

Cornerstones Curriculum - Thanksgiving Planning Guide

Are you preparing for a November unit on Thanksgiving? Many Bible stories can shed light on a variety of aspects of Thanksgiving. Here is a list of 22 lessons from which to choose. Select the ones that best fit your congregational needs and talents of potential teachers. (All references are cited by the Cornerstones Year: Unit: Workshop and can be ordered online at http://www.cstones.com/order_form.htm).

Witness to God's Presence: Feeding of the 5000 → Make the connection between the way Americans celebrate Thanksgiving and our call by Jesus Christ to make sure that all are fed.

Created by the Spirit

Gyotaku, a Japanese printing process using fish, will be used to explore the story of the five loaves and two fish.

Faith Today

By exploring issues of hunger and justice, learn that the story of the Feeding of the 5000 can be a model for our own actions. Participation in a program such as Heifer Project International will be encouraged, as that organization strives not only to feed the hungry but empower those who are hungry to become self-sufficient.

Moved by the Spirit

Fun picnic activities will get to the heart of the story – how did Jesus (and how do we) view hunger in our midst. Relay races, Frisbees and piñatas are just a few of the many possibilities.

Video Live

Create an on-location broadcast from the hillside in Galilee. Conduct interviews with those present at the Feeding of the 5000.

Where in the World

Experience a variety of activities that build awareness of the uneven distribution of resources in the world and how this contributes to world hunger.

Witness to God's Presence: The Lord's Prayer → How does our prayer life enter into the Thanksgiving story?

Eat Your Way through the Bible

How does “daily bread” translate into our general nutritional needs? Understand how God provides for us by sampling food from the food pyramid.

Covenant: Kingdom Parables → How can we create God's kingdom on earth?

Eat Your Way through the Bible

Progressively prepare a celebration meal over four weeks to be shared with another local Sunday School, Meals on Wheels, a senior group or a homebound person in your congregation.

Messiah: 23rd Psalm → As we sit down to the Thanksgiving table, in what ways are we being inclusive?

- **Puppetry:** This lesson is based on Brian Sirchio's song, "Table of Friendship and Love". Discuss the connection between the psalm and the song and create a puppet show that both recites the 23rd Psalm and enacts the song.

Word of God: Beatitudes → Thanksgiving is a reflection of our awareness of God's blessings. This is a perfect time to ponder the Beatitudes.

- **Bedouin Encampment:** Meet the author of the book of Matthew and hear about the Beatitudes. Play a large board game to reinforce the Beatitudes and to see how they relate to everyday life.
- **Created by the Spirit:** While shaping clay, hear the Beatitudes. Look at various famous sculptures. Create an individual sculpture of one of the Beatitudes.
- **Eat Your Way through the Bible:** Experience the Beatitudes through taste. Make a bean soup or chili (fresh, frozen or dried) to be sold as a fundraiser for your local food pantry. This could be morphed into a Chili Cookoff.
- **Faith Today:** Invite the members of the congregation to share with the class what they do to make the world a better place, making a connection to the Beatitudes. Share the work of young poet, Mattie Stepanek. Respond to their work by writing a litany, poem or web page.
- **Mary & Martha's B&B:** Do a balloon exercise to memorize the Beatitudes. Learn about Jesus' encounter with Jairus and the woman who touched his robe. Share Joys and Concerns, creating a prayer chain within the group.
- **Moved by the Spirit:** Play several games to become more familiar with the different Beatitudes. Use Body Sox® to internalize the Beatitudes.
- **Video Live!:** After studying the Beatitudes, select the Beatitude that speaks to each one personally and put it in their own words. Videotape these personal versions of the Beatitudes and show the tape in the narthex before worship, during worship or during coffee hour.

Test of Faith: Ruth → The story of Ruth makes a great connection to Thanksgiving as Jewish law allows her to glean in the fields after harvest. In reality, most of us are like Boaz, required to provide for the Ruth's and Naomi's of this world.

- **Bedouin Encampment:** Learn about Ruth's gleanings by hearing the story "The Little Red Hen" and making a wheat craft.
- **Bible Improv:** Using props and costumes, act out seven scenes from Ruth's story. Scripts provided for readers and pre-readers.
- **Faith Today:** Hear the story of Ruth and learn about pockets of emptiness and pockets of fullness. Create reversible pockets that are filled with love, hope, kindness, joy, patience --- and hugs and kisses.
- **Puppetry:** Imagine that Ruth asks Naomi, "What is your God like?" Naomi calls on the many images of God that are found in the Bible. Create 3D props that express image of God that become props for a puppet show. The class will fine tune a loose script, adding their own dimensions.
- **Video Live!:** Understand the story of Ruth against the backdrop of human migration across the millennia. Create the experience of an immigration office with each student role-playing a potential foreigner who want to enter Bethlehem, connecting that experience with God's open invitation to enter the Kingdom.

Test of Faith: Rich Young Man → As Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate our blessings, it is also a time to ponder how our personal abundance separates us from others.

- **Created by the Spirit:** Hear the story, [The Quiltmaker's Gift](#), and create a tissue paper quilt. Consider launching a blanket drive.
- **Where in the World Is?:** Participate in a two-person narration about the rich young man's encounter with Jesus. Learn about the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and do some interactive exercises to highlight some of the elements of poverty and need for basic human services. Consider one of several service projects in response to the story.

Finally, either as a kick-off or closing celebration, consider hosting an all-church event using the Cornerstones program "**Exploring the Biblical Roots of Thanksgiving**". This program explores the Jewish harvest festival of Sukkoth and the connection to the early American celebration of Thanksgiving. (http://www.cstones.com/creative_uses.htm)