

OPERATION: THANKS

(Don't Be a Turkey!)

A ONE WEEK
**THANKSGIVING
LESSON**

BY KARL BASTIAN
AND TOM BUMP

CHALLENGE KIDS TO
SHOW THANKS IN NEW
AND CREATIVE WAYS!



Overview



Operation: Thanks

Unit Overview:

We live in a "gimmie gimmie" culture that focuses on how much it can get. God wants us to have an attitude of gratitude for the many blessings we already have. The purpose of this unit is not only to help kids focus on being thankful, but to challenge them to think of some people that haven't expressed thanks to. It will help them think of some ways they can express their thanks in practical ways.

Operation Thanks includes an assignment after the lesson where children will be challenged to do something to demonstrate thankfulness to three people who have helped them, yet they haven't yet responded to in a tangible expression of thanks.

Theme Verse:

1 Thessalonians 5:18 - "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Welcome Activity



OPTION #1: **THANKFULNESS MURAL**

Items Needed:

- Poster Board or sheet of Butcher Paper
- Crayons/Markers

Set up one wall with poster boards or a large sheet of paper. Across the boards/paper, write the letters of the word **THANKFULNESS**. As the children arrive have them draw a picture or write a word of something they are thankful for, each beginning with that letter.

OPTION #2: **POST-IT THANKS**

Items Needed: Colorful Post-It Notes and Pens

Encourage kids to write things they are thankful for on Post-It Notes and stick them on the backs of their friends. Tell them everyone needs to have at least 3 Post-It Notes on their back. Then, they try to guess what is on their back asking each other questions that can only be answered with a "Yes" or "No."



Worship & Opening

Worship Song Suggestions

Recommended theme song is "Thanks to You" by Alan Root, which can be found on his *Farthest Star* music CD or *Saturday Morning Music* DVD. Both available on Kidology.org

Opening Video

Show: "The Dude of Gratitude" from ToyBoxTales.com

You can download here: Kidology.org/DudeOfGratitude

"Gobble Gobble" Ice Breaker Question

Encourage kids ask each other: "If you could change the main dish at Thanksgiving to any other food besides turkey, what would you want to eat?"

You can also have them go around and greet one another by saying, "Thank you for coming today!" Then have them ask two people, "What's the coolest thing someone ever did for you?"



Theme Verse Illustration

1 Thessalonians 5:18 - "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Items Needed:

- 18 12-inch Balloons in a variety of colors
- Thick Black Marker
- Needle

There is an old saying, "it's more blessed to give than to receive." Which do you like better giving or receiving? Most of us say receiving, right? But there is something we should love to give so much more than receiving it. What is it? Giving Thanks to God!

Praising him because of who he is can be done lots of ways too. What are ways we can give thanks to God? Should we only praise God when good things happen? This verse says we should give thanks in "all circumstances." No matter what happens, because God is good we can praise him. When we do we are obeying what he wants us to do. As Christians it's our desire to do God's will each and every day. When we live with an attitude of gratitude, we do just that! So we shouldn't just act or give thanks during Thanksgiving season; every day should be Thanksgiving. We can give something special everyday!

Encourage your students to memorize this verse by saying it several times. Inflate 18 balloons and write the words of the verse on the balloons (one word per balloon, with "1 Thessalonians" on one, "5" on another, and ":18" on the last one.) Have 18 kids come up and hold the balloons. Say the verse over and over, popping one of the balloons at a time randomly, then having that child sit down. Once all of them are popped, the kids will know the verse!

OPTIONAL: Put a piece of candy in the balloon before inflating so the child that held it will get a treat when it is popped!

Use the theme verse as a lead-in to worship. We worship God out of hearts of gratitude.



Game With A Point

Alphabet Thanks!

Items Needed:

- 26 slips of paper with each letter of the alphabet (large enough for everyone to quickly see)
- Container to hold paper slips
- Additional slips of paper denoting "100 Points" and "50 Points"

Invite two contestants on to the stage. When the leader draws letters of the alphabet from a container, the contestants have to call out something they are thankful for that starts with that letter. If they are first, they get a slip that says "100 Points". If they are second they get a slip that says "50 Points". If they can't think of something in 5 seconds, they are replaced by someone else in audience.

If they repeat an item that has been said by a previous contestant at any point in the game, they are out and return to their seat (this helps kids in the audience to continually pay attention).

Points can be redeemed for candy at the end of class. Consider having different sizes of candy, some worth more than others.

Optional: Audience members can make a challenge if they think the word isn't true. For example, if a contestant says, "Zebra," an audience member can jump up and say, "I challenge!" The teacher calls on them and asks, "Why do you challenge?"

The challenger might say, "Do you have a Zebra?" The contestant provides an answer ("No", "I am thankful God invented them," etc.) and then the audience votes on whether the answer is acceptable. If the challenger wins, they receive a "100 Points" slip. Either way, the contestant keeps their points.

The Point: Sometimes we have a hard time thinking of things we are thankful for or we keep expressing thanks for the same ol' things. We need to make an effort to think about the things we have received or the people who have helped us that we may have overlooked!



"Let's Talk Turkey" Main Lesson

Bible Stuffing! (Sword Drill)

Kids race to look up these words about thankfulness and then the teacher gives a brief commentary on the verse.

- 1 Thess. 5:18 Give thanks to God for the good and the bad in life.
- 2 Cor. 9:15 Jesus is God's gift to us.
- 1 Chron. 16:8 We should always be saying thanks to God.
- Psalm 100:4 We can thank God every Sunday through worship.
- Hebrews 12:28 We can thank God for all he does for us.
- 1 Cor. 15:57 Give thanks to God for victory over sin.
- 2 Cor. 2:14 Give thanks to God for leading us through life.
- Phil 4:6 We should be thankful during our prayers to God.

Skit/Drama

Items Needed:

- Bottle of cold water somewhere on the stage
- Actor who is in rags and looks like they are starving.

At some point in the lesson - it doesn't matter when, but it needs to be after the kids know the lesson is on giving thanks, but it should be an interruption. An actor, preferably a man wearing only shorts and who looks like he has been crawling through the desert starving comes crawling into the room crying out for "Aqua! Aqua! Water! Water!" and barely makes it to the stage alive. Muttering "crash... no survivors..." etc. (Keep it humorous so no kids are alarmed.)

The leader acts very concerned and rushes to get the man some water. He drinks it, pours it on his head and body. Then miraculously gets up and DOESN'T SAY THANKS. Just says something like, "Well, that was nice. Cool. I feel much better now. Guess I can get back to what I was doing. Oh, hi kids. How are you. See ya around. Later!" As he walks out with the water.

The leader acts stunned and says after him, "Uh, ok... your welcome!" See if any of the kids notice he never said, "thank you." If they don't, ask, "Did you notice anything odd about how he responded after I gave him the water?" (He didn't thank you.) Say, "Do we ever do that? People help us and we just go on without helping? Today we are going to

hear a story in the Bible where Jesus helped 10 people like that, and only ONE said thank you. Crazy, huh?"

Introduction: Say Thanks!

Items Needed:

- 3 "Gifts" - small candy bars or toys to give away

Intro: Have a couple children or leaders cued into your introduction so that it looks natural. Have three "gifts". As you begin your lesson say, "Oh, before we start the Bible lesson this morning I forgot to hand out a few gifts that I was supposed to take care of earlier."

Proceed to hand out first gift and to the first person, which looks at it and then sets it under their chair like it's no big deal to have it. Stop and pause for a minute and then, move on. Hand out the second gift and have them prompted to say, "Wow, it's about time you gave me something." And move on to the last person, who takes the gift and at first doesn't say anything. AS you return to the stage, have the last person, interrupt you and say, "I just wanted to say thanks for this gift."

You can respond, "You're very welcome and I'm so thankful that you were thankful, In fact it reminds me of a Bible story that we need to investigate this morning and see if we can find some clues about being thankful."

Bible Story: Luke 17:11-19

This is the Bible Story of Jesus healing the 10 lepers, but only one comes back to say thanks (Luke 17:11-19; Psalm 107:1-2, and Col. 2:7.)

Items Needed:

- 2 rolls of toilet paper
- Couple sheets of small round stickers (For lepers)
- 1 blue sash or towel and some safety pins (For Jesus)

Optional: If you can't find small round stickers, you can use bandages and Band-Aids. (Perhaps one small box per child.)

Short Lesson Summary

For teachers who prefer just an overview

Choose 11 kids from the audience to help you tell the story. One will be Jesus. (Perhaps select the tallest.) Pin the blue material over one shoulder and pin at the opposite side at the waist to create a sash.

The others will be lepers and many need to help each other get into costume. They will be adorned in stickers or bandages. With bandages, they can wrap their head, arms and body. With stickers or Band-Aids, they can be added clothes so they come off easily and painlessly.

Options: If you have a drama team, they can be ready to go in advance of the story, or you have kids in the audience help bandage the children in 10 small groups to help speed that process up.

As you tell the story, have the kids act it out. Have them act like they are in pain. Have them calling out, "Go away! Unclean! Unclean! I am a leper!" When Jesus heals them have them all tear off all their bandages and jump around and joy and run to the back of the room greeting the kids in the audience as they go saying, "I'm healed! - Jesus healed me!" After they get to the back have one of them come back and thank Jesus dropping at His feet in gratitude.

Detailed Story Presentation

For teachers who prefer a written script

In Luke 17, Jesus was traveling and was in the area between Jerusalem and Samaria. Jesus encountered 10 very sick men. He was traveling with his disciples to Jerusalem and had been teaching them about serving others. He wanted them to know how important serving is to God. Jesus came to this earth to serve and he wanted his disciples to also serve. He loves it when we serve others too.

Sometimes we don't even notice those who serve us. We know they do but we often times are so busy or even selfish to realize that there are people who love to help us and serve us. Sometimes our pride keeps us from serving and instead expecting to be served. Think about it. How many times a day does your mom "serve" you?

Ask the kids: Name some things your mothers do for you each day. They do a lot, don't they? How many times do you say, "Thank You"?

When we follow Jesus, he wants us to be willing to serve even when no one says "Thank You," but it really helps when we do remember to say it.

Jesus was helping his disciples learn as they traveled from place to place and he wasn't done teaching them. In fact he was going to have a living object lesson happen right in front of them.

(Invite the volunteers or drama team to come up). Have your volunteers come and proceed to wrap them in the toilet paper like a mummy and then as you continue to talk place spots all over them.

As Jesus was walking he saw in the distance 10 men. They wouldn't come close to Jesus and his disciples, as they were sick. They had a disease called leprosy! It was a terrible sickness where the skin would be covered with sores and they would often lose fingers or toes. And when a person got leprosy they would be forced to live outside of the city. Many would gather into groups and live in caves or other places together. It was a terrible thing to have.

They would no longer see family or friends, as there was no cure except to keep them away from everyone else. Leprosy was also very contagious so in order to protect people, they would always have to call out "unclean, unclean" as they walked so that others would know not to have contact with them. It was a very lonely life.

If our friends here had real leprosy they would have to stay away from everyone and they would wrap bandages around themselves to cover all the sores over their bodies. What a sad way to live, right?

You know, we have something that is much worse than leprosy. It's called sin! Sin is anything we think, say, or do that displeases God. The Bible says that our sinfulness leads us to death. Meaning we would be separated from God forever. That is a terrible idea to think about too.

Well, Jesus loved those people, even though they were sick and couldn't come near him. In fact, He saw them and they called out to him, "Master, Have Mercy On Us!" They knew the rules and understood they couldn't approach Jesus, but they wanted Him to help them.

The Bible tells us that Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the Priest at the temple, and as they were traveling there, some thing amazing happened! (Help your volunteers; break free from the paper or bandages.) The 10 men experienced a real miracle! God healed them of their leprosy! What an amazing gift!

Ask the kids: What do you think those 10 men did? How did they celebrate?

Read: Luke 17:15-19

Nine of them seemed to forget this gift, but one did not. He returned to say, "Thank You!" In fact, this man was even a Samaritan. The Jews and Samaritans didn't like each other and so this made it even more amazing. He came back to thank Jesus... and Jesus gave him another gift. The gift of everlasting life! "Your faith has healed you," Jesus said. (v. 19)

You see Jesus desires to give you the same gift. If you have not received the gift of everlasting life, you can today by saying your sorry for your sins and that you believe that Jesus gave his life on the cross and rose again for you. You can ask him to save

you from your sin and to live with you forever. If you would like to trust him today, I can help you at the end of our lesson time.

The other nine must have been so happy they forgot to say thanks, and they didn't return to tell Jesus thank you. They didn't show thankfulness like the one did. He showed that the gift he had received meant something special to him and he wanted to say express his gratitude.

Ask the kids: How often do people do things for you and go unnoticed?



Object Lesson: Thanksgiving Overflow

Items Needed:

- 16 oz empty plastic soda bottle, preferably with a narrow neck
- 1/2 cup 20-volume hydrogen peroxide (20-volume is 6% solution)
- Squirt of dish detergent
- 3-4 drops of food coloring
- 1 teaspoon yeast dissolved in approximately 2 tablespoons very warm water
- Funnel
- Foil cake pan with 2-inch sides
- Safety glasses

Presentation: Stand the bottle up in the center of the cake pan. Put the funnel in the opening. Add 3-4 drops of food coloring to the peroxide and pour the peroxide through the funnel into the bottle. Add the detergent to the peroxide in the bottle. Pour the yeast mixture into the bottle and quickly remove the funnel. Watch the thanks overflow!

The Point: Our theme verse tells us that we should be ready to give thanks to God in both the good and bad situations of life. Because of how much God loves us and we love him, our hearts should be full of thanksgiving! We should be a lot like our glass here and as we receive good things we should be overflowing with thanks!!

Snack Suggestion

Have fun making Oreo Turkeys! Learn more and get full details at:
Kidology.org/OreoTurkeys

As kids are enjoying making these have them talk conversationally about what they might do for their Operation Thanks mission assignment. Who will they thank. Maybe they can give an Oreo Turkey to someone as a gift.



"Flock Time" Small Group Activity

Option #1: Church Service Recognition

Items Needed:

- Construction Paper and other art supplies to make cards or award ribbons

Challenge the children to think of someone serving in the church and design a card or award ribbon to say THANK YOU for serving! You may need to help with suggestions. Encourage the children when completed to take the card personally to the person as a way to put their thankfulness into action. Another option is to collect the cards and deliver them for the children.

Option #2: Small Science Experiment

Items Needed:

- 3 clear plastic cups per group
- 1 pie tin per group
- ½ cup of Juicy Juice

Instructions:

- Put in Cup #1: ½ cup of Juicy Juice
- Put in Cup #2: 3 teaspoons of Baking Soda & ½ cup of Water (mix together)
- Put in Cup #3: ¼ cup of Vinegar

For the experiment – pour the contents of Cup 1 & Cup 2 together. It will look disgusting!

Say: This is a lot like when we have an attitude of selfishness and don't say "thank you!" It really is disgusting! We don't want to live our lives being ungrateful do we?

Instead, we want to live our lives overflowing with praise and thanksgiving! We have great deal to be thankful for don't we? Pour slowly Cup #3 into Cup #2 what happens? It overflowed! That is how we should live our lives overflowing with praise! Bubbling over!

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. Why is it hard to give thanks when hard or difficult things happen?
2. Who are some people you are thankful for and why?
3. What are some ways you can show people you are thankful for them?
4. Why might people be thankful for you?

Closing:

As we wrap our lesson time today, let's remember that we should be living with an attitude of gratitude. Our daily mission is that we should be on the lookout to find people to say thanks to. We should also remember that we worship God by being grateful for all the things he does for us each and every day. As we pray let's take a moment to do a popcorn prayer and say one thing we are thankful for. "Popcorn Prayer" is where everyone takes turns saying short prayers in any order. Let them know that like popcorn sometimes two kernels "pop" at the same time and so there may be times where two or three may say something out loud at the same time and that's O.K. Allow the children to say out loud things they are thankful for. After several kids have had a chance to offer a prayer of thanks and you sense the prayer time coming to a close, close with a prayer like this:

Dear God, We thank you for all the many blessings that you have given us. Forgive us for too often being like the nine lepers who didn't bother to go back and thank Jesus for what He did for them. We want to be more like the one who did go back and say thanks. Help us to notice those who have helped us and to take the time to go back and thank them, realizing that everything we have is because of you and others who have blessed us. Help us to have an attitude of gratitude toward you and others. In Jesus Name, Amen!

Make sure you thank the children for coming and the parents for bringing them!!



Operation Thanks!

I want to give you a mission this week. **Are you up for a challenge?**

This week I want you to notice or think of just three people who help or serve you. I want you to do something special for them as a way to say, "Thank You!" This is your mission, should you choose to accept it. Those who bring back their mission report next week will be rewarded with a prize!

Are you up for Operation Thanks?



Partnering With Parents

Take Home Options:

1. There is a Coloring Sheet that can be used for a Coloring Contest. Kids can bring it back to display in the room or hallway for a small prize.
2. Send home the Operation T.H.A.N.K.S. take home assignment. Each child is to list three people other than immediate family and do something to show gratitude for their service to them beyond a simple "thank you." This is their mission should they choose to accept it!
3. Letter to Parents. The letter below is intended for leaders to send via e-mail, Facebook, or print mail to their students' parents as a communication about what the students learned about on Sunday so that they can better partner with their parents and help the parents engage in the process of helping their kids with the effort to be more thankful.

Dear Mom and Dad,

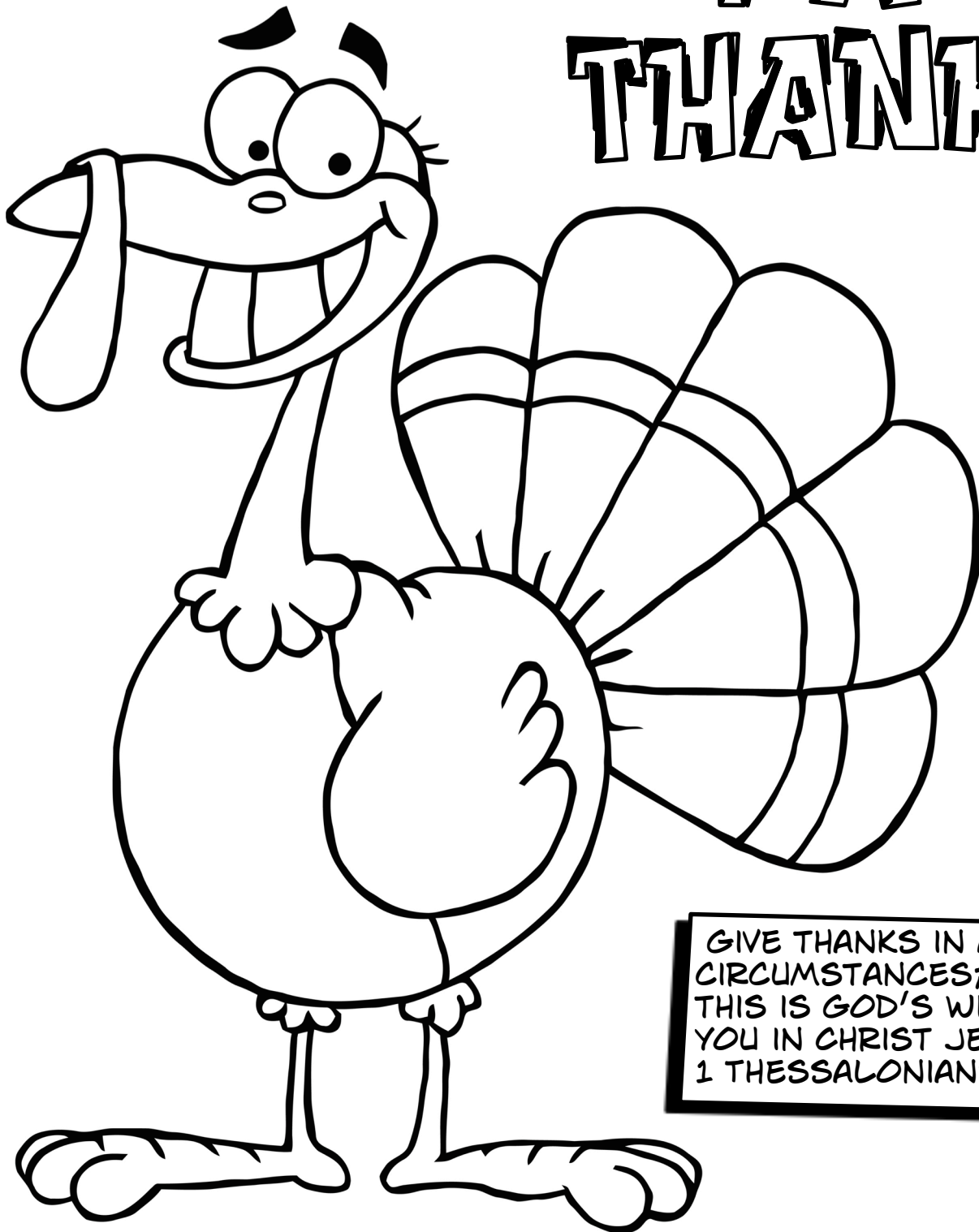
The lesson this past week was called "Operation T.H.A.N.K.S." We live in a gimmie-gimmie culture that focuses on how much it can get. God wants us to have an attitude of gratitude for the many blessings we already have. The purpose of our lesson not only to help kids focus on being thankful, but to challenge them to think of some people that haven't expressed thankfulness to and to challenge them to think of some ways they can express their thanks in some practical ways. We extended a challenge at the end of the lesson for each child to think of three people beyond their immediate family who have done things for them and to think of a way to express gratitude to them. Perhaps you can help them with this endeavor. I hope that your family has a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday and I am thankful for you and the opportunity to partner with you in the exciting adventure of helping to disciple your child to follow Jesus and learn what it means to follow God's Word.

*Sincerely,
[Your Name]*

PS I have attached a PDF of the "Operation T.H.A.N.K.S." assignment we sent home last week in case it got lost in the midst of your child's busy life. We hope it can be a fun opportunity for them to grow in the area of gratitude.

Don't Be a Turkey!

SAY THANKS!



GIVE THANKS IN ALL
CIRCUMSTANCES; FOR
THIS IS GOD'S WILL FOR
YOU IN CHRIST JESUS.
1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

Operation Thanks Report

My Name: _____

Assignment: This week think of three people who help or serve you. Do something for them as a way to say "Thank You!" This is your mission, should you choose to accept it. Those who bring back their mission report next week will be rewarded with a prize!

WHO did you serve? - **WHEN** did you do it?
WHERE did you do it? - **WHAT** did you do for them?

TARGET #1
WHO:
WHEN:
WHERE:
WHAT:

TARGET #2
WHO:
WHEN:
WHERE:
WHAT:

TARGET #3
WHO:
WHEN:
WHERE:
WHAT:

Operation Thanks Report

My Name: _____

Assignment: This week think of three people who help or serve you. Do something for them as a way to say "Thank You!" This is your mission, should you choose to accept it. Those who bring back their mission report next week will be rewarded with a prize!

WHO did you serve? - **WHEN** did you do it?
WHERE did you do it? - **WHAT** did you do for them?

TARGET #1
WHO:
WHEN:
WHERE:
WHAT:

TARGET #2
WHO:
WHEN:
WHERE:
WHAT:

TARGET #3
WHO:
WHEN:
WHERE:
WHAT: