Grateful children and teens tend to thrive. **Kids who practice gratitude get higher grades, are more satisfied with their lives, are more integrated socially and show fewer signs of depression.**
So how can families practice gratitude in meaningful ways so that our kids learn what it means to be thankful?
According to Kristen Race, here are a few ideas:

* **Express your appreciation for each other.** In my house we started this as a birthday tradition. When it is someone’s birthday we go around the table and express what we all appreciate about that person. The first time we did this it was uncomfortable for me, it felt ‘cheesy’ for lack of a better term. But when I heard the amazing things my kids had to say it quickly became my favorite family ritual, and we remind each other of what has been said often.
* **Acknowledge the small stuff.** When we practice mindfulness it helps us to be present in our relationships and pay attention to our environment. Often it is easy to go through the day distracted, out of sync with our environment and the people around us. When you are with your kids, be intentional about noticing the beautiful flowers, bright blue sky, the helpful person at the coffee counter, and the nice man who held the door for you. Your appreciation for the little things around you will rub off on your kids.
* **Make a gratitude jar.** This can be a fun project for kids. Find a container and let the kids decorate it. Cut out some pieces of scratch paper and put them in a convenient place so that family members can write down things they feel grateful for and place the paper in the jar. If kids can’t yet write, then having them draw a picture of something works great also! Then, open the jar once a week or once a month and read what everyone has written.
* **Make it part of your bedtime routine.** Take a few minutes at the end of each day to show appreciation for the little things in your life for which you are thankful. It is important for parents to model gratitude for meaningful things like relationships, kindness, and the natural beauty in your environment (rather than your 60 inch plasma TV or your new ipad). This is a wonderful way to end each day!