

Thanksgiving Family Devotions

7 days to a thankful table

These Thanksgiving family devotions fill the week before Thanksgiving Day with what the holiday is meant to be about: thanking God. Seven short readings from the Psalms, the Law, the Gospels and the letters show why God's people give thanks, what keeps us from it, and the greatest gift of all.

Start a week before Thanksgiving, or use them any time your family wants to grow more grateful. Each day has a few verses, a talk to read aloud, questions for every age, an activity and a prayer. Keep a family thankful list going all week, and read the whole list together on Thanksgiving Day.

DAY 1

Enter His gates with thanksgiving

READ

A Psalm of thanksgiving. Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; come into His presence with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and bless His name. For the LORD is good, and His loving devotion endures forever; His faithfulness continues to all generations.

— Psalm 100:1-5 (BSB)

TALK

Psalm 100 is called a psalm of thanksgiving. It tells everyone on earth to make a joyful noise to the LORD. Why? Because the LORD is God, He made us, and we belong to Him, like sheep belong to their shepherd. And because “the LORD is good, and His loving devotion endures forever.” This week, as we get ready for Thanksgiving, we will practice coming to God with thanks first.

ASK

- What does the psalm tell all the earth to make (v. 1)?

- Who made us, and whose are we (v. 3)?
- What is one reason you are thankful to God today?

DO

Start a family thankful list on a big sheet of paper or the fridge. Everyone adds at least three things each day this week. Read the whole list together on Thanksgiving Day.

PRAY

LORD, You are good and Your loving devotion endures forever. We come into Your presence with thanksgiving today. Thank You that we are Yours. Amen.

DAY 2

His loving devotion endures forever

READ

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good. His loving devotion endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods. His loving devotion endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords. His loving devotion endures forever. He alone does great wonders. His loving devotion endures forever. By His insight He made the heavens. His loving devotion endures forever. He spread out the earth upon the waters. His loving devotion endures forever.

— Psalm 136:1-6 (BSB)

TALK

Psalm 136 has a chorus that comes back in every single verse: “His loving devotion endures forever.” It was probably sung with one voice leading and everyone answering with the chorus. God’s people thanked Him for who He is and for making the heavens and the earth. However many times we say it, it is still true: God’s love never runs out.

ASK

- What words come back in every verse?
- What does the psalm thank God for in verses 5–6?
- Why do you think God’s people repeated the chorus so many times?

DO

Read the psalm together: a parent reads the first half of each verse, and everyone answers loudly, His loving devotion endures forever! Then make up new verses about your own family.

PRAY

Thank You, LORD, for You are good. Your loving devotion endures forever, for us and for every generation. Amen.

DAY 3

Don't forget when you are full

READ

When you eat and are satisfied, you are to bless the LORD your God for the good land that He has given you. Be careful not to forget the LORD your God by failing to keep His commandments and ordinances and statutes, which I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses in which to dwell, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud, and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

– Deuteronomy 8:10-14 (BSB)

TALK

Before Israel entered the promised land, Moses warned them about a danger. Not hunger, but plenty: “When you eat and are satisfied, you are to bless the LORD your God.” When life is comfortable, we easily forget who gave us everything and start to think we did it ourselves. That is why we give thanks before meals, and why Thanksgiving dinner should begin with thanking God.

ASK

- What did Moses tell the people to do when they ate and were satisfied (v. 10)?
- Why is it easier to forget God when we have plenty?
- What do you have that you sometimes forget comes from God?

DO

At dinner tonight, before you eat, name where each food came from: the farmer, the store, the cook, and God who gave it all.

PRAY

LORD our God, when we eat and are satisfied, help us remember You. Thank You for every meal and every good thing You have given us. Amen.

The one who came back

READ

When one of them saw that he was healed, he came back, praising God in a loud voice. He fell facedown at Jesus' feet in thanksgiving to Him—and he was a Samaritan. "Were not all ten cleansed?" Jesus asked. "Where then are the other nine? Was no one found except this foreigner to return and give glory to God?" Then Jesus said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well!"

— Luke 17:15-19 (BSB)

TALK

Jesus healed ten men with leprosy. All ten were cleansed, but only one came back, praising God in a loud voice, and fell at Jesus' feet to thank Him. Jesus asked, "Where then are the other nine?" It is easy to receive good things and forget to say thank you. The man who came back received something even better: he met Jesus face to face.

ASK

- How many men were healed? How many came back?
- What did the man do when he came back (vv. 15–16)?
- Who has done something kind for you that you have not thanked yet?

DO

Write thank-you notes or draw thank-you pictures for people who helped your family this year: a teacher, a neighbor, a pastor, a grandparent. Deliver them before Thanksgiving.

PRAY

Jesus, we do not want to be like the nine who forgot. Thank You for all You have done for us. Help us remember to say thank You. Amen.

Every good gift

READ

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, with whom there is no change or shifting shadow. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of His creation.

— James 1:16-18 (BSB)

TALK

James writes, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.” That means every good thing in our lives, food, home, friends, family, laughter and sunshine, comes from God. And God does not change like shifting shadows. He has always been good, and He always will be.

ASK

- Where does every good gift come from?
- What does it mean that God does not change (v. 17)?
- What good gift from God is something you cannot buy?

DO

Go on a gift hunt around your home: each person finds three good gifts from God, like a warm blanket, a photo of someone they love or a window full of light. Share them at dinner.

PRAY

Father of the heavenly lights, every good and perfect gift comes from You. Thank You for our food, our home and each other. Amen.

Whatever you do, give thanks

READ

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, for to this you were called as members of one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

— Colossians 3:15-17 (BSB)

TALK

Paul gives a short command: be thankful. Then he says that whatever we do, in word or deed, we can do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, “giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Thankfulness is not only for one holiday. It can fill ordinary days, chores, school and work, as we let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.

ASK

- What does Paul say should rule in our hearts (v. 15)?
- What does it mean to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus?
- What ordinary thing could you do this week with thanks?

DO

Pick a chore you usually grumble about and do it together today, thanking God for something with every task. Notice how it changes the mood.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, let Your peace rule in our hearts and make us thankful. Whatever we do, in word or deed, help us do it all in Your name, giving thanks. Amen.

His indescribable gift

READ

Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your store of seed and will increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will produce thanksgiving to God. For this ministry of service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanksgiving to God. Because of the proof this ministry provides, the saints will glorify God for your obedient confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the generosity of your contribution to them and to all the others. And their prayers for you will express their affection for you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

— 2 Corinthians 9:10-15 (BSB)

TALK

Paul was collecting gifts from the churches for poor believers in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26). He says that generous giving produces thanksgiving to God. Giving and thanking go together. Then Paul ends with the greatest thank-you in the Bible: “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” That gift is Jesus. On Thanksgiving, our biggest thanks belongs to God for sending His Son.

ASK

- What does generosity produce, according to verse 11?
- What is God’s indescribable gift?
- How could our family be generous to someone this Thanksgiving?

DO

As a family, choose one way to give this Thanksgiving: invite someone who would be alone, donate food, or give to a ministry that feeds the hungry. Then read your whole thankful list together.

PRAY

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! Thank You, Father, for Jesus. Make us generous, so that others will give thanks to You too. Amen.

Tips for family devotions

Start the Friday before. In the US, starting on the Friday before Thanksgiving puts day 7 on Thanksgiving Thursday.

Keep the list visible. A thankful list on the fridge or a paper chain on the wall lets even little ones join in.

Read day 7 at the table. On Thanksgiving Day, read the passage and the list before the meal, then pray.

Include guests. If family or friends join you, invite each guest to add one thing to the list.

More family devotions

Advent Family Devotions · 25 days

Family Dinner Devotions · 10 days

Family Devotions on Kindness · 7 days

Family Devotions for Young Kids · 10 days

Bible study on gratitude

Thanksgiving prayer points

A Thanksgiving prayer for family

A Thanksgiving prayer before the meal

All family devotions

Questions