

Thanksgiving Resources

Have you noticed how our culture forgets **Thanksgiving** in the mad dash from Halloween to Christmas? ... even in the church. Once October ends, we quickly begin preparations for Advent, culminating in Christmas celebrations and traditions. The fourth Thursday in November gets relegated to the day before “*Black Friday*” sales events, rather than a national day set aside to remember God’s goodness and thank Him for His provision. When President Abraham Lincoln officially proclaimed a national holiday on October 3, 1863, he penned these amazing words:

“No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the most high God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy ... I do, therefore, invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday in November next as a day of Thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in heaven.”

This handout provides resources to help turn this holiday into an intentional disciple-building opportunity with those who will join you around the **Thanksgiving** dinner table. Before enjoying the meal, consider these options:

- Invest several minutes reading aloud some of the historical narratives and Scripture passages.
- Ask members of your family to participate in the readings.
- Incorporate a time of corporate praise and prayer between the meal and dessert.



Historical Anecdotes:

There are numerous claims to the “first” **Thanksgiving** in America.

- A half-century before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth in 1621, a small colony of French Huguenots established a settlement near present-day **Jacksonville, Florida**. On **June 30, 1564**, their leader, Ren de Laudonnire, recorded that “*We sang a psalm of Thanksgiving unto God, beseeching Him that it would please Him to continue His accustomed goodness towards us.*”
- In **1610**, after a hard winter called “*the starving time*,” the colonists at **Jamestown** called for a time of thanksgiving. This was after the original company of 409 colonists had been reduced to 60 survivors. The colonists prayed for help that finally arrived by a ship filled with food and supplies from England. They held a prayer service to give thanks.
- One Friday in the middle of **March, 1621**, a Native American, wearing nothing but a leather loincloth, walked up the English settlers’ main street in **Plymouth**, and to their startled faces boomed in flawless English, “Welcome”! His name was Samoset, a chief from a local tribe. He had been visiting the area for the previous eight months, learning English from various fishing captains who had put in to the Maine shore over the years.

He returned the following week with another Native American who also spoke English, and who was to prove a special instrument of God for their good, beyond their expectations. His name was Tisquantum, also called **Squanto**. He quickly observed that these English were helpless in the ways of the wilderness, so he taught them how to catch eels, stalk deer, plant pumpkins, refine maple syrup, discern edible herbs and those good for medicine, too.

One of the most important things he taught them was the Native American way to plant corn. They hoed six-foot squares in toward the center, putting down four or five kernels, and then fertilizing the corn with fish: three fish in each square, pointing to the center, spoke-like. Guarding the field against the wolves (who would try to steal the fish), by summer they had 20 full acres of corn that saved every one of their lives.

Squanto also taught them to exploit the pelts of the beaver, which were in plentiful supply and in great demand throughout Europe. He even guided their trading to insure they got full prices for top-quality pelts. The corn was their physical deliverance, while the beaver pelts would be their economic deliverance.

- The **Pilgrims** were a grateful people. Governor Bradford declared a day of public Thanksgiving, to be held in October. Ninety Native Americans joined their celebration, but did not come empty-handed: They brought five dressed deer and more than a dozen fat wild turkeys. They helped with the preparations, teaching the Pilgrim women how to make hoecakes and a tasty pudding out of cornmeal and maple syrup. They even showed them

how to make one of their Indian favorites: white, fluffy **popcorn**! The Pilgrims, in turn, provided many vegetables from their gardens: carrots, onions, turnips, parsnips, cucumbers, radishes, beets, and cabbages. They also introduced them to blueberry, apple, and cherry pie. The Pilgrims and Native Americans enjoyed competing in shooting contests, foot races, and wrestling. Things went so well, that this first **Thanksgiving** was extended for three days!

Biblical Precedents:

In addition to our national history, there are strong biblical precedents for celebrating **Thanksgiving**. Ask various family members and friends to read portions from the following Old Testament passages.

- “Then on that day David first assigned Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the Lord. ‘Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples.’”

1 Chronicles 16:7–8

On the very day that King David brought the ark of God into a tent built for it, he also commissioned an extended family to formally give thanks and sing praises to God. Their outburst of praise continues for **29 verses** in **1 Chronicles**, and lists multiple imperatives for how to give thanks to God.

- **Psalm 105** repeats and amplifies David’s prayer of thanksgiving.
- **Psalm 34**
- **Psalm 100**
- **Psalm 107**

More information may be found at these sources:

- *The Light and the Glory* – Peter Marshall & David Manuel
- *Our National Challenge: Thanksgiving* – Chuck Missler [www.khouse.org/articles/1998/72/]
- *The First Thanksgiving* – Chuck Missler [www.khouse.org/articles/1997/111/]