



The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.
— Psalm 67:6

Thanksgiving Day Milestone Moment

The modern U.S. holiday of Thanksgiving Day is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November each year. It is a holiday celebrated by many countries around the world. For example, Canadian Thanksgiving Day is celebrated on the second Monday in October, directly connected with the fall harvest and giving thanks for God’s providence.

In 1621, the Plymouth colonists and Wampanoag Indians shared an autumn harvest feast that is acknowledged today as one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations in the colonies. For more than two centuries, days of thanksgiving were celebrated by individual colonies and states. Writer Sarah Josepha Hale campaigned for 36 years to establish a national Thanksgiving in the United States during the 19th century, eventually winning President Abraham Lincoln’s support in 1863, who declared Thanksgiving by Presidential Proclamation to officially fall on the last Thursday of November. However it was only from 1942 onward that Thanksgiving Day, by an act of Congress, signed into law by Franklin D. Roosevelt, received a permanent observation date as the fourth Thursday in November.

For the Christian tradition, the day provides an opportunity to give thanks to God for providing the world with abundant food, for all the benefits of this life, for family and friends, and for peace and tranquility. All of this is prayed for in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

The opportunity for families and friends to gather together to honor their family and to give thanks for life’s blessings is a special time. This Thanksgiving Day Milestone Moment has a simple five stage structure that includes naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing so that the Milestone Moment has a greater chance to take deeper root in lifelong faith formation.

Naming – Observing and celebrating Thanksgiving Day encourages us to have meaningful conversations about God’s care for us and our care for one another with thankful hearts.

Equipping – Celebrating Thanksgiving Day with food, caring conversations, reading scripture, and praying creates and nurtures a Christian connectedness in our relationships with one another and acknowledges the blessings in our lives.

Blessing – Offering a Thanksgiving Day blessing reminds us of God’s presence in our lives and of the importance of family and friends.

Gifting – The sharing of food and the preparation of the meal is an important gift for the day, one that can fill our hearts with fond memories of loved ones.

Reinforcing – Finding ways to remember the time together and the experience of expressing faith and love for one another is a yearlong and lifelong task. Sharing pictures and talking about the day can encourage family and friends to strengthen bonds.

Four Key Faith Practices

- Caring Conversations
- Devotions
- Service
- Rituals and Traditions





Thanksgiving Day Milestone Moment

For a Small Group or Family Gathering



Growing People in Faith when at Home and Away

“and talk about them when you are at home and when away, when you lie down and when you rise.”

– Deuteronomy 6:7b

A follow-up for the Thanksgiving Day Milestone Moment can be done with caring conversations to discuss what people are thankful for and how to sustain a heart of thankfulness. When with those who were together on Thanksgiving Day—and when with others as well—think about God’s goodness and mercy to us each and every day and pray for a heart of thankfulness.

An important step after experiencing the Four Key Faith Practices in small groups or home setting is to bless and equip friends and families by using faith practices daily as an intentional step to encourage faith traditions in the home.

Suggested resources for continued caring conversations:

*[Taking Faith Home](#)
[Taking Faith Home Cards](#)
[For Everything A Season Book](#)*

Additional Milestone Modules and Moments can be found at: www.milestonesministry.org



At the heart of equipping people for their lifelong faith formation are the Four Key Faith Practices: Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions. They provide an opportunity for people to learn, experience, and grow in their faith together. The outline below is found as a discussion guide handout on the next page to assist with the conversations.



As you gather together, begin by sharing a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your lives and then use the outline below to talk about faith and God’s presence in this moment.



Caring Conversations

Discuss these thoughts and questions:

- What are you thankful for?
- What are some of the things you are thankful for but are easy to take for granted and forget?



Devotions

Read the following:

And let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Colossians 3:15 (NRSV)

- How does the peace that Christ brings lead you to be a thankful person?
- How does the scripture verse encourage you to live a life of thanksgiving?
- What does it mean to be a diverse people called into one body?



Service

Being thankful and grateful in your life is contagious. It is an attitude that can influence others. Think of someone who would benefit from the spirit of thanksgiving. Connect with them through a note or a phone call. Encourage them with a message that promotes thanksgiving for all the blessings of life we have been given through Christ Jesus.

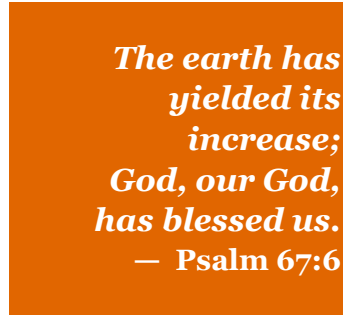


Rituals and Traditions

Thanksgiving Day provides the opportunity to be reminded of how we are blessed by God for a life of faith, hope, and love. Take time to write down a list of blessings. If you are in a group, read your list to one another. Pause and think about how God’s ongoing work of creation and redemption gives us reason for thanksgiving.

Finish the meal by praying together: *God of steadfast love and mercy, help us to be aware of all that you do to care for us so that we may give you thanks through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

Then conclude with this Thanksgiving Day blessing: *May the God who loves you give you a thankful heart through Christ our Lord.*



Thanksgiving Day Discussion Guide



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