

11-2008

# Creating an Atmosphere of Thankfulness

Susan E. Murray  
*Andrews University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Murray, Susan E., "Creating an Atmosphere of Thankfulness" (2008). *Lake Union Herald*. 567.  
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/567>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Lake Union Herald at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Lake Union Herald by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact [repository@andrews.edu](mailto:repository@andrews.edu).



## FAMILY TIES

# Creating an Atmosphere of THANKFULNESS

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

Sharing meals together as a family does more than just create healthy eaters. When you slow down and sit down—**S**together—it creates a space for all of you to enjoy one another and focus on the good that is in your life.

**First, say a blessing.** “A blessing celebrates the profound connection we all have to giving thanks for food,” says Adrian Butash. His book, *Bless This Food: ancient and contemporary graces from around the world*, contains 160 blessings, including ancient prayers. When children select a blessing, or originate one of their own, it gives them a feeling of being an active part of the family. A blessing can be a great conversation starter, and it turns our thoughts toward our gracious heavenly Father.

**Keep it simple.** Pancakes or waffles at supper time, grilled cheese sandwiches or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, served on real plates and eaten with real people, are just fine. Recently, I read of a family who has a pasta or pizza bar one night a week. The night before, someone makes a homemade sauce for the pasta or gets the pizza toppings ready and in the refrigerator. The next evening, they have a delicious meal in a short time. Who wouldn’t be thankful for that?

**Make meals a team effort.** Kids love to feel needed, and it’s amazing how much cooperation you can get, in both cooking and eating, if you give each person a task. An idea I saw in a magazine showed a pantry with several wire baskets on the shelves. In each basket were all the staples needed for different meals. For example, there was a basket with pasta, spaghetti sauce, canned vegetables, Parmesan cheese, salad dressing and a loaf of French bread. Anyone could start the meal and, by adding a fresh salad, they were ready to eat!



**Be flexible.** Look at your schedules and decide which meals will usually work for you, but be open to a change of plans if things get too busy. Sunday mornings actually work surprisingly well for many families—when they plan for it.

**Aim for stress-free communication.** Eating together is one of the best times to hear what family members have on their minds.

Kids share what their likes and dislikes are, fill you in about their friends, and talk about what their daily life is like. It isn’t a time for lectures or heavy discussions about serious family issues. Sitting together after a meal can lead to such meaningful conversation and connection.

**Turn off the TV.** Years ago, when our children were home, we made a decision to never have the television on while eating. Even though there are just the two of us now, we continue that habit. It creates a special place where the two of us connect and have meaningful conversation, even after all these years.

**Be creative and have fun.** Eating by candlelight, eating on the “good dishes” or eating on paper plates can add to the fun. Of course, trying new foods and recipes is an excellent opportunity to be creative!

Creating an atmosphere of thankfulness is done in many ways, but I invite you to plan how you can specifically reinforce that attitude as you slow down and sit down and eat a meal together!

---

Susan Murray is an associate professor of family studies who teaches behavioral science and social work at Andrews University. She is a certified family life educator and a licensed marriage and family therapist.