



# Bulletin

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Happy Thanksgiving!

## SEASONED WITH GRACE

BY JIM DALY

MANY OF US FEEL THE BURDEN TO PROVIDE THE PERFECT Thanksgiving meal to our family and guests. And yet something always gets in the way. Maybe it's your first time around the table without a loved one who has passed away, or perhaps the family is reeling from the shock of bad news. Or maybe you have a rowdy toddler who likes to hide cranberry sauce in the seat cushions.

This year, may I suggest setting more realistic expectations? Focus on simply being together and giving each other grace. Give the day, and the meal, to the Lord. Take a moment to pause and ask God for His presence to be evident during your time together as a family. Ask Him to intervene between family members who've hit a rough patch, or to guide the conversation. So many times we try to do everything right but forget that our best efforts will often fall short without His blessing.

It's my hope and prayer that, no matter how your Thanksgiving Day ultimately goes, you will sense God's presence and love. As Christians, we know that we can have thankful hearts despite dashed expectations or in the midst of trials, so I encourage you to look to Him as the source of all blessings and comfort.

**My parents give our children very expensive toys and large amounts of spending money. When I bring up this topic, they imply that it's their "right" to spoil their grandchildren. What can we do?**

**ANSWER:**

Unfortunately, there's not an easy solution to this question. A child's relationship with his or her grandparents is certainly one to be treasured and cultivated. But when it keeps your children from learning the principles of a successful and godly life, you may need to stand firm. I recommend picking one or more of the following alternatives.

The first and best alternative is to lovingly confront the grandparents with what they are doing. Do this after you have begun teaching your children a budgeting

system, so your system becomes the standard—not you or them. By doing so, you may be able to point out the behavior that is giving you a challenge.

A second idea is to give them an alternative to the large gift. For example, you could ask them to set up a savings account or a college fund for your children instead of giving gifts. You could also ask them to spend time, rather than money, with your children. A relationship with their grandparents is a blessing they can never purchase. Or perhaps you could set a limit on the gift amounts.

Third, your children could accept financial gifts but put them into savings accounts. At some point they could share with their grandparents how they used the total of the gifts given to them.

You may wish to provide a list of needs (such as school supplies or clothes) to the grandparents. This may help them give more practical gifts rather than the 15th stuffed animal or 20th doll.

A last-resort option is to say on your children's behalf, "No, thank you" and return the gifts. There is obviously great risk in choosing this alternative in terms of the relationship with the grandparents, but it may be the only one that meets your objective—teaching your children wisdom. Be careful not to put your children in an adversarial relationship with their grandparents. The problem is not your children's fault.

(Adapted from the *Complete Guide to Faith-Based Finances* by Ron Blue with Jeremy L. White)



Tough Questions from Kids

Does praying over our meal change the food?

## TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

**ANSWER:**

Praying at meals does not change the food; it changes us. We pray over the food to thank God for it and to ask His blessing on those who eat it. Praying at meals reminds us that every bit of food we get comes from God's hand and that He provides everything we need.



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## 'I LOVE YOU, PERIOD'

In some marriages, one or both spouses feel a need to live up to the other's expectations in order to be loved. This is performance-based acceptance, and it's often a carry-over from childhood. When did your sweetheart feel most loved by his or her parents? Was it when A's showed up on the report card? When his or her team won the game? For many people, performance-based acceptance is programmed deep within them. They give love and feel loved on an "I love you *if*" basis.

But an accepting love takes an altogether different approach. It's an "I love you, *period*" kind of love,

one that is commanded in Scripture: "Accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us" (Romans 15:7, NASB). Does Jesus extend acceptance to people based on their performance? Of course not. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9, NIV).



There is such joy and security in knowing that your beloved accepts you—no matter what. Your husband repeatedly forgets to pick up his clothes as he promised, but he still feels your love. Your wife sometimes seems to give more attention to the dog than to you, but she still feels your love. Your acceptance of each other is based not on performance but on your love for and commitment to each other.

My wife can testify that I really mess up—often. I'm not as considerate as I should be, I make cutting remarks when I am tired—I could go on and on. But her loving acceptance of me inspires me to please and bless her. I seek her forgiveness when I blow it, and the knowledge that she loves and accepts me, period, motivates me to make her security, welfare and happiness as important to me as my own is. And that cycle of accepting and being accepted builds strong and lasting trust, comfort and security in our relationship.

—Josh McDowell

## APPRECIATING OUR HEROES



A friend's older brother, Caleb, was in the military and stationed overseas. This provided a perfect opportunity to teach my 7-year-old twins to show appreciation and offer encouragement to our country's soldiers.

I encouraged my kids to draw pictures for and write letters to Caleb. Their letters covered everything from prayers for safety to mundane details about what happened

in school that day. At night they prayed for him, asking God to protect him and his men and to keep him from worrying.

In anticipation of Caleb's return home, my kids recorded a welcome-home video for him. They also constructed posters on which they drew pictures and wrote celebratory phrases so that Caleb's wife could decorate the walls when he returned home.

Though Caleb lived approximately five hours away, we stopped by to visit him while on a road trip. The kids were shy around him, but meeting Caleb helped personalize their prayers for those who serve our country.

—Tanara McCauley

## THANKS IN ACTION

When my daughter was 3, I wanted to help her think about the meaning behind the Thanksgiving season. I placed a small dry-erase board at the center of our dining table, and at the top wrote the following words: "We are thankful for . . ." Then, during each morning throughout November, I asked my daughter to think of one person or thing she was glad to have in her life. I wrote her answer on the board, and underneath we listed the reasons she was thankful for that particular person or thing.

After saying a prayer of thanks for that blessing, we talked about how God wants us to bless others. Then we did a simple activity based on what she was thankful for that day. When she was thankful for her toys, we went shopping for toys to donate to other children. When she was thankful for her grandparents, she colored pictures for them and we put them in the mail. Putting gratitude into action allowed my toddler to better understand what it truly means to be thankful.

—Kayla Aimee