

# Thanksgiving MiniUnit

## OVERVIEW

### Preparing the Teacher

The Bible reveals to us some aspects of God's perfect character and some of His good works. A Christian's logical response is to praise such a wonderful God, but sometimes we do not feel very thankful. Yet the Bible calls us—in fact, commands us—to give praise and thanksgiving in a variety of ways.

The book of Psalms in particular is full of commands to praise the Lord as well as personal testimonies from people who gave thanks. At least twenty-seven times the authors exhort us to praise. God is praised for who He is (7:17) and what He does (139:14). We can even read about the nature of praise and thanksgiving in Psalms. We read that praise should be public at times (22:22; 35:18), continual (34:1), and wholehearted (9:1). Often, praise and thanksgiving to God were expressed through songs (9:2; 28:7). In fact, it is in Psalms that the ideas of praise and giving thanks occur most often in the Bible.

When we come to the New Testament we see thankfulness being modeled in Christ's words and works, in Paul's letters, in Christian service, and in the Last Supper, which is given as an ordinance to the church. Help your students glorify God by developing an attitude of thankfulness toward Him.

### Preparing the Materials

**Lesson A:** An 8" × 36" piece of art paper [E]; an 18" length of ribbon or yarn [E]

**Lesson C:** A quilt with brightly-colored pieces and neutral pieces (or a paper quilt made with bright colors and neutral colors)

**Lesson D:** See food items listed in the lesson.



# God's People Remember with Thanksgiving

## PREVIEW

### Doctrines

- **A:** God is all-knowing (omniscient) (Job 42:2).
- **A-B:** Members of the local church should fellowship (Acts 2:46).
- **A-B:** Members of the local church should participate in the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7).
- **B:** Officers of the local church should take care of those having special needs (Acts 6:1-7).
- **C:** God is all-powerful (omnipotent) (Jer. 32:27).
- **C:** God is faithful (1 Cor. 1:9).

### Skills and Applications

- Demonstrate a thankful attitude toward God
- Speak God's praises in a choral reading
- Know how God's people praised Him in Bible times
- Demonstrate an awareness of the blessings that belong to those who know Jesus Christ as Savior

## LESSON **A** Remembering Christ's Example

### Materials

- An 8" × 36" piece of art paper [E]
- An 18" length of ribbon or yarn [E]
- Hole punch
- Felt-tip pens and other materials for decorating memory book covers [O]
- Copy of "Choral Reading" from the Teacher's Toolkit CD under the Activity Pages section [E]
- Copies of "Choral Reading Markers" from the Teacher's Toolkit CD (as many as needed)

### Hymn

**Choose a song.** Some songs that correlate with the Thanksgiving lessons include "Bless the Lord," "Count Your Blessings," "We Gather Together," and "Worthy Is the Lamb."

Read aloud **Psalm 103:1-5** to set the theme for thanksgiving. Establish the importance of praising God. Lead in singing the first verse of the selected hymn.

## Bible Account

### Background Information

#### Thanksgiving Celebrations in North America

The first designated observance of Thanksgiving in America was held in 1619 at Berkeley Plantation on the James River in what is now Virginia. The settlers there had included in their charter a requirement that December 4, the day of their arrival in the New World, would be observed every year as a day of thanksgiving to God. The first Thanksgiving celebration in New England was observed in the fall of 1621 in what is now Massachusetts. The Plymouth colonists gathered together for a three-day feast to thank God for giving them their first harvest. They were joined by their Native American friends who had enabled them to survive that first winter and helped plant their first crops. Although some of the states named official Thanksgiving holidays, it was not until 1863 that President Abraham Lincoln

proclaimed the last Thursday in November as a national day of thanksgiving to God. Later Congress changed the observance of Thanksgiving to the fourth Thursday of November. In Canada, Thanksgiving Day is observed on the last Monday in October.

### Passover During the Time of Christ

Jews traveled from all over Palestine, from Babylonia, and from every part of the Roman Empire to observe the Passover in Jerusalem. They stayed in rented rooms and even on flat rooftops during the festival. Men went to the temple to buy lambs to be sacrificed by the priests there. After the blood, entrails, and fat were burned on the altar, the meat was wrapped in the skin and returned to the owner to be taken home, roasted, and eaten as a part of the ritual meal. Other elements of the feast included unleavened bread (commemorating the bread eaten on the night of their leaving Egypt), bitter herbs (symbolizing the bitter treatment the Israelites endured), nuts and chopped fruit (representing the mortar they were forced to tread), and wine. **Psalms 120–136** were often sung as a conclusion to the meal.

### Guest Chamber

This was a room used by the master of the house as a reception area for visitors. It was opposite the entrance to the central court and usually raised above the level of the courtyard. This upper room was an elevated ground floor area rather than the rooftop sleeping room usually assigned to guests. It is possible that this was the kind of place in which Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples the night before His suffering and death. (Traditionally, the upper room was thought to have been a second-floor room accessible by an outside stairway.)

### Introduce the Bible Account

Discuss God's omniscience.

What does it mean to say that God is omniscient? **He knows everything.**

What did Jesus know would happen after the Passover meal that He shared with His disciples? **He knew that He would suffer and die.**

### Teach for Understanding

Read **Matthew 26:17–19, 26–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–20**, or use the following retelling of the passages. Listening question: **When Jesus took the bread and the cup, what did He do before giving them to His disciples? He gave thanks.**

## Remembering Christ's Example

As the time drew near when Jesus would be arrested, tried, tortured, and crucified, these things must have weighed heavily on His mind. In spite of this, Jesus took time to lead His disciples in the special Passover remembrance to give thanks for what God had done for His people in the past. He also gave them a special way to remember God's provision of salvation through the death of His Son.

It was the time of the Passover, and Jesus and His disciples had come to Jerusalem as did many Jews from other regions and foreign lands. Jesus instructed Peter and

John to make preparations for celebrating the feast. He sent them into the city and told them to watch for a man carrying a jar of water and to follow him. When they got to the house, they were to say to the homeowner, "The Master asks, 'Where is the guest chamber where I will eat the Passover with my disciples?'" They did as Christ had instructed them and were shown a large upper room where they did what was necessary to get ready for the traditional meal.

With the disciples gathered around Him at the table, Jesus told them how much He had looked forward to eating this Passover meal with them. This would be the last time He would share such a meal until He ate it again in the kingdom of God. Sometime during the meal of roasted lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs, Jesus took bread, broke it into pieces, gave thanks, saying that they should take it and eat it because it was His body. Jesus also took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to His disciples, instructing them all to drink it. This cup represented His blood, shed for the sins of all people of all time as the fulfillment of a new covenant between God and humans. Jesus added that they should often remember His broken body and the blood He shed for the redemption of mankind.

After they sang a hymn, Jesus and His disciples went out to the Mount of Olives.

- ▶ What was the Passover meal a remembrance of and a thanksgiving for? **for what God had done for His people in the past; for deliverance of God's people from Egypt**
- ▶ What was different about the observance of this Passover meal by Jesus and His disciples? **It was the last time that they would eat the meal together until they ate it in the kingdom of God.**
- ▶ When Jesus took the bread and the cup, what did He do before giving them to His disciples? **He gave thanks.**

Emphasize that Jesus is the perfection of all things. In observing the Passover, even on the day before His suffering and death, Jesus exemplified a perfect heart of remembering to thank God in all circumstances for what He is, what He has done, and what He will do. In giving thanks before offering the bread and the cup to His disciples, Jesus demonstrated humility and surrender through His thanksgiving.

### Choral Reading

**Direct a choral reading.** Explain to the students that a choral reading is performed as a choir would perform a piece of music, giving attention to speaking at assigned times. Like singing, choral reading is a way of praising and worshiping God. Encourage the students to use clear, pleasant, naturally expressive speech, and a worshipful posture and attitude. Display a copy or distribute copies of the "Choral Reading." Model one or two lines; then allow the students to practice one or two lines with you.




Assign the solos (or duets if you have a large number of students) and place the reminder markers on the speakers' desks. Distribute the group markers, making sure that you include both boys and girls in each group and that the group members



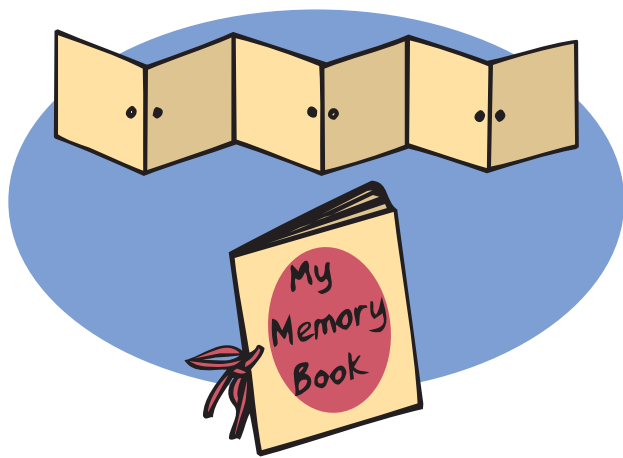
are distributed throughout the room. Direct the students in the scripted choral reading based on **2 Corinthians 9:15, 1 Corinthians 11:23–26, Revelation 22:20, and Hebrews 13:15–16.**

## Writing Connection (optional)

Guide a writing activity.

-  What do some people do to help them remember things that they need to remember for a short time? **Possible answers include writing notes and to-do lists, making calendar notations, and using electronic devices.**
-  What are some things that people use to remember things on a more long-term basis? **Possible answers include photo albums, CDs, journals, scrapbooks, and objects.**
-  Do we always need such tangible reminders? Why? **Not for every event. Many things in our lives leave lasting memories without any such reminders. Memorials simply aid the preserving of the memories that we want to cherish.**

Give each student a piece of art paper and a piece of ribbon or yarn. Have a hole punch available. Guide the students in folding the paper, punching holes, and inserting the yarn to make a memory book. Provide felt-tip pens and other materials for decorating the covers.



After the memory book is completed, give time for the students to write on page 1, “I Remember Jesus’ Example of Giving Thanks”; then direct them to write on page 2 a list of things that God has done for them.

## Remembering God’s Blessings Together

### Materials

- Copies of the choral reading from Lesson A
- Memory book prepared in Lesson A [O]

### Hymn

Review the song and develop higher-order thinking skills by asking application questions.

## Bible Account

### Background Information

#### The Lord’s Supper in the Early Church



During the early days of the church, Christians often met together for a simple fellowship meal that also included an observance of the symbolic meal that Christ had instituted as a remembrance of His suffering and sacrificial death. Passover was observed annually, but this new feast had no rule for frequency. Sometime during the last half of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus (ca. AD 54–59), he wrote to the church at Corinth, addressing numerous areas of contention among the church members. One of these issues was behavior at the fellowship meals where the Lord’s Supper was observed. At first all Christians met together as equals, but as time went on, there began to be distinctions of rank, wealth, and culture. Some people took precedence over others in the order in which they helped themselves to the food. Paul firmly reminded the Corinthian Christians of the real meaning of the observance. All true Christians observing the Lord’s Supper were redeemed by the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Choral Reading

**Practice the choral reading.** Distribute the copies, as well as the solo and group markers to students, choosing different individuals and groupings than in the previous lesson. Follow the usual procedure for the reading, being sure to emphasize and model a worshipful attitude.

### Introduce the Bible Account

Discuss using a meal as a time of fellowship.

-  How did the Pilgrims in America spend their three days of thanksgiving? **feasting, fellowshiping, and giving thanks**
-  Do the members of your church sometimes share a meal together? Explain. **Answers will vary.**

Allow students to briefly tell about fellowship meals in their churches.

### Teach for Understanding

**Read 1 Corinthians 10:16–17; 11:20–29** or use the following retelling of the passages. Listening question: **What should Christians do before they take part in the Lord’s Supper?**

**Christians should carefully examine their hearts before taking the Lord’s Supper to make sure that their motives and attitudes are right.**

## Remembering God’s Blessings Together

Paul wrote to the Christians in the church in Corinth after he heard reports of their meetings to observe the remembrance of Jesus’ suffering and death. When the Corinthians met for a meal that concluded with this observance, they

gave more importance to eating the meal than to remembering the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some wealthy church members were able to bring large amounts of food, while others were so poor that their contributions to the meal were very meager. A problem arose when the wealthy members did not share what they had brought. They ate an excessive amount and left the poor members without enough food to satisfy their hunger.

Paul did not tell the Corinthian Christians to stop observing the Lord's Supper because they were not doing it correctly. Instead, he reminded them of the meaning of the symbolic meal. He also called their attention to the fact that giving thanks in this way was something they did together, not as individuals. One loaf was used to symbolize the body of Christ, pointing to the fact that the church of Jesus Christ is one body even though it has many members. It also served as a reminder that believers share all things in Christ, just as they shared the loaf. Paul cautioned Christians to examine themselves carefully before partaking of the meal to make sure that their motives and attitudes were right. If Christians remember Jesus' suffering and death with a humble heart, it should cause them to join together in giving thanks for all the blessings that they share in Him:

- Thanks for the redeeming and transforming work of Christ (1 Cor. 6:11)
- Thanks for all God's gracious gifts, beginning with Christ (Rom. 8:32)
- Thanks for the spreading of the gospel of God's grace to others (2 Cor. 4:15)
- Thanks for the spiritual progress of others (1 Thess. 3:8)
- Thanks for partnership with other Christians in sharing the gospel (Phil. 1:3)
- Thanks for fellowship with other Christians (1 John 1:7)



- What was the problem with the way the Corinthian Christians were observing the Lord's Supper? **Some of them were forgetting the real reason for the meal and were therefore not loving others as Christ commanded (Matt. 22:39).**

- ⚙️ What are some of the blessings that Christians share in Jesus Christ? **Possible answers include the redeeming work of Christ, God's gifts, partnership with other Christians in spreading the gospel, the spiritual growth of others, and fellowship.**

- ⚙️ How can a Christian avoid taking part in the Lord's Supper with wrong motives or attitudes? **by examining himself to see whether he is guilty of wrong motives, attitudes, or sins; by making sure that his relationship with God and with others is right and pure**

- ⚙️ What are the right attitudes when observing this remembrance? **Possible answers include thankfulness, worship, humble gratitude, and consideration for others.**

- ⚙️ What are some ways Christians can share the blessings that God has given them? **Accept any reasonable answer.**

## Writing Connection (optional)

**Guide a writing activity.** Give the students time to write "I Remember to Give Thanks with Others" on page 3 in their memory books; then tell them to write on page 4 a list of ways that they can share the blessings that God has given to them. Direct each student to put a star next to the blessing that he will try to tell others about this week.

## Giving Thanks Always for All Things

### Materials

- Copy of the choral reading from the previous lessons
- Copy of the "Remembering with Thanksgiving" activity page from the Teacher's Toolkit CD [E]
- A quilt with brightly-colored pieces and neutral pieces (or a paper quilt made with bright colors and neutral colors) [O]

### Hymn

**Review the song and develop higher-order thinking skills by asking application questions.**

## Bible Account

### Background Information

#### King Jehoshaphat

Jehoshaphat was the fourth king of the separate kingdom of Judah. He was known for seeking God with all his heart. His character is sharply contrasted with that of the wicked King Ahab, the king ruling at that time in the kingdom of Israel. Jehoshaphat's name is included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:8).

### Choral Reading

**Practice the choral reading.** Display the choral reading or distribute the copies from Lesson A. Distribute the solo and group markers to different people from those in the previous lessons but follow the same procedure for the reading. Emphasize and model a worshipful attitude.

### Introduce the Bible Account

**Discuss giving thanks.** Read aloud Ephesians 5:20. Direct the following discussion to be guided by 1 Thessalonians 5:16–19, Genesis 50:20, and Romans 8:28–29.

- ⚙️ Does this verse really mean *always* and *everything*?
- ⚙️ What about things that are frightening, troublesome, or unpleasant to us?
- ⚙️ What about things that we have not received yet?
- ⚙️ What about blessings from the past?

Explain that although God is certainly honored by the proper observation of a day or season of thanksgiving, His people are instructed to give thanks *always* for *everything*.

## Teach for Understanding

Read 2 Chronicles 20:2–26 or use the following retelling of the passage. **How were the people of Judah described at the end of the account? They returned to Jerusalem full of joy, continuing to praise God just as they had before God delivered them.**

### Giving Thanks Always for All Things

The news received by King Jehoshaphat was certainly alarming. A huge army of Moabites and Ammonites was marching against Judah. This army was indeed a formidable foe, and their approach frightened the king and people of Judah. King Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast and prayed to God. In his prayer, the king recounted some of the wonderful things God had done for His people in the past. He admitted that they were weak and didn't know what to do. When the prayer was finished, God spoke His answer through a Levite named Jahaziel. He prophesied that God would give victory to the people of Judah without a battle. King Jehoshaphat and his people thanked God and praised Him for what He had not yet done.

The next morning the king encouraged his people to trust God. When the people of Judah marched out to the battlefield to meet their enemies, they followed singers who had been appointed by King Jehoshaphat to lead them in praising God. They sang, giving thanks and praise to God for His eternal and faithful mercy. As they sang praises to God, the Lord worked on their behalf, causing the armies of Ammon and Moab to destroy each other. The people of Judah returned to Jerusalem full of joy, continuing to praise God just as they had before God delivered them.

- ▶ What did King Jehoshaphat do when he heard of the approaching large army? **He proclaimed a fast and prayed to God.**
- ▶ How did the king describe his people in prayer? **He said they were weak and didn't know what to do.**
- ▶ What did Jahaziel prophesy? **that God would give victory to the people of Judah without a battle**
- ▶ Where did Jahaziel get his message from? **God**
- ▶ Who led the people of Judah to the battlefield? **the singers**
- ▶ What were they doing according to the king's commandment? **singing praises to God**
- ▶ What happened to the armies of Ammon and Moab? **They destroyed each other.**
- ▶ What did the people of Judah do after that? **They returned to Jerusalem full of joy, continuing to praise God just as they had before God delivered them.**

## Writing Connection (optional)

**Guide a writing activity.** Direct the students to write “I Give Thanks Always and for All Things” on page 5 in their memory

books; then tell them to write on page 6 about a blessing that came through difficult or unpleasant circumstances.

## Picture the Point

**Discuss a patchwork quilt.** Show a patchwork quilt that has brightly colored pieces and neutral pieces. (*Note:* If a quilt is not available, make a small sampler quilt out of paper or display the quilt bulletin board from the Teacher's Toolkit CD.)

- ▶ **In the quilt, which pieces catch your eye first? Accept any answer, but suggest that the brightly colored pieces are the most eye-catching.**

Explain that the things we should thank God for can be compared to the pieces of the quilt. The brightly colored quilt pieces are like the obvious blessings of life that we enjoy every day—salvation, health, food, family, friends, and vacations. The neutral quilt pieces are like the blessings that come through difficult or unpleasant circumstances—patience in illness, dependence on God, strength from His comfort in trials, and experiences of His goodness in times of need. Just as both types of quilt pieces complete the quilt, God gives blessings in both pleasant and unpleasant circumstances.

## Remembrance with Thanksgiving

Referring to the “Remembering with Thanksgiving” activity page from the Teacher's Toolkit CD, identify how people in the Bible thanked and praised God.

## LESSON D Unit Activity

### Materials

- Large slow cooker
- Pita or mofleta bread
- Ingredients for vegetable stew (serves 12):
  - 4 cups beef or chicken bouillon
  - 1 cup chopped onion
  - 1/2 cup chopped celery
  - 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
  - 2 bay leaves
  - 2 tablespoons olive oil
  - 1 can chick peas (drained)
  - 2 cans brown or red beans (drained)
  - 1 can black beans (drained)
  - salt and pepper to taste

Cook the onion and celery in bouillon with the bay leaves, olive oil, and garlic on high setting until tender (about 2 hours). Remove bay leaves. Add remaining ingredients and simmer on low setting for about 2 hours. Serve with pita or mofleta bread for dipping. Complete the meal with goat's milk cheese, olives, dried figs or raisins, and water.

**Serve a fellowship meal.** Explain that you have prepared a meal similar to what was served at fellowship meals in the early church. Prepare the vegetable stew as directed. Begin or end the meal reading aloud verses from Psalms that give praise to God (e.g., Psalm 111:2, 5).