

HOLIDAYS SERIES

EPISODE 1: THANKSGIVING FOR A REASON

look back

First, **LOOK BACK** at the past week by asking, "How did we do?" Begin with prayer, then check in with one another—sharing honestly, celebrating victories, acknowledging struggles, and graciously offering practical help.

PRAYER - Begin with prayer, thanking God for His goodness and asking Him to help you approach this holiday season with gratitude, grace, and joy.

Since this is the first episode in this series, take time to:

- Share what you enjoy most about the holiday season.
- Recall a Thanksgiving memory that still makes you smile.
- Share what you hope to gain from this study.

look up

Next, **LOOK UP** to God's Word by asking, "What does Jesus want us to know?" If you haven't already, watch this week's video: "*Thanksgiving for a Reason.*" Then use the summary, questions, and Scriptures below to draw out the main truths together.

WATCH: Episode 1: Thanksgiving for a Reason

Episode Summary

Thanksgiving is an opportunity to remember God's goodness and enjoy the people He has placed in our lives. The Pilgrims gave thanks after a season of hardship and unexpected provision, reflecting a biblical pattern of remembering God's faithfulness with gratitude.

A little intentionality can help us make our own gatherings meaningful too—setting aside distractions, bringing generations together, sharing stories, making gratitude fun, and praying for God to fill the day with His grace and joy.

HOW TO USE THESE RESOURCES

Whether you're studying on your own or with a group, each guide follows a simple yet powerful rhythm: **Look Back / Look Up / Look Forward.** For group leaders, additional instructions for leading a small group are included at the end of the first workbook in each series.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

The holidays give us wonderful opportunities to celebrate God's goodness and strengthen the relationships that matter most. But the holidays can wear us out and family gatherings can be potentially explosive. This four-part series offers biblical wisdom and practical ideas for making Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas gatherings more meaningful. Along the way, we'll explore how to slow down, enjoy one another, navigate family tensions with grace, and keep Christ at the heart of the season.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. What Thanksgiving traditions or memories have brought your family the most joy?
2. Why is remembering God's goodness such an important part of gratitude?
3. What tends to distract people from enjoying one another during holiday gatherings?
4. What could help the different generations in your family spend more meaningful time together this Thanksgiving?
5. What are some ways you could make gratitude feel natural, joyful, and fun this Thanksgiving?

Despite all our differences, we still come to the same table.

WHAT DOES GOD'S WORD SAY?

KEY SCRIPTURE

Psalm 107:8 - "Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind."
Psalm 107 repeatedly calls God's people to remember His deliverance and give thanks for His unfailing love. Thanksgiving gives us an opportunity to do the same: to remember God's goodness and respond with gratitude.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Psalm 100:4–5 - "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."
Thanksgiving turns our attention toward who God is and what He has done. His faithfulness does not belong only to one generation—it is something we can celebrate and share together.

look forward

Finally, **LOOK FORWARD** by asking, "What does Jesus want us to do?" Commit to practical steps for living out this week's lesson. Review the assignment, share commitments with the group, pray for one another, and move forward together in faith and hope.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18
Psalm 78:4
Colossians 3:15–17

THIS EPISODE'S ASSIGNMENT

Choose **one simple way** to make your Thanksgiving more intentional this year. You might bring generations together for an activity, invite people to share something they are thankful for, tell a meaningful family story, or create some screen-free time to simply enjoy one another.

Then spend a few minutes praying for your gathering and the people who will be there, asking God to fill your time together with gratitude, grace, and joy.

PERSONAL GROWTH COMMITMENTS

- What has God laid on my heart?
- What is the Holy Spirit leading me to change?
- What will I do in my own life, in my relationships, and to strengthen my family?

SHARE WITH THE GROUP

Encourage sharing commitments, prayer needs, and favorite Thanksgiving traditions or ideas. Close in prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness and asking Him to help make your Thanksgiving a joyful time of gratitude and connection.

ESSENTIALS FOR LEADING A SMALL GROUP

These principles help create a safe, encouraging environment where everyone can grow and connect:

- **Begin with Prayer –** Invite Jesus into the meeting and ask for His guidance. Prayer can also help refocus if discussion drifts or stalls.

- **Create a Welcoming Setup –** Sit in a circle so everyone can see each other. Affirm contributions and foster an atmosphere where every question and comment is welcomed without judgment.

- **Facilitate, Don't Lecture –** Guide the conversation using thoughtful, Scripture-based questions. Aim for participants to do most of the talking while you model active listening.

- **Stay on Mission –** Gently redirect if conversation strays into politics or unrelated topics, keeping focus on the greater purpose of reaching and discipling the next generation.

- **Model Grace & Openness –** Be transparent about your own journey, admit you don't have all the answers, and set expectations for confidentiality, respect, and grace.

- **Build Relationships –** Include some social time before or after the episode to strengthen trust and connection.

- **Follow the Look Back / Look Up / Look Forward Rhythm –** Stick to the format for balance, and practice compassionate accountability—celebrating progress and offering grace for struggles.