

Leader's Guide

Session 1



AIM:

To help children have an awareness of God as the giver of all good gifts.

OUTCOMES:

- Know that God is a person.
- Know that they can say thank you to God.
- Understand what it means to say thank you.

NOTES FOR LEADERS:

Eric Says Thanks reminds all of us of the basic truth that God provides what we need in terms of food and other needs. Matthew 6 reminds us:

"So I tell you, don't worry about the food you need to live. And don't worry about the clothes you need for your body...Look at the birds in the air. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns. But your heavenly Father feeds the birds. And you know that you are worth much more than the birds... And why do you worry about clothes? Look at the flowers in the field. See how they grow. They don't work or make clothes for themselves. But I tell you that even Solomon with his riches was not dressed as beautifully as one of these flowers."

God provides us with everything we need to eat. Eric was having something as uncomplicated as toast and we see through this story that he thanks many people, but ultimately the final thanks is to God for what he provides. God loves us. How easy that is to forget as we take so much for granted!

The children who you share this story with may not think to thank God for anything that they have. They may not have a real awareness of who God is and why they should thank him. The main aim of this lesson is to raise their awareness of who God is and a little of what he does for them – in this case to have food to eat.

Spend a few minutes thanking God for what he has given you.

MENU

KICK-STARTER

Choose your kick-starter activity from the options below. Instructions are in the activity menu at the end of the session. Make sure that you have all the resources that you need ready to go before the children arrive.

- **Bread and toppings**
- **Let's make toast**

Discuss

1. **What do you like about bread/toast?**
2. **When would you normally eat toast in your house?**
3. **Does anyone know what might be in the bread?
How do you make it?**

Explain to the children that you are going to watch and listen to a story on the video (maybe have the children finish their snack while you watch it, if they have not already done so). Before watching, ask the children if they know any of the people who might be involved in making the ingredients for the bread?

Encourage the children to keep an eye out as they watch the *Eric Says Thanks* story, to see if they were correct about the people involved in the bread-making process, and if there was anyone they had not thought of.

STORY

Watch the video of Dai Hankey telling the story of Eric Says Thanks at <https://vimeo.com/327923303/45f83c5e7b>

If you do not have access to video equipment, the storybook can be used to tell the story 'live'.

Once the children have heard the story, show them the pictures (six in total printed as A3) of the people involved in making the bread that Eric ate for his breakfast that morning. Make sure they are mixed up and get the children to put the people in the order they appear in the story.

Discuss together the people involved and the role they play in the making of the bread.

Talk about how Eric learns that the process all starts with God, who we need to thank for providing the earth and the sun/rain/growth of seeds to make the flour etc.

Have the children think of something else that they enjoy eating and see if they can think of all the people who might be involved in producing the ingredients for that item. Write/draw/show pictures of the process up on a wall so that the children can see it.

For example:

Chocolate: parent | shopkeeper | factory (processing) | farmer (harvests and ferments) | God;

Chips: chip shop | peeler of potatoes | supermarket | market | farmer | God.

BIBLE VERSE ACTIVITY

This activity is to help the children learn the Bible verse that is used as part of the story in the book.

Farmer Pete opens his Bible and shows Eric what it says.

In the story, when Eric meets Farmer Pete, he pulls out his Bible to help Eric see what God says about who he needs to thank for the sunshine and the rain. Farmer Pete opens the Bible at Deuteronomy. Explain to the children that Deuteronomy is a book in the Old Testament, the first part of the Bible.

The verse says: *"Love the Lord your God. Serve him with your whole being. Then he will send rain on your land at the right time, in the fall and spring. You will be able to gather your grain."*

This verse is from Deuteronomy chapter 11:13-14.

BIBLE VERSE ACTIVITY CONTINUED...

This is quite a long verse to teach the children so we suggest you use the paraphrase that is in the book *Eric Says Thanks* instead.

It says, "Love the Lord, serve him heart and soul. For he sends the rain that makes grain grow."

Encourage children to say the verse a few times.

Put the children into teams of six or eight. Before the session begins, put words from the verse on pieces card and place in a pile, mixed up. Have one set of words for each team. Do a relay race to collect the cards and put in order. Say verse again together when complete.

CREATIVE ACTIVITY

We want to encourage children to encounter God. One way that we can do this is through some creative prayer ideas.

Set up both of these activities and give the children some time to interact with them and encounter God in a non-threatening way. Many children, even if not from a church background, can really benefit from interacting with prayer in creative ways. These 2 prayer stations focus on being thankful to God for the things that we have to eat.

- Empty plate
- People tree

Start of activity: **Explain** to the children that prayer is when we talk to God and we can do that in different ways.

End of activity: To help children process this activity, **ask** the children to share anything that they particularly enjoyed about the activities or anything that they found difficult.

PULL IT TOGETHER

Take a couple of minutes at the end to bring the whole session together.

Who can tell us some of the people who were in the story?

(Allow the children to respond.)

Who was the last person that Eric learnt to say thanks to?

(Allow the children to respond. God.)

There are lots of people in the world to whom we can say thank you that we meet every day – or can make a special effort to thank, like Eric did. It is important to remember that we should also thank God, even though we cannot see him. We can thank Him by praying.

Pray with children before they leave – a simple prayer is printed at the back of the book:

Dear God, thank you for all the good gifts that you give us. You love us and lead us and feed us and forgive us. Above all, thank you for Jesus Christ, who died and rose to give us new life. Amen!

TAKE IT HOME

It can be good to have something that the children can take home with them to remember what they have been learning. There are three ideas to choose from.

1. Have a sandwich bag with two slices of bread and toppings for the children to take home and make toast. Encourage them to think about who to thank as they eat it.
2. Give the children a bookmark with the words "Thanks God" on it to remind them who the giver of all good gifts is.
3. Give the children their creative prayer activity to take home as a reminder of who to say thank you to.

ACTIVITY MENU

Bread and toppings

Have normal sliced bread available, with a variety of toppings that the children can put on the bread. Toppings might include butter/spread, jam, chocolate spread, etc. Give each of the children a plate and, depending on their age, allow them to add toppings. Help them if they are younger.

Empty plate

You will need: paper plates, pens, pictures from food magazines, scissors, and glue.

This prayer activity encourages children to think about food. Encourage them to choose a picture of some things that they like to eat and to stick it onto the plate. They may also like to draw some other things on the plate that they enjoy eating. On the back of the plate, encourage the children to write a simple thank you to God for all the food that we have to eat each day. Hang the plates in a row on a string or clothes rack with clothes pegs so that the plates can be read.

Let's make toast

Make toast with the children, have a variety of toppings for them to choose from. Encourage all the children to participate in the activity.

People tree

You will need: a cardboard/paper tree stuck to a wall, paper cut to the size of photos, felt tips and pencils.

Encourage the children to take a couple of the pieces of paper and draw on them someone that they would want to say thank you to. Encourage the children to think about the person for a few minutes as they draw them. Encourage the children to write the thing that they want to say thank you for under the picture (something positive). Then give the children some Blu Tack to stick their person onto the tree.