



Bulletin

NOVEMBER
2023

A PUBLICATION OF FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®

Now Thank We All Our God!

PARDON FOR TURKEYS

BY JIM DALY

THANKSGIVING IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. SO ARE LARGE HELPINGS of turkey, stuffing, football games and family. Unfortunately, that last one—family—is often a source of pain instead of something joyous to look forward to.

If that's your situation, I encourage you to remember Pumpkin, Biscuits, Gravy and Marshmallow. No, that's not a menu of food items for a holiday meal. Those are the names of turkeys that have been pardoned for Thanksgiving by US presidents over the years.

Every November, a lighthearted tradition is observed by the White House whereby a domestic turkey otherwise destined for someone's dinner table is granted a presidential pardon. It's a symbolic gesture meant to remind us that even in challenging situations there is opportunity for pardon, reconciliation and forgiveness.

Family conflict is tough to ignore during the holidays, especially if past wounds still run deep. But we can rise above conflict and allow peace to reign when our families gather for dinner. A little grace is all it takes to get the process started. Grace for them, and grace for us.

Paul told the Colossians to forgive each other as the Lord forgave them (Colossians 3:13). Likewise, we should allow the spirit of the season to compel us to forgive each other. After all, Pumpkin, Biscuits, Gravy and Marshmallow aren't the only "turkeys" who need a pardon.

For more resources to encourage your family, visit our website at www.focusonthefamily.com.



THANK GOD FOR HIS GIFTS

All the busy preparations for Thanksgiving can eclipse the real reason for celebrating—offering thanks to the Lord for His abundant blessings. Your table can become a vehicle to bless the Lord and bless your guests. Here are a few thoughts to direct your heart toward God's gifts, taken from Psalm 118.

First, the psalm begins with a call: "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good." Rest in this reality. No matter how things turn out, even if your careful plans go awry, even if you experience a kitchen disaster, God is good.

Second, the Creator loves you. "Oh give thanks to the LORD . . . for his steadfast love endures forever!" (Psalm 118:1). Not only do you have a good God, but you have a God who loves you personally and for all time. The reality of God's love can shine through you as a motivation to love others.

Third, the Lord will give you strength. In Psalm 118:14, we read, "The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." You may feel tired just thinking about everything that must be done

for Thanksgiving. You can draw emotional strength from knowing the Lord is with you.

Fourth, you are blessed to serve the Lord in the community of the saints. Verses 19 and 20 say, "Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it." When we come to the church where we serve, thankfulness rises in our hearts. What a privilege to live in a place that allows believers to worship alongside one another.

Fifth, God listens to you and responds. Psalm 118:21 says, "I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation." Begin now to pray for your upcoming hospitality. Ask Him to make you a thankful servant.

Lastly, both verse 14 and verse 21 conclude with a reminder of the salvation we have been given. Think about the Savior who died for our sins, and offer Him your praise and thanksgiving.

—*Caroline Newheiser*

THE VALUE OF PRACTICING THANKSGIVING

One of my favorite passages is 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3: "We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

The practice of thanksgiving is an act that confers value on the thing or person for whom we are grateful. It is a way for God to train us to see the world and others without pride and enjoy the gifts they bring us. Without thankfulness, we are likely to see only the things that frustrate us in others instead of recognizing the good. We can lose sight of the goodness of God in all he gives.

Thanksgiving is a spiritual discipline for the follower of Jesus Christ. If we are only thankful when we feel blessed to overflowing, we will miss the power of countering the vice of bitterness.

Abraham Lincoln made his famous Thanksgiving Day Proclamation in the middle of the Civil War, a time that must

have felt as dark as any in our nation's history. Speaking of "fruitful fields and healthful skies," he reminded the nation of the gifts God continued to give them even in the middle of a bloody Civil War. His act of thanksgiving was all the more powerful in view of all the reasons people had for not feeling grateful.

When I am at my lowest or most frustrated, my wife calmly reminds me of all the good things God has done and the abundant blessing of family and friends He has put in my life. I am truly blessed by a good and loving God, and I must keep that in mind. It is a discipline, and one that it is possible to develop. When thanksgiving becomes a habit, I discover the world is full of the goodness of God.

Today, let us begin the habit enjoined by Paul when he tells us we need to keep our minds on the things that are good, true and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). This can change the way we see everything else.

—*Phil Steiger*



WELCOME TO ADVENT 2023

The Advent and the Christmas seasons are right around the corner, and excitement for each of them is in the air. Celebrating Advent is a wonderful way to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus Christ. Advent reminds Christians of Jesus' birth, His presence with us and His second coming.

Celebrated the four weeks before Christmas, Advent is when we remember God's promises to send a Messiah and how Jesus Christ fulfilled every prophecy written about Him. Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection made it possible for us to have a relationship with God and to one day spend eternity with Him.

However, Advent doesn't only celebrate the birth of Jesus; it's also a time to rejoice and hope in Jesus Christ's second coming. In the same way that people waited with anticipation and prepared for the Messiah's birth, Advent reminds us to anticipate and prepare for His return. By reading the Bible, praying and fasting, we can prepare our hearts and deepen the relationship we have with Jesus.

Advent is a beautiful season of the year and an excellent time for families to discuss Christian beliefs and values, their faith and Jesus' return. Take a look at the upcoming resources from Focus on the Family that will help you and your family dig deeper into the love God showed when He sent His Son Jesus to be born.

Sign up for this season's amazing **Advent resources** from **Focus on the Family** at focusonthefamily.com/advent-2023. Then **watch your inbox for Advent updates** that will help you and your family draw closer to Christ this Advent season. These resources will help your family grow in faith, feel the anticipation of Christ's return and encourage you to share the love of Jesus. New content will be released during the four weeks of Advent, so **check back often!**

For more information on any of the topics in this bulletin, go to FocusOnTheFamily.com or call 800-A-FAMILY (232-6459). To reach Customer Service regarding your subscription, please call 1-800-692-9912. To check out more ministry resources, please visit us at www.tyndaleperiodicals.com.

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY BULLETIN (ISSN 0897-537X), vol. 36, no. 11, November 2023. Jim Rusnak, editor; Shirley Ree, designer. Published monthly by Tyndale House Publishers, 351 Executive Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188 in cooperation with Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, CO. © 2023 Focus on the Family. *Focus on the Family* and the accompanying logo and design are federally registered trademarks of Focus on the Family, 8605 Explorer Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920. Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Cover image of family dinner © Roman Simborsky | Dreamstime.com. Image of autumn leaf and wedding rings © Andrey Cherkasov | Dreamstime.com. Image of fall couple © Tarragona | Dreamstime.com. Image of kids playing © Fannevldman | Dreamstime.com. Image of woman holding turkey © Seanlockphotography | Dreamstime.com. Image of holding hands at table © Wavebreakmedia Ltd | Dreamstime.com. Back cover image of candles by Laura Nyhuis on Unsplash.com. Subscription \$16.00 per month per 100 copies. Canada: \$18.00 per month per 100 copies, payable in Canadian funds. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Focus on the Family, Subscription Services, P.O. Box 405, Mt. Morris, IL 61054.