



Date: _____
Series: Holiday: Thanksgiving
Fall Year 2, Lesson 27

Oh, Give Thanks for He Is Good!

Take Home Point: *We thank God for he is the giver of all our blessings. *Repeat this phrase throughout the lesson.

Bible Event: Psalm 107:1-9

Key Verse: Psalm 107:1, "Give thanks to the LORD because he is good, because his mercy endures forever."

We will help kids know:

- The Christian perspective of America's first Thanksgiving. It was not just a feeling of being thankful. The Pilgrims thanked God, who was the source of their blessings in good times and bad times.
- We need to give thanks to God and see him as a source of all of our blessings.




We will help kids feel:

- Amused at how silly it would be to forget that our blessings come from God.
- Awed as we consider the immensity of our blessings.

We will help kids do:

- Identify blessings in their lives for which they can give thanks, especially those things which last forever.
- Bring a Thanksgiving devotional activity to their Thanksgiving table, encouraging all to share in thankfulness.

THIS LESSON'S ROADMAP

| DESTINATION | PAGE # | DISCOVERIES ON YOUR JOURNEY | SUPPLIES NEEDED |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Small Group Warm-Up  | 3-4 | Kids will toss popcorn into the open mouths of their friends. The point of it will be to get the kids to focus on the concept of blessings and where they come from—God. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> popcorn |
| Large Group  | 4 8-9 10-13 14 | Overview Puppet Presentation: “Gordy Goes Pilgrim” – Gordy dresses as a pilgrim to celebrate Thanksgiving. Dramatic Monologue: “Elder Brewster” – A monologue that gives the history of the Pilgrims’ plight and the story of the first Thanksgiving Day. Puppet Presentation Conclusion: “Gordy Goes Pilgrim”—Gordy learns God is the source of <u>all</u> our blessings, especially the gift of our salvation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gordy dressed as a pilgrim or something that reminds the audience of Thanksgiving (such as having a turkey taped to his front) Pilgrim costume |
| Small Group Application  | 5-7 | Kids count their blessings, especially those blessings that last forever. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> bucket of popcorn two poster boards or sheets of paper for each group pencil for each group sandwich bag with 10-12 popcorn kernels in it for each child |

Small Group Warm-Up: 15 minutes



Purpose: *Get pointed in the right direction!* Build relationships and help guests feel at ease. Do the learning readiness activity that will point your group in the right direction for the lesson.

Today's warm-up activity will be fun and a bit chaotic. Kids will toss popcorn into the open mouths of their friends. The point of it will be to get the kids to focus on the concept of blessings and where they come from—God.

Because throwing popcorn into each other's mouths can be so much fun, it would be easy to let the game overpower the idea. Begin by focusing on the concept of blessings. Keep your popcorn hidden so as not to distract and ask the following:

Have you ever heard the word “blessing” before? What do you think it means?

Encourage kids to give a definition; don't give them your answer.

If someone helped me by bringing a meal to me when I was too sick to get up and get food for myself, I would call that a blessing. What does that mean? Who can give me an example of a blessing they received this last week?

Now let's play the game “Blessing Bombardment.” I have some popcorn... I mean little puffs of blessings. Find a partner and toss the popcorn... I mean little puff of blessings... through the air and into your partner's mouth.

Demonstrate with a child. After kids partner up, hand them each some popcorn. Let each partner try to toss a popcorn kernel into the other's mouth, five times. Pick up and throw away any dropped popcorn. Have kids find different partners and toss popcorn five more times. Have them remember their best score out of five attempts. Continue selecting new partners as time allows.

Caution! Though it is highly improbable, watch for any child who might get a popcorn piece stuck in his or her throat.

After adequate amounts of bombing, missing, laughing, and receiving, call your kids together for discussion.

Who had the highest number out of five hit the target in this blessing bombardment? I would like each person to share the highest number they caught. What was your secret?

Here is the important question. Can you tell me which partner it was that tossed the blessing bombs when you scored your highest? Is that easy to remember? Why?

Now imagine this. You are outside. You look up to the sky, bend your head back, open your mouth wide and down comes a popcorn kernel and lands right in your mouth. So you chew it up and enjoy it, open your mouth for another and the same thing happens. It happens again and again, until finally when you are full, you just walk away. You don't even wonder where the popcorn comes from... floating down from the sky like that! Does that seem strange to you, to not even wonder where it came from, if that really happened to you?

In today's game, we know that someone had to toss "the blessings" for us to receive them. It was very easy to remember who tossed them to you.

Who is it, though, that tosses blessings to us every day? (*God.*) What might some of those blessings be? (*Food, family, friends, Jesus, salvation.*) Do we sometimes forget where our blessings come from?

Today we are talking about Thanksgiving. It is more than a holiday. It is more than just feeling like you are lucky or that good things have happened to you. Thanksgiving is giving thanks to the one who drops blessings right into our lives. **We thank God, for he is the giver of all our blessings.*

Let's go to large group and find out how we can know that all our blessings come from God. By the end of Kingdom Quest, you should be able to show God how thankful you are!

Large Group: 20-30 minutes



Purpose: *Help kids observe what the Bible says. Present the Bible event in creative fashion. Help kids begin to interpret what it means.*

Overview

Puppet Presentation: "Gordy Goes Pilgrim" – Gordy dresses as a pilgrim to celebrate Thanksgiving.

Dramatic Monologue: "Elder Brewster" – A monologue that gives the history of the Pilgrims' plight and the story of the first Thanksgiving Day.

Puppet Presentation Conclusion: "Gordy Goes Pilgrim"—Gordy learns God is the source of all our blessings, especially the gift of our salvation.

Small Group Application: 20-25 minutes



Purpose: *Help kids map out the meaning of the Bible event in their lives. Use the questions to stimulate discussion but don't feel tied to them. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you. Include personal examples from your own faith journey. The example of Christ at work in your life will leave lasting impressions of how Christ can work in the children's lives.*

Use your Bibles! Children need to learn how to look up references and follow along when scripture is read aloud. Allow for quality time of prayer at the close of the lesson.

Observation Questions: What happened?

Read Psalm 107:1 and ask:

Why are we supposed to give thanks to God? *(Because he is good, and his mercy endures forever.)*

What does it mean, "His mercy endures forever?" *(Mercy means that someone is kind to another who doesn't deserve it. We deserve punishment for our sin, but God shows us kindness instead by giving us Jesus. This kindness lasts forever because we get to be with him in heaven forever.)*

What blessings can you think of that last forever? *(Heaven, friendship with God, forgiveness, peace, being with your loved ones forever...)*

Make two lists on a poster board. Title one list "Spiritual Blessings" and the other list "Physical Blessings." Add examples of both to the list as you continue through the lesson.

Spiritual blessings are what God gives us that help our spirits. This is what we feel with our hearts and can even know with our minds. What are some examples of spiritual blessings? *(Friendship with God, Jesus' presence with us always, the Holy Spirit's power in our lives, love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, etc.)*

How was God good to the Pilgrims? How did they know "his mercy endured forever?" *(The kids might mention food, safety, health and other physical blessings. List these under physical blessings.)*

Interpretation Questions: What does this mean?

When do you think was the hardest time for the Pilgrims to give thanks to God? When do you think was the easiest time?

Application Questions: What does this mean to me?

When is the hardest time for you to give thanks? When is the easiest time to give thanks?

As you listen to kids discuss these questions, be aware that often our thanklessness is due to neglecting the time and effort to recognize God as the source of all our blessings. Other times, we fail to be thankful because we are only measuring our thanks by our outward blessings. If we do not feel we are receiving a lot of outward blessings, then we may not feel thankful. God's truth tells us that, even when outward blessings do not seem apparent, God still gives us blessings that last forever. These spiritual blessings are the blessings that come from having a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Application Activity:

Supplies needed: two poster boards, a marker, a bucket of popcorn, and a baggie with 10-12 popcorn kernels in it for each child

During the next activity help kids count their blessings, especially those blessings that last forever. Use the Bible to help remember things to be thankful for. Psalms 103 or 107 are good references to help think of eternal things to be thankful for. The following game will help this process.

Have one child reach into the bucket of popcorn and grab a fistful. Everyone in the group will guess how many pieces of popcorn are in that fistful. They might want to write their number down so they do not forget it. To count the amount of popcorn, have each child take a piece of popcorn as they tell about a blessing. The shepherd records the blessing on the poster board as a spiritual or physical blessing while counting the number.

Have kids repeat the take home point: ****We thank God, for he is the giver of all our blessings.***

Closing Prayer:

Help kids see the importance of thanking God, who gives all blessings to them, as opposed to just feeling grateful. Also, encourage kids to think of the things they could be thankful for even if they were going through a hard time. Remember the Pilgrim's thankfulness even when they were enduring many hardships.

Then let kids give thanks for the physical and spiritual blessings listed on the poster boards in a conversational prayer. They would say, **"Thank you, God, for. . . ."**

Take Home Project:

Pass out to each child a sandwich bag filled with unpopped popcorn kernels. Explain to them that they have a Thanksgiving mission: to help their entire family remember to be thankful. What they are to do is to take the popcorn kernels and sneak one onto the spoon of each person around the table before the meal starts. It is supposed to be a

secret until someone asks, “What’s the popcorn for?” The child is supposed to say that he/she will explain it right before dinner.

Before dinner the child should share with their family that the popcorn seed is to remind them of one special blessing. Then ask the child to share the Thanksgiving story of how the Pilgrims were thankful to God and had a Thanksgiving feast with their harvested corn. We, too, can be thankful. Ask every family member to thank God for one thing as they put the popcorn seed in a special blessing pile in the middle of the table. (This is also explained in the God Talk at Home.)

Be ready to have your group tell how well this secret surprise worked next week!

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Large Group Presentation: 20-30 minutes

Gordy Goes Pilgrim Puppet Presentation

Gordy has some type of decoration on him reminding the audience of the first Thanksgiving. It could be a pilgrim hat or even a cutout turkey.

Mr. King: Boys and girls, thank you for popping into Kingdom Quest today. I am glad you are here as we are talking about an important part of our Christian life. It is also a special holiday this week. It is . . . That's right. It is Thanksgiving! Should we see if Gordy wants to join us?

Kids Chant: Go-rdy . . . Gor-dy . . . Gor-dy . . .

Gordy: Hi, Mr. King. Hi, boys and girls.

Mr. King: Hi, Gordy. What in the world do you have on?

Gordy: Can't you tell? I'm a pilgrim. I'm getting ready for Thanksgiving.

Mr. King: Great. That is what we are talking about today, too. Thanksgiving is more than a holiday, though. Thanksgiving is an attitude in our hearts.

Gordy: Wait a minute. I know all about Thanksgiving. I have learned about it in school.

Mr. King: Well, good. Tell us about it.

Gordy: Thanksgiving is when the pilgrims got together, and they were thankful to the Native Americans for helping them to survive in their new land.

Mr. King: Well, they were thankful to the Native Americans for helping them out. But that is not who they were most thankful to.

Gordy: Sure it was, Mr. King. The Native Americans showed them how to plant corn and make popcorn.

Mr. King: Yes, that is true, but where did the popcorn come from?

Gordy: The Native Americans.

Mr. King: Who gave it to the Native Americans?

Gordy: Well, they just found it!

Mr. King: **How did they find it?**

Gordy: Maybe Orville Redenbacher gave it to them! I don't know, Mr. King! It was just there.

Mr. King: **Gordy, let's get the story right. The Pilgrims were not just thankful to the Native Americans. They were thankful to God.**

Gordy: What did God have to do with it?

Mr. King: **The pilgrims saw God as the source for all their blessings. As they gave thanks to him for their survival, they also invited the Native Americans because they were their friends.**

Gordy: Are you sure that's the way it happened?

Mr. King: **I'm sure. As a matter of fact, I have someone here today that will tell you the story of what really happened.**

Gordy: Who is that?

Mr. King: **His name is Elder Brewster.**

Gordy: Elder Brewster...elder...does that mean that he's old.

Mr. King: **He lived over 400 years ago.**

Gordy: Wow...that's even older than you are, Mr. King!

Mr. King: **Thanks, Gordy. He is called "elder" because he was a leader in Plymouth Colony, 400 years ago, at the very beginning of our country. Let's meet him, okay?**

Gordy: Great. I'll pop back here and listen, too!
(*exits*)

Go to monologue.

A Monologue for Elder William Brewster

Minister of the Early Pilgrim Congregation

This large group presentation is designed to re-enact our country's first Thanksgiving in a character portrayal. Children today are familiar with the Thanksgiving story, but in public schools they are often taught that Thanksgiving was primarily a feeling of gratefulness from the Pilgrims to the Native Americans. In reality the pilgrims were thankful to their Lord. They saw him as a source of their gifts in good times and in their tragic and difficult times. Their thanksgiving was greater than just their circumstances. These primary truths must come alive. Again they are:

- 1) God is the source of all our good gifts.*
- 2) We thank him in all circumstances; in good times and in hard times.*

The character portrayed will be Elder William Brewster, a spiritual leader of the pilgrims. Much of the information has been borrowed from "New World History and Geography: In Christian Perspective," published by A Beka Book Publications. If you have the technology, you might create an accompanying slide show.

Option 2

Change the narrative so that it is given from the perspective of a child in the colonies. An older child, or perhaps a teenager, would manage it well with coaching and practice. Or you could record the narrative and set it to the pictures you are showing. Use your imagination and come up with your own possibilities.

Costuming Notes:

Elder Brewster can be dressed in a full Pilgrim costume, or in a top hat with a buckle, buckles on his shoes, a white square collar, and dark knickers. Much of this can be made from construction paper if necessary.

The following six-point outline might be helpful as a tool to remember this storytelling event. It is most helpful to tell this as a story, stopping to interact with the kids instead of simply reading the narrative. Yet, a narrative is provided to give fuller details. Your own research can add greatly to the interesting details of this story. Be aware that monologues lasting more than four to seven minutes may not hold the undivided attention of children. DON'T TALK TOO LONG.

Outline:

1. Reason For Leaving

Religious persecution. Holland. England. King James. "Go." September 1620.

2. Crossing The Ocean

102 people. Thirty-five separatists. Rest adventurers. 65 days -- stale bread and water. No bath. Much prayer. Sailors laugh. Captain kind.

3. Hard Winter

Arrived in Massachusetts Bay, November. Began settlement. Chopping trees Christmas Day. Sick and starving. One-half die.

4. Native American Friends

Samoset's surprise. Squanto's help. Hunt. Fish.

5. God's Faithfulness

Limited food. Drought. Fast and prayer. God answers. Rain -- ten days.

6. Thanksgiving

Many blessings. Ninety Indians. Worship God. Read Bible. Shared food -- three days. Psalm 107:1-8.

NARRATIVE

Reason for Leaving

How do you do? I am Elder Brewster. I am someone you know as a Pilgrim. You may think I dress funny, but this is the type of clothing we wore three hundred years ago. We were looked upon as quite unusual people, for we were a group of people called Separatists.

You see, I lived in England. The King of England also considered himself the head of the church. It was his law that everyone must worship as his church, the Church of England. I disagreed for reasons I found in the Bible. Many of my friends also disagreed. We wanted to worship our own way, according to what we read in the Bible. It was, however, against the law. We wanted to be separate from the Church of England so they called us Separatists.

We went to Holland to escape persecution and jail, and to worship our own way. Holland was nice, but we wanted our children to grow up speaking our language. We wished we could be in England. Since we could not be there and follow our own religion, we asked that King James would let us go to the new world, America, and settle there. He said that we could. In the year 1620, we left for America.

Crossing the Ocean

Our tiny boat was called the Mayflower. There were thirty-five of my people, the Separatists, on board. I was their spiritual leader and minister. Twice as many people on the boat as us were just adventurers wanting to find a new life in the new world. There were one hundred two people all together.

In this small ship we sailed for sixty-five days. That is more than two months. We did not have much to eat, only crackers and stale bread. Even the water began to taste stale. We could not take baths or wash our clothes. It was a hard time. Every day, though, we would bow

down on our knees and pray, giving thanks to God for his blessings. The sailors thought we were silly. They often laughed at us. We believed that we must thank our God in all circumstances. We were thankful that the captain was kind. We crossed safely.

Hard Winter

It was already November of 1620 when we landed in Massachusetts Bay. It was wonderful to see land again, but we had not brought enough food with us. We were hoping to find food in the new land. We did not even have any homes yet. We had to start building everything ourselves.

I can remember on Christmas Day rowing a small boat to shore with a group. We had axes in hand as we began to chop the trees and build a large house for us to live. It was a hard winter with so little food. Some were starving to death, and others were quite sick. By the time the winter was over, more than one-half of the people in our group had died. In all of that sadness we still knew that God was with us, and we gave him thanks. We worshiped him in good times and in bad times.

Native American Friends

We had been praying that God would help us. You can imagine our surprise the next spring when a Native American (or Indian, as we called them) walked right into our village. We knew Indians could not speak English. We were awfully afraid of him.

This Indian raised his hand and greeted us. He said, "Welcome Englishmen." What a surprise! He could speak our language. He was an Indian who knew other Englishmen and had learned their language. He helped us and became one of my closest Indian friends. His name was Squanto.

Squanto's tribe had died in sickness, so he decided to live with us and teach us the Indian ways. He showed us how to make nets out of reeds so that we could catch fish. He also taught us to sneak up on deer to hunt them for food. The Indians showed us how we could plant corn in a hole with a small fish as fertilizer to grow into a healthy plant.

God was faithful, indeed, as we made friends with an entire tribe of Indians. We had Squanto there, who could even speak our language. Isn't God marvelous?

God's Faithfulness

We worked hard that first summer growing enough food to feed us for the next winter. Otherwise, we might starve again. I remember often being hungry. Many of our crops would not be ready until fall so we carefully rationed our food. Some meals had only six grains of corn. Yet, we trusted that God would be faithful and help us.

You can imagine our worry when our crops began to wither for lack of rain. We were in a drought. If it did not rain, we would lose our crops and not have enough food for the next winter. I called my people together so that we might fast and pray. For nine hours we prayed to God for help. The Indians watched us doing what was a strange thing to them. They also watched the sky to see what would happen. Finally, the sky began to cloud and a raindrop fell followed by another. Soon there was a gentle rain watering the ground.

For ten days it rained. Our crops were saved and so were we! We gave thanks to God. Even the Indians could tell that the God of the white man had heard the white man's prayers. He is not just the God of the white man, though. He is the true and living God. He hears all prayers to him in the name of Jesus.

Thanksgiving

We pilgrims were so thankful to God for providing for us. We wanted to give thanks to him in a special way and share our blessings with others. We chose a day to celebrate and invited our Indian friends to join us. Ninety Indians came. We worshiped God. We read the Bible. We sang, and we prayed. We shared food with our Indian friends. We ran races and played games. For three days we feasted. The Lord had been very merciful to us so we gave thanks to him for his blessings of food, health, and our Indian friends. We gave thanks to him in the good times, just as we gave thanks to him in the hard times.

Here are some verses we often read from the Bible. Maybe they will describe our Thanksgiving and your Thanksgiving, as well.

Read all or some of Psalm 107:1-9.

Gordy Goes Pilgrim

Puppet Conclusion

Gordy: Well, it was a good thing those pilgrims and Native American came along.

Mr. King: It sure is.

Gordy: It's a good thing because we have popcorn now.

Mr. King: We have much more than that. We have a country in which we are free to worship and thank our God.

Gordy: And eat popcorn!

Mr. King: Okay...and eat popcorn. But what is really special is where that popcorn comes from... someone pretty special.

Gordy: Right! The Native Americans!

Mr. King: Gordy! Weren't you listening?

Gordy: Orville Redenbacher?

Mr. King: Gordy!

Gordy: I'm just fool'n with you, Mr. King. I know that it comes from God. Along with turkeys and corn on the cob and what else...let me see...

Mr. King: Spiritual blessings like knowing that Jesus gave his life for you and lives with you...and gives us friends and family...love and joy...and...

Gordy: Pumpkin pie and whipped cream...is anyone else feeling hungry?

Mr. King: Well we can have another snack in small group as we count our blessings. **We thank God for he is the giver of all our blessings.* Why don't you close us with prayer, Gordy? I think it's time to go.

Gordy: Okay. Dear God. You are so good to us. You give us so many good things. Thank you for our country and Thanksgiving and the Pilgrims and the Native Americans and Jesus and Mr. King and turkeys and everything. There's so much stuff, we can't even count it all...so please help us stay thankful. In Jesus' name. Amen.