



The World Is Waiting For You...



## Parenting With Purpose

### Request #4: Appreciate

“Appreciation can make a day, even change a life. Your willingness to put it into words is all that is necessary.”

Margaret Cousins

If you APPRECIATE me,  
I will know your support.

## Understanding Appreciation

I remember opening the windows on a beautiful evening a few summers ago, expecting to hear the birds chirping and the little kids playing. But instead, I was treated to an earful of angry shouting from the house next door. It had something to do with taking out the garbage and it was most definitely directed at the 15 year-old son. Something about, “YOU’LL DO WHAT I TELL YOU TO DO **WHEN** I TELL YOU TO DO IT!” Yadda, yadda, ya.

I cringed at the thought of the poor boy carrying out his chores to the stares of the curious neighbors. Furthermore, I was even more curious to know if the Dad was aware of the role that simple appreciation could play in motivating his son to do simple household chores without screaming and yelling.

So what's the definition of "appreciate?"

*It's to be conscious of the significance, desirability or worth of.*

It's so easy to appreciate someone, isn't it? The waitress brings you a glass of ice water and you say, "Thank you." That's it! That's all there is to it. She is appreciated.

Sincere appreciation is one of the most effective ways to make a teen feel part of the family, and ultimately part of society, so don't take this lightly. Starting at an early age, express your appreciation through admiration, praise or thanks and you will be rewarded later on. But here's the thing. We're not talking about the out-of-proportion applause for a first grader's finger painting. With older children and teenagers, it's more subtle. They will pick up on phony praise, so don't even go there. The admiration must be sincere and it must be delivered in a sincere way.

Even if the task is small, teens want to be noticed for having done it. Even if they are expected to do something, such as a chore (taking out the garbage), they want to be acknowledged. They actually love getting our praise and admiration, who doesn't? But they want it in a new way that honors who they are at this stage in life. No more gushing praise that seems fake or childish.

"The deepest principle in human nature is the  
craving to be appreciated."

William James

Think about how you would express appreciation to a co-worker or a neighbor and then treat your children the same way. A sincere acknowledgement of something they've done well is one way to make them feel like a grownup.

One word of caution, though, NO strings attached! Don't use attention or compliments as bait for something that you want done or as evidence of what a good parent you are. If you want them to do something, make a clear request, and then after the task is done, praise them or thank them. Also leave out the "buts" or "ands." "I appreciate you, but..." is a way to make them think that your appreciation is conditional and that is *not* how you want to make a connection with them.

Appreciate your teens for what they ARE contributing to the household, rather than focusing on what they are NOT doing. They will start to look forward to receiving your praise and their actions will soon change to position themselves to receive even more of it. By giving your appreciation freely and authentically, you will reinforce respect, listening and understanding. Never take the efforts of your teen (or younger child) for granted. Acknowledge their contributions to your household and to your life. You may soon find this attitude reciprocated and they will begin to appreciate YOU!

"Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They're absolutely free and worth a fortune."

Sam Walton

## Practice Appreciation

Before we begin practicing appreciation, take a few moments to think about how YOU like to be appreciated. Are you someone who wants to be thanked for your efforts around the house? ARE you thanked for your efforts? When you're not acknowledged, how does that make you feel? If you spend the entire afternoon cleaning out the garage and your spouse comes home and walks in without noticing, does that bother you? I'm pretty sure it would. And it should!

Keep your answers in mind when you start thinking about how you acknowledge your teen. They are human too, well, most of the time. And they probably feel the same way that you do.

### **PRACTICE #1 - TAKE INVENTORY**

Actually write down the ways that you like to receive appreciation, as well as the things that you like to be appreciated for. Consider external appreciation as a commodity that you enjoy, and consider how you receive it and from whom. Then, look at your answers from the eyes of a teenager. Finally, make a list of the ways that you might show appreciation for your teen or younger children and then go out and do it!

“Every day, set your mind in the right direction. Find something to be grateful for.”

Joel Osteen

## **PRACTICE #2 - SAY IT**

Incorporate the word “appreciate” into your vocabulary. Not only with your teen but also with your spouse, family, neighbors, and coworkers. Get everyone involved! It’s harder than you think. Society doesn’t use the word appreciate in everyday conversations, just like we don’t say the word “respect” on a daily basis either. Whenever you see your teen doing something that you are grateful for, say, “I appreciate the way you \_\_\_\_\_.” (Fill in the blank) This is something that you should continue for the rest of your life, not figure out and then stop doing. And if you have young children, start this today! Being thankful and expressing gratitude to others is a way to honor God. And cultivating this kind of appreciation will bring ease and joy into your household.

“Begin with praise and honest appreciation.”

Dale Carnegie

### **PRACTICE #3 - PERSPECTIVE**

Where does your appreciation come from? Learning to value others for their unique contributions to the world (and to your household) means eliminating your personal judgments about them. Begin to train your thoughts by using a simple phrase in your mind. When your teen or child walks in the room, think to yourself, “I cherish you.” Let this fundamental thought determine how you send out your love and appreciation.

Make it a habit to tell people thank you. To express your appreciation, sincerely and without the expectation of anything in return. Truly appreciate those around you, and you’ll soon find many others around you. Truly appreciate life, and you’ll find that you have more of it.”

Ralph Marston