

*Thanksgiving Family
Prayer Guide*



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Introduction by Seth Miller

In our current culture, there is a fun debate that takes place. It revolves around this question, “When is the best time to start celebrating Christmas?” There are usually two camps involved. The first camp insists on yuletide observance immediately after Halloween. Kids’ costumes are tucked away. Candy is devoured. Jack-o-lanterns are thrown away. Then the Christmas trees are put up and holiday music fills the house. For this crew, it is never too early to celebrate Christmas! I love Christmas, so I can understand the temptation to stretch it out if possible.



I, however, tend to fall into the second camp. As a member of this group, I say, “Whoa! I believe you are forgetting something. It is not time for Christmas. It is time for Thanksgiving!” This wonderful holiday, I feel, is overlooked. From simple observation, I see many that rush the dinner, mumble a few thoughts about being thankful and then rush out the door to go bargain hunting. It was not too long ago that it was unheard of to go shopping on Thanksgiving. My, how things have changed!

My goal with this prayer guide is to help the families of First Baptist Church of Brandenburg observe Thanksgiving with a heart filled with gratitude. Sam Melloy, Roxanne Nanney, and I worked together to provide instruction and thoughtful devotions to be read together as a family. In this study guide, you will find the following:

Wednesday, November 24: “Every Day is Thanksgiving!”

Roxanne offers a reminder from Psalm 34 that the practice of thanksgiving can be done every day.

Thursday, November 25: “Gather for Thanksgiving!”

Seth shares his thoughts on Psalm 100 and the significance of gathering with other believers to offer praise to Jesus Christ.

Friday, November 26: “The Reason for Thanksgiving!”

Sam speaks from Psalm 95 about our greatest reason for being thankful—having salvation in Jesus Christ.

Each day there will be suggested prayers and fun ideas to do as a family. I truly hope that you enjoy this prayer guide. It is our gift to you and may God grant you a happy Thanksgiving.



November 24: “Every Day is Thanksgiving” by Roxanne Nanney

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. I will boast in the Lord; the humble will hear and be glad. Proclaim the Lord's greatness with me; let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he answered me and rescued me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant with joy; their faces will never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him from all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and rescues them. Taste and see that the Lord is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him! You who are his holy ones, fear the Lord, for those who fear him lack nothing. Young lions lack food and go hungry, but those who seek the Lord will not lack any good thing. Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Who is someone who desires life, loving a long life to enjoy what is good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from deceitful speech. Turn away from evil and do what is good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry for help. The face of the Lord is set against those who do what is evil, to remove all memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is near the brokenhearted; he saves those crushed in spirit. One who is righteous has many adversities, but the Lord rescues him from them all. He protects all his bones; not one of them is broken. Evil brings death to the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be punished. The Lord redeems the life of his servants, and all who take refuge in him will not be punished—Psalm 34

When I was growing up, Thanksgiving and Christmas were the “big two” as far as holidays are concerned. Today, however, Thanksgiving has been overshadowed by Halloween and has now turned into a day to eat and shop with little notice paid to the meaning of the name given to the holiday. As followers of Christ, we, of all people, have much for which to be thankful. In fact, every day for us should be a day of thanksgiving...of **thanksgiving**.

On this Thanksgiving Eve, take some time alone or with your family to reflect on God's goodness to us. We will use Psalm 34 as our guide.

Psalm 34 is the third *acrostic* psalm in the Psalter. We might call it an *alphabetical* psalm. Each of the verses begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet (except for the last verse). In the first ten verses, David gives a testimony of praise for God's goodness and then offers wise observations, like Proverbs, in the remaining verses. Charles H. Spurgeon referred to the first ten verses as a “hymn” and the last twelve verses as a “sermon.” David begins the psalm by praising the Lord for His goodness and calls on the reader to “taste and see” His goodness. He then teaches his “children” not to do evil but to pursue good because God sees and will hear the cries of the righteous (those who follow His commands). Parents, are you declaring God's greatness to your children? Are you teaching them to do good because God sees and hears?



*Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD delivers him out of them all.
Psalm 34:19*

This psalm does not say that the righteous will not *have* troubles, but that God will deliver us *out* of them all. As a musician and worship leader, I love looking at the stories behind some of the songs we sing. In November 1873, Horatio Spafford's wife and four daughters boarded a luxurious French liner bound for Europe. Along the journey, their ship collided with an iron sailing vessel. Spafford's four daughters were among the 226 fatalities. His wife survived and cabled her husband, "Saved alone." Horatio immediately booked passage to join his wife. Enroute, the captain informed him that they were nearing the place where the *Ville du Havre* went down. Spafford went to his cabin but found it hard to sleep. He said to himself, "It is well; the will of God be done." Later he wrote the words to the hymn "It is Well with my Soul"

Sing the hymn together.

[It Is Well With My Soul - Hymns from Home Edition \(Lyric Video\)¹](#)

All that we have comes from the Lord.
Boast only in Him and His goodness.
Come before Him with praise and thanksgiving.
Declare His salvation among the nations.
Every good gift comes from God.
From Him and to Him and through Him are all things.
Glory and majesty and splendor are His.
His praise will always be on my lips.
I will boast only in God, my Savior.
Just and upright is He.
Kings will one day bow before Him.
Leaders will kneel at His feet.
May the people be glad and sing for joy.
Nations will come to His light.
O taste and see that the Lord is good.
Praise Him with joyful lips.
Quite happy is the one who takes refuge in Him.
Rejoice in His faithfulness.
Seek the Lord while He may be found.
Turn away from evil and do what is good.
Uphold His commands.
Victory is ours in our Great Redeemer.
Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.
eXclaim your joy in Him.
Yes, Lord, I will walk in Your ways.
Zeal for Your great name will guide me.

Since Psalm 34 is an acrostic psalm, I decided to write my own based on the English alphabet. I've shared mine. Try writing your own, alone or with your family.

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFKC4zUG_gY&t=40s

November 25: “Gather for Thanksgiving!” by Seth Miller

Let the whole earth shout triumphantly to the Lord! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. He made us, and we are his—his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name. For the Lord is good, and his faithful love endures forever; his faithfulness, through all generations—Psalm 100

My childhood Thanksgiving experiences revolve around Stone Mountain, Georgia. Every year, my parents and siblings would travel south to visit my aunt, Uncle, and cousins. We did not get to see them often, so we made sure that our gathering was meaningful. Our routine was typical. Board games were played. Movies were watched. My uncle knew a few magic tricks and entertained us little ones. We would fill ourselves up with appetizers leaving very little room for the main course (I somehow managed!). The house was crowded but we did not care.



Christianity is a communal religion. Our practice is to gather. We covenant with one another and live out our lives with each other. Our children are raised together. Families lean on each other during hard times and comfort each other in prayer. And, of course, we gather to worship the Lord of Heaven and Earth. Thanksgiving Day is a great opportunity to do just that. It is a feast designed to remind us of God’s providential blessings over our lives. This a day to gather and give Him the adoration He rightly deserves!

The psalmist tells us that the whole earth is encouraged to “shout triumphantly to the Lord!” As His people, this is what we want; the whole world singing to the Lord. He is our King that deserves to have victories celebrated. We are to gather!

Gather to Your God—With energy and vigor, gather to the Lord. On this day of Thanksgiving, resolve to “serve the Lord with gladness.” Sometimes Christians are guilty of unenthusiastic worship. We gather into our pews, lip synch the hymns and routinely check our watches to see if noon is approaching. I know this to be true because I have done it myself! Instead, we should, “come before him with joyful songs.”

Gather to Your Creator—Many in the world choose to ignore the fact that God is their Creator. This is not true of Christians! We acknowledge Him as our maker. God loves His people, and we are like sheep in His pasture. During this Thanksgiving holiday, constantly reflect on who He is and what He has done.

Gather to Your Provider—Today is Thanksgiving! Give God praise! He is good. He is faithful! The love of God knows no limit. Take the time to pause and look at your family. He wants to bless you and your legacy. His faithfulness extends through all generations.

Many of you who are reading this, know of my health predicaments. To be honest, I never thought I would still be alive to see another Thanksgiving. I am not the only one in the church family who has faced a crisis. All of us have in some way, shape, or form. I am so thankful that God has granted me life and life to its fullest.

*Father in Heaven,
We gather here on this Thanksgiving Day to celebrate your holy name.
Let us sing joyful songs!
Let us celebrate our communion with You and others!
In love Your wonderful love,
You gave Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ.
To bring comfort to us,
Jesus sent the Holy Spirit.
Your kindness is undeserved and so we ask that you receive our worship.
Amen.*

Marshmallow Toast

I want you to try one of my favorite treats. My mother made these for me all the time and now I make them for my children. Here is all you need.

Several pieces of bread

Peanut Butter

Grape or Strawberry Jelly

Tiny Marshmallows

Take your slice of bread and smear on both the peanut butter and jelly. Take your mini marshmallows and put as many on top as you want. Then place them on a cookie sheet pan and then toast them in oven (350 Degrees). It only takes about 5-10 minutes, so keep an eye on them. Once done, they are extremely hot but awesome.



November 26: “The Reason for Thanksgiving!” by Sam Melloy

Come, let's shout joyfully to the Lord, shout triumphantly to the rock of our salvation! Let's enter his presence with thanksgiving; let's shout triumphantly to him in song. For the Lord is a great God, a great King above all gods. The depths of the earth are in his hand, and the mountain peaks are his. The sea is his; he made it. His hands formed the dry land. Come, let's worship and bow down; let's kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, the sheep under his care. Today, if you hear his voice: Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the wilderness where your ancestors tested me; they tried me, though they had seen what I did. For forty years I was disgusted with that generation; I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray; they do not know my ways." So I swore in my anger, "They will not enter my rest."—Psalm 95

Thanksgiving Day was always a special moment in my childhood. Having a brother sixteen years older than I, along with other older siblings, meant that there was extended family. It was expected that everyone would gather at our house on Thanksgiving Day for the customary turkey and dressing meal with all the trimmings. There was joy throughout the house as small children played while the adults talked. In some years, my single uncles (widowed and a bachelor) would join us. Memories of years past were shared and the family history was updated. Dad usually asked the Lord's blessing on the meal that Mom had cooked. Thanksgiving was more significant in our family than Christmas because, most likely, everyone attended that day more so than on Christmas Day.

The theme today is our salvation in Christ and the joyful reception of the gospel. On our Thanksgiving Day each year, we knew that everyone present was part of the family of God through faith in Christ. We worshiped together every Sunday morning, evening, and Wednesday night at our local church. All of our family members were involved in church activities and business. Thus, as the years passed, and our family grew and members could not attend because of their own growing family traditions, we also noted the passing away of our parents, aunts and uncles, and even siblings.



Each year was a reminder of what once was, but it was also a reminder of what lay ahead: resurrection and reunion. For that we are always grateful. The hope that is in Christ Jesus is the reason for joy.

Psalm 95 is a command to “come...sing unto the LORD.” Let us make a joyful noise. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving. Let us acknowledge the greatness of our God. Let us worship, kneel, and bow before Him. We are “the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.”

Hopefully, as you gathered yesterday or at any time this holiday, you not only shared the joy of each other's company, but you shared a time of giving thanks for the blessings of God and His goodness to you.

*Lord of Heaven,
thank you for all the blessings of life that you have bestowed upon me and my family.
Thank you for the gospel of Jesus Christ and the gift of salvation by grace through faith in your only Son.
If our faith has grown cold,
restore to us the joy of Thy salvation through our true repentance from sin and daily trust and obedience
to our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ.
Amen.*

Date Nut Roll Recipe (Handed down from Sam's Mother!)

1 pound of Graham Cracker Crumbs (Reserve 1 Cup

1 pound of Chopped Dates

1 Cup of Miniature Marshmallows

1 Cup of Chopped Pecans

1 pint of Cream

Combine crumbs, dates, marshmallows, and pecans. Add cream to moisten mixture. Work into a log shape. Dust with reserved crumbs. Wrap in wax paper and chill. To serve, slice and top with whipped cream.

