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ABOUT

Capitol Ministries 8



Leading Thanksgiving Devotions with Your Family



Thanksgiving Day will soon be upon us, and I want you to be prepared to lead your family spiritually. As is my custom, I offer the following information to empower you for this special day with family and friends. I realize you'll probably not use everything that follows, but take what might be helpful and spend some time crafting a plan for a spiritually growing, memory-building investment.

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

- Former Cabinet Members / White House Senior Staff:* Wednesdays 7am, Zoom.
- Senate Members:* Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served.
- House Members:* Thursdays 8am, AG Hearing Room, Longworth 1302, hot breakfast served.

The views expressed in each Bible study are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study Sponsor.



Elbridge Gerry



In observance of Thanksgiving Day, he called on the State of Massachusetts to pray:

“With one heart and voice we may prostrate ourselves at the throne of heavenly grace and present to our Great Benefactor sincere and unfeigned thanks for His infinite goodness and mercy towards us from our birth to the present moment for having above all things illuminated us by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, presenting to our view the happy prospect of a blessed immortality.”

— Elbridge Gerry, signer of the Declaration of Independence, fifth vice president of the United States, serving under James Madison, member of the Constitutional Convention, framer of the Bill of Rights, U.S. Congressman, 9th governor of Massachusetts.

Elbridge Gerry, Proclamation for a Day of Thanksgiving and Praise, October 24, 1810.

If the trajectory of our country is going to change, it must begin with our hearts. America’s systemic problem is spiritual in nature; therefore, we must first steward our own hearts and the hearts of our families before speaking about changing the direction of our country; anything less is hypocritical. May God use the following thoughts to aid in crafting a special, constructive day centered in our love for Jesus. Let us give thanks for all He has done for us! If I can be of help to you in preparing, give me a call.

Danielle and I have much to be thankful for in the honor of serving you. Together, in partnership, we are poised to launch many new ministries in state capitols and foreign nations in this coming year. We are grateful and thankful for all that God has done in and through you.

Read on, my friends.

Ralph Drollinger

I. INTRODUCTION

The following is a suggested outline to help prepare you for leading and facilitating a meaningful and spiritually nourishing time of family gathering and devotions during Thanksgiving.

II. PREPARING FOR THE FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

A. ANNOUNCING DEVOTIONS

When you invite your family members and are informing them of the

time to arrive and the time you will sit down to dinner, mention the family devotion in the conversation. By preparing them, people will not be surprised when you transition into this part of the day. Providing advance notice will serve to take pressure off of you when the time arrives to segue into the devotion. (Don’t surprise your guests.)

B. DRESSING FOR DEVOTIONS

Give prior consideration as to how you will dress. Dress one step above your guests—but only one step.



Your dress should reflect the season, warmth, love, nobility, and a sense of seriousness. Remember, how you dress should reflect that in the coming moments you will be God's spokesman to your family; don't take that lightly or discount the sobriety of your duties.

C. TIMING DEVOTIONS

You might want to have devotions after the main meal, during dessert. Make sure the TV and background music are off and not competing for attention. Kindly inform everyone that they need to "turn off all electronic devices during takeoff and landing." It's best that you and the others aren't distracted by a football game or the young ones' text messaging.

I ask Danielle to serve dessert and beverages before I share. Serving them helps to take the edge off, especially for those who might not personally know Christ.

D. TRANSITIONING INTO DEVOTIONS

As you circulate among your guests and invite them into the room that you have previously determined is best for this purpose, make appropriate, edifying-only small talk as people settle in. You are starting to set the tone. Be extra sensitive to make your guests feel comfortable. Help move the chairs and bring people coffee. Manifest a servant's heart.

III. BEGINNING THE FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

A. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Express your heartfelt gratitude that you could all be together during this wonderful time of the year.

B. PRAISE YOUR WIFE

Nothing is more important in the formation and stability of your children and grandchildren than for them to see how much you love your wife. Follow the ACTS outline as you speak about her:

ADORATION

Mention several things you like most



CONFESSION

Reference things she puts up with



THANKSGIVING

Show gratefulness



SUPPLICATION

Express that you pray for her

♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

Psalm 100:4–5

Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations.



Give thanks!





Samuel Adams



November 1, 1777 (adopted by the 13 states as the first official Thanksgiving Proclamation):

“It is therefore recommended ... for solemn thanksgiving and praise, that with one heart and one voice the good people may express the grateful feelings of their hearts and consecrate themselves to the service of their divine benefactor ...”

— Samuel Adams, signer of the Declaration of Independence, father of the American Revolution, ratifier of the U.S. Constitution, Governor of Massachusetts.

Continental Congress’ November 1, 1777 national *Thanksgiving Day Proclamation*, as printed in the Journals of Congress.

C. INCLUDE FAMILY MEMBERS

Speak personally and edifyingly into the lives of your family members. This will require forethought to be most effective.

Ask some family members to share what they are especially thankful for this year.

Very importantly, herein you are setting long-term tone and culture in terms of the interpersonal relationships amongst your clan. This is a time to circle the wagons and huddle with your loved ones.

IV. OPEN THE SCRIPTURES TOGETHER

Prepare enough copies for everyone of the passage of Scripture that you will find at the end of this study.

A. READ THE PASSAGE

Ask your best reader to read Psalm 100. This isn’t so much a time to exegete the passage as it is to open the Scripture together as a part of your family tradition.

B. EXPLAIN THE PASSAGE

Once the reading is completed, be ready to share some of your insights of the passage that are self-evident from the reading.

V. SING A HYMN TOGETHER

The Hymn “Give Thanks” is very appropriate for singing after reading Psalm 100. (It is also found at the end of this study.) If not you, defer to someone else to lead who is gifted in music.

VI. SHARE YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Prepare beforehand your personal conversion story. Speak no longer than three minutes. Refrain from reciting every detail of your life. Mention the following areas: an effective testimony includes three irreducible minimums.

Your life before receiving Christ
∞
Specifically, how you received Christ
∞
Life changes since you received Christ

Your main objective is to model for your family how they too can receive Christ if they haven’t already. Edit your comments accordingly. You are modeling a powerful living



example and tool as to how they too can receive Christ, if not now, at a later date.

VII. SHARE THE GOSPEL

There is nothing more important to accomplish as a husband and father than to lead your kids to Christ—now is a good time! Here is how to transition:

A. APPLY THE PASSAGE

It is fitting at this point, having read Scripture, sung a hymn, and having given your testimony, to make some personal applications. These former ingredients will serve as pillars to support your quest for the others' consideration of Christ.

Ask your family members (if they haven't already) to invite the Lord Jesus into their hearts—just as you did. Consider and incorporate the special warmth people typically feel at Thanksgiving. Don't preach; emphasize gentleness.

B. GOSPEL VERSES TO USE

I recommend that you look up the following passages prior to the devotion and mark them in your Bible. Don't read to them from this study. These will aid you in sharing the gospel in a succinct and thoughtful way.

Notice how these verses progress

through the plan of salvation—make appropriate transitions to achieve a similar, smooth progression.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name (John 1:12).

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1–2).

C. INVITE OTHERS TO ASK JESUS INTO THEIR HEART

Pray out loud the following prayer, inviting anyone who would like to ask Jesus into his or her heart to pray silently along with you:

John Jay



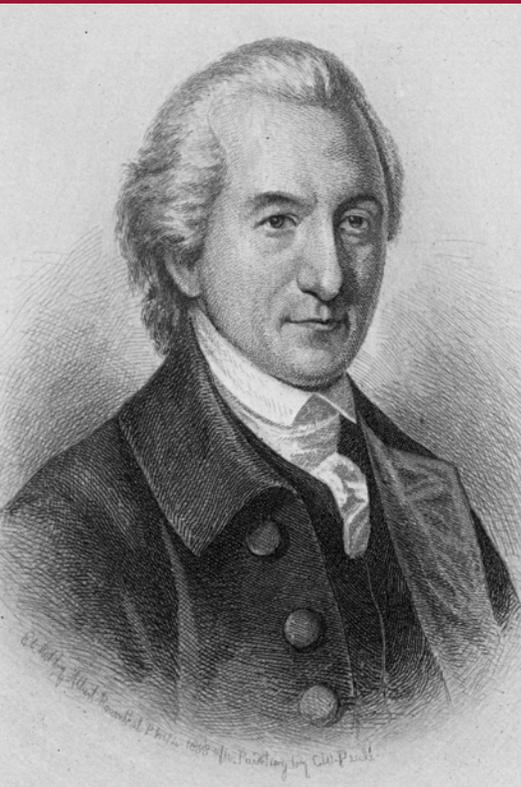
“I recommend a general and public return of praise and thanksgiving to Him from whose goodness these blessings descend. The most effectual means of securing the continuance of our civil and religious liberties is always to remember with reverence and gratitude the source from which they flow.”

— John Jay, president of Congress, diplomat, author of *The Federalist Papers*, original chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, governor of New York.

William Jay, *The Life of John Jay* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1833), Vol. I, 457–458, to the Committee of the Corporation of the City of New York on June 29, 1826.



John Dickinson



“Lord Jesus, I need You. I realize that I have sinned and fall short of Your standard of perfection and am in need of not only a Savior, but a Lord Who will always lead me in the right direction. I open the door of my life today and ask You to come in and begin to change my life for good and Your glory. Amen!”

At a later time, you need to personally and individually follow up with your family members; ask them if they prayed that prayer with you. In the days that follow, minister to each accordingly as the family shepherd. Continue to cultivate your own understanding of being the family shepherd.

VIII. CLOSING THE FAMILY DEVOTION

From the bottom of your heart, express how important this time has been to you.

It is very likely you’ll face heartfelt spiritual warfare in the form of a lacking courage or doubting you should do this.

Expect that you may even put off some family members going in. You are definitely doing the best thing you could possibly do for your family!

A. SING THE SAME HYMN AGAIN

B. CLOSE WITH PRAYER

You might choose to have someone else in the family whom you know has a strong walk with Christ to close in prayer.

C. EXPRESS APPRECIATION

Once again, take the opportunity to set a tone of love. Abundantly show others with His love and tell them how much you appreciate each one of them. How can you spend more time with your family members? For someone as busy as you are, your prioritization of time is probably your best way to express your love and extend your influence for Christ.

IX. SUMMARY

May God richly bless you as you lay hold of your spiritual leadership responsibilities. This is what God has called you to, and you need to serve your family in this way in service to Him. A family devotion is one of the most important functions you will perform in life—with the greatest return on investment, I might add!

“Rendering thanks to my Creator for my existence and station among His works, for my birth in a country enlightened by the Gospel and enjoying freedom, and for all His other kindnesses, to Him I resign myself, humbly confiding in His goodness and in His mercy through Jesus Christ for the events of eternity.”

— John Dickinson, signer of the Declaration of Independence, governor of Pennsylvania, governor of Delaware, general in the American Revolution.

From the *Last Will and Testament of John Dickinson*, attested March 25, 1808.

**PSALM 100***A Psalm for Thanksgiving*

*Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth.
 Serve the LORD with gladness;
 Come before Him with joyful singing.
 Know that the LORD Himself is God;
 It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
 We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
 Enter His gates with thanksgiving
 And His courts with praise.
 Give thanks to Him, bless His name.
 For the LORD is good;
 His lovingkindness is everlasting
 And His faithfulness to all generations.*

GIVE THANKS*Public Domain*

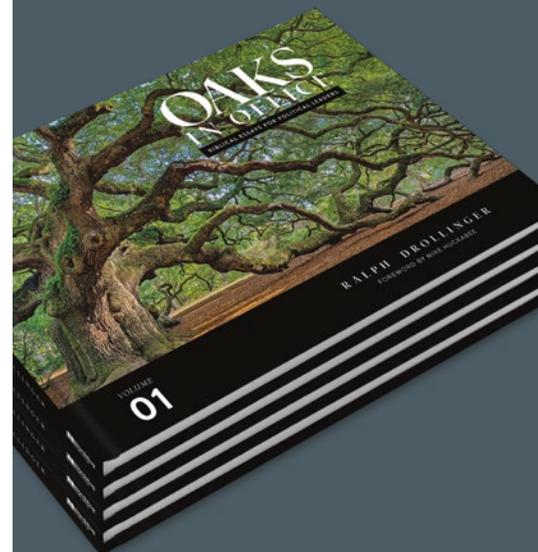
Give thanks with a grateful heart,
 Give thanks to the Holy One,
 Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son.

Give thanks with a grateful heart,
 Give thanks to the Holy One,
 Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son.

And now let the weak say, "I am strong,"
 Let the poor say, "I am rich"
 Because of what the Lord has done for us.

And now let the weak say, "I am strong,"
 Let the poor say, "I am rich"
 Because of what the Lord has done for us.

Give thanks.



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