

youthESource Worship

A Thanksgiving for Families

By Dean Nadasdy

Introduction

Here is an opportunity to thank the Lord as families. Be sure to invite entire family units: parents, brothers, sisters, and maybe even grandparents, depending on the size of your group.

Have the mood be celebrative. Before people come, ask them to bring along some old pictures from their family history. Have the pictures on display as people arrive. You may want to label each family's group of pictures with a number. Then give all the participants a card with blanks next to each number and have them try and identify which pictures come from which family.

Also ask families to bring along some slides from their recent family history.

Invocation

Leader: For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:14-19 RSV).

All: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thanksgiving Hymn Sing

Sing some favorite Thanksgiving hymns. As you sing, show the slides from the families present.

A Family Portrait

A family unit presents the following little straight-line meditation (memorized if possible). They should line up facing the rest of the group. (1 - Mom; 2 - Dad; 3 - youth; 4 - younger sibling)

1: We are a family.
2: We eat together...
1: ...when we can.
4: We laugh together.
3: We work together...
2: (looking at 3) ...when we can.
1: We pray together.
2: We play together.
3: We stay together...
4: ...even when it's very difficult to maintain a strong family support system.
3: What?
4: I said, we stay together even when it's hard to maintain a strong family support system.
3: Where did you hear that?
4: I read it someplace.
3: What does it mean?
4: How am I supposed to know?
1: It means that we're committed to each other no matter what, and we'll stay together.
4: No matter what?
1: No matter what!
2: We are a family.
1: We say a lot of things to each other that aren't exactly helpful. For example ...
2: ...Don't you have the car washed yet?

1: ...Aw, Dad, do I have to?
 4: ...You never say yes, Mom!
 1: ...Sorry. Just don't have time.
 3: ...Aren't my jeans out of the dryer yet?
 2: ...Quiet! I'm trying to hear the news!
 4: ...Why does Dad always get to watch what he wants?
 3: Sometimes we can get really crazy.
 4: Like when Dad fell off his chair because he was laughing so hard at the table.
 3: And Mom said he'll never grow up.
 4: Or when Mom filled Dad's car with balloons for his birthday and made him late for work.
 3: He loved it!
 4: Right. We are a family!
 1: We each have a name. My name is _____.
 2: And my name is _____.
 3: I'm _____. And this is...
 4: _____.
 1: But we have a family name, too.
 All: (shout family name together)
 2: We're different in many ways . . .
 1: ...But also the same.
 3: Different ways of doing things.
 4: Different tastes in music.
 2: That's for sure!
 3: And different personalities.
 4: That's for sure!
 1: But the same all the same.
 2: The same home.
 3: The same roots.
 4: The same heavenly Father.
 3: We are a family.
 1: And that makes us grateful...
 2: And stronger...
 4: And confident, considering the strong family support system we enjoy.
 3: I don't believe this.
 2: We are a family...
 1: And that...
 3: Makes us...
 4: Glad!

A Hymn of Praise

Together read or chant Psalm 145:1 -7.

Five Kernels of Corn

This Thanksgiving custom goes all the way back to colonial days. Five kernels of corn would be placed at each person's place at the feast table. Time would be given for each guest to mention five specific gifts from the Lord for which he or she was grateful.

Ask each family to gather as a family unit. Have each participant take five kernels of corn.

Then ask the families to share their "Five Kernels of Corn" Thanksgiving within their family units. Again, each family member is to share five specific blessings for which he or she is thankful. The focus for each kernel of corn is as follows:

First Kernel: A favorite time for our family.

Second Kernel: A favorite place for our family

Third Kernel: My favorite family memory

Fourth Kernel: What the family member to my right especially brings to our family

Fifth Kernel: A spiritual blessing our family enjoys

If time permits, ask each member of the total group to share a single kernel of corn. Any common objects of thanks? Any surprises?

Plant and Harvest a Family Ministry

Using the covenant, ask each family to commit themselves to a specific caring ministry in the near future. It could be a visit to a nursing home, skipping a meal for the hungry, painting the home of an older person, writing a letter to a relative who needs support, etc.

It is important that the family be specific regarding its planned ministry and the time. The covenant form should help. When all have completed and signed their forms, close by asking a given family to speak a prayer on behalf of another family present with their chosen ministry in mind.

Covenant: A Ministry for Our Family

By God's grace, we the _____ family, herewith promise to undertake the following ministry:

We will begin this ministry as a family on _____. The ministry will be completed by _____.

We are grateful to have the _____ family supporting us in prayer as we carry on this ministry.

In thanksgiving for God's many gifts to us, we, the undersigned, begin this good ministry in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Member of Supporting Family : _____

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