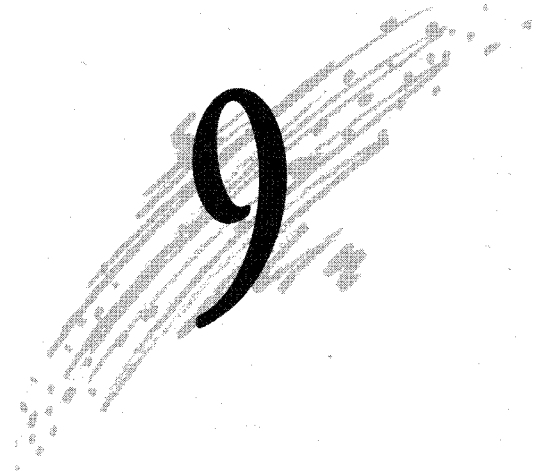


# Thank You, Lord!

*(a lesson for Thanksgiving  
or any time)*



## LESSON AIM

To help kids learn that ★ it's good to give thanks.

## OBJECTIVES

Kids or families will

- experience not being thanked for their efforts, then being thanked;
- examine and re-create the Feast of Tabernacles;
- create personal expressions of thanks to God; and
- commit to a thankful lifestyle.

## BIBLE BASIS

**Deuteronomy 16:13-17; Nehemiah 8:13-18**

The Feast of Tabernacles is a fascinating Jewish festival and an interesting parallel to our Thanksgiving. Unlike our Thanksgiving celebration, the Feast of Tabernacles lasted seven days, from the 15th to the 21st day of Tishri, our October. During this feast the Israelites traveled to Jerusalem where they celebrated the harvest of fruits and olives. They built and camped out in outdoor shelters called "booths" to commemorate the 40 years their ancestors had lived in temporary shelters as they wandered in the wilderness. Shelters were located on rooftops, in courtyards, in the court of the

## YOU'LL NEED

- sheets, blankets, or small tents
- Bibles
- newsprint
- a marker
- a toy horn
- a cassette tape or CD of Jewish choruses
- a cassette or CD player
- grapes, olives, dates, and soda crackers
- juice
- paper cups and plates
- photocopies of the "Thankful Turkey" handout (p. 85)
- pencils
- scissors
- old newspapers or scrap paper

## NOTE

This lesson works well with an intergenerational class. You may wish to invite whole families to join you for this session.

temple, and along the edges of city streets. In the evenings the people lit torches and danced and sang in the streets. On the eighth day, they took the shelters down and gathered at the temple to worship.

It's wonderful to celebrate God's goodness with feasting. The key to making our Thanksgiving a holy celebration is to focus more on God's goodness than on the feast! It's good to give thanks any time of year. It's good to give thanks every day, several times a day. We live in a privileged time in privileged nations. The effects of wind or insect damage, droughts, and floods are seldom felt as we load our plates at dinner. Our distance from nature tends to dull our sense of dependence on God. Let's celebrate God's goodness and fully acknowledge that God is the giver of all good things!

### **Psalm 67**

The psalms are rich with praise and are meaningful for people of all generations and all nations. This psalm celebrates God's goodness with joy and thanksgiving for a good harvest and God's blessing on his world.

## **UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS**

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Are there kids in your class who act as if coming to church is a chore? You can help them learn otherwise. Our culture constantly bombards kids with new and exciting entertainment, and it's hard for church to compete. But we have something much better to offer than entertainment: We can introduce kids and their families to the living God.

Worship and thanksgiving cut through high-tech hype and artificial values. Worship helps kids discover that "I am one little human being on one small planet in a galaxy in a universe that no one can comprehend, and the God who made all this demonstrates his love by taking care of me."

Now that's reason to give thanks!

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## **The Lesson**

### **ATTENTION GRABBER**

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#### **Thanks/No Thanks**

During this lesson, participants will put together "booths"

to re-create the biblical Feast of Tabernacles. The booths can be made by simply draping sheets or blankets over tables and chairs, by putting up lightweight tents, or even by hanging small tents from the ceiling. Make the process as simple or as sophisticated as you like.

You'll need one booth for every four to six people. Decide where you'll have the booths set up—in the corners of the room, for instance. Leave the room in its usual configuration for the Attention Grabber.

When participants arrive, have everyone who has shoes that tie stand against one wall. Have everyone with slip-on shoes stand against the opposite wall. It's OK if the groups are unequal in size.

Turn to the group with shoes that tie and say: **Ties, I'd like you to help me rearrange the tables and chairs. Please move them to the other end of the room.**

After they perform this task, shrug your shoulders and shake your head.

Then turn to the other group and say: **OK, no-ties, I've changed my mind. I really liked the tables and chairs the way they were. Would you put them back, please?** When the no-ties finish their task, thank them enthusiastically. Pat them on their backs and shake hands with several of them.

Turn back to the ties and say: **OK, now I've got it figured out. I need one table in each corner** (or however you want to arrange the room for creating the booths) **and the chairs here in a semicircle.**

When the ties complete this task, say: **That's a great job! Thanks for sticking with me! I really appreciate your helpful attitude.**

Have everyone sit down, then ask:

● **Ties, how did it feel when you did what I asked without being thanked for it?** (Kind of disappointing; a little confusing.)

● **How did you feel when I did say thank you?** (I was glad that I helped you; I felt appreciated.)

● **How do you react when you do something nice for someone but that person doesn't thank you?** (It's OK, because it was my choice to help; I might not feel so friendly toward that person again.)

● **Who can tell me about a time when you got a note or other special thank-you from someone? How did that make you feel?** (Special; important; appreciated.)

Say: ★ **It's good to give thanks. We like it when people thank us for what we do, and we sometimes feel**

## TEACHER TIP

If adults will be involved with the class, women in dresses who might feel uncomfortable sitting on the floor in booths can participate by being "feast makers."

bad if people don't notice or don't care. God likes it when we thank him, too. Today we're going to learn about a special feast the Israelites celebrated to give thanks to God.

## BIBLE STUDY

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Welcome to the Feast! (Deuteronomy 16:13-17; Nehemiah 8:13-18; Psalm 67)

Say: **Let's find out about this feast straight from the Bible. Listen carefully to what the Bible says, because I'm going to ask you what it tells us to do for our feast.**

Have volunteers read aloud Deuteronomy 16:13-17 and Nehemiah 8:13-18. Then ask:

● **What do we need to do to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles?** (Build booths; read from the Bible; celebrate joyfully; thank God for the harvest; bring gifts.)

List participants' answers on a sheet of newsprint.

Say: **Before you leave class today, we'll do all these things. Let's begin by asking God to bless our feast time.**

Ask a volunteer to pray or pray a simple prayer yourself, asking God to bless your time of giving thanks.

After the prayer, bring out your toy horn and blow it. Explain that Jewish priests used to blow a ram's horn to call people to worship, and that whenever you blow your horn, everyone should stop what they're doing and focus on you.

Then say: **Now we need to build our booths.**

Help participants form groups of four to six people. Ask each group to choose a feast maker, a reader, and two or more booth builders. Show the readers and the booth builders the materials you've provided for making booths—tents to assemble or sheets and blankets to drape over tables and chairs. As the groups work, play lively, Jewish-sounding choruses. ("Cornerstone," "Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord," and "King of Kings" from *The Group Songbook* cassettes and CDs are good examples.)

As the readers and booth builders work on the booths, set out grapes, olives, dates, soda crackers, juice, paper cups, and paper plates. Have the feast makers prepare a plate of food and cups of juice for the people in their groups.

When the booths are complete and the feast prepared, blow the toy horn to bring everyone together. Say: **It's time for the feast! The food we have here is like foods people enjoyed in Bible times. Help your feast maker carry the**

### TEACHER TIP

If you have adults in your class, make sure that each group has about the same number of them. It's best to mix families, so children get to know adults from other families. Encourage adults to act as helpers and facilitators, not to direct the activities.

feast into your booth. Readers, before anyone eats, please read Psalm 67 aloud. At the end of the psalm, say “amen” together. Then enjoy your feast. ★ It’s good to give thanks!

## LIFE APPLICATION

### Thankful Turkeys

Allow up to five minutes for groups to read Scripture and enjoy the Bible-time foods. Then blow the horn to get everyone’s attention.

Say: **Stay in your booths. In just a moment, I’m going to ask you to send one of your booth builders to come pick up pencils, scissors, and photocopies of the “Thankful Turkey” handout (p. 85). You’ll find directions for writing your own psalm of thanks on the handout. The readers and writers in your group can help those who don’t yet read and write complete their handouts. When you’re finished, read each other the psalms you’ve written.**

Have each group send a booth builder to pick up supplies. As participants work, circulate among the booths to offer encouragement and suggestions.

As you see groups finishing, blow the horn and announce that there are two minutes left. Then blow the horn again to bring everyone together. Invite volunteers to read their psalms to the whole group.

After volunteers have shared, say: ★ **It’s good to give thanks! All of us have different things we’re thankful for and different ways of showing our thanks. Let’s give thanks together by singing a song.**

Lead the group in a favorite song or chorus of thanksgiving.

### TEACHER TIP

If it’s in keeping with your church’s tradition and your participants would enjoy it, you might invite someone to lead the class in a simple dance to Jewish music. Have participants wrap their arms around each other’s shoulders, then use the “step, cross behind, step, cross in front, step, cross behind, step, kick, then reverse” pattern to create a joyful expression of praise.

## COMMITMENT

### Paper Offerings

Refer to the list you created that describes the Feast of Tabernacles. Point out that you’ve done most of the things on the list. Ask:

● **What do we need to do to complete our celebration? (Give gifts to God.)**

Set out piles of old newspapers or scrap paper. Have participants crumple, cut, or tear the paper to create sculptures of things they're thankful for. You might demonstrate by making a crumpled paper sculpture in front of the class.

Allow two or three minutes for participants to work. Then say: **Let's line up and present our sculptures to God as gifts of thanks.**

Lead the procession by walking to the front of the room, placing your sculpture on the table, and saying: **God, I thank you for** (whatever your sculpture represents). Then walk to the back of the room and signal the next participant to go forward. Encourage an atmosphere of quiet worship.

## CLOSING

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### Thankful Lives

After all the sculptures have been presented, gather everyone around them.

Say: **★ It's good to give thanks! And we don't have to wait for a feast day to do it. Turn to a person beside you and brainstorm three or four ways you can give thanks every day.**

Allow a minute for partners to share, then invite volunteers to share their ideas with the class.

Close with a prayer similar to this one: **Lord, you truly are a great God. Thank you for all the ways you show that you love us. Thank you for the good food we have to eat and the wonderful country we live in. Help us to remember to thank you every day. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Tell participants you'd be very thankful for help in taking down the booths. Encourage everyone to take their sculptures with them as reminders of God's goodness.

