk in prayer as you thank God for these blessings and express your thoughts and feelings to the Almighty Listener!

› **Gratitude Journaling**

With the “almost-lost art” of penmanship, choose a special journal booklet and find a routine that suits your schedule to make a note of the things you are grateful for. These may be some of the same items you noted during your Gratitude Walk, or perhaps they are new blessings that come to mind. Consider making an entry in your Gratitude Journal during a daily devotion and/or prayer time.

› **Music of Gratitude**

The gift of music is one that many people find to be a tremendous blessing in their lives. The many

different styles of music that God has given allow for creativity in ways that touch the hearts and minds of many. Whether you listen to music that has spiritual lyrics or simple instrumental music that soothes your mind, reflect on what (and why) you are grateful for what you have in your life.

› **Be in God's Presence!**

Sit; relax. Enjoy your time in worship with your fellow Christians. Remember what is happening there: God is coming to you, serving you, rejuvenating you with His gifts of Word and Sacrament. Even if you have to “work” during worship, remember that God's Word is still there FOR YOU. And in addition to regular worship, consider taking time for private meditation/reflection. When is the last time that you entered God's house and simply sat and enjoyed the quiet and peace? If you have colorful stained-glass windows, look deeply at the color and images present. Count the number of crosses you see in the sanctuary. Visit your regular location of seating in the sanctuary, but also sit for a few moments in a seat with a new view. Think of all the Christians who have worshiped in the Lord's house over the years and how God has blessed them with His love, grace and mercy.

When you really think about your life, there are many things to be thankful for. As Paul shares in 1 Thessalonians, Christians are to “give thanks in all circumstances” (5:17). Even when things are bleak, there are rays of sunshine. Stormy, rain-filled clouds must appear in the sky before a rainbow expresses its marvelous colors. Know that because of God's love for you, you are special. You are unique. God made you so you can show others His love.

As you celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday, remember that blessings are hidden as well as visible. Take time to reflect on the work God has set before you. He equips those He has chosen to serve.

Thank you for serving in Lutheran education! Thank you for making a difference in the lives of others! Thank you for striving to live a life of gratitude!

Time Out for Directors

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

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