

Grandparenting *at* **THANKSGIVING**

Practical ideas
for intentional
Christian
grandparents

 **Legacy**
COALITION

Three Types of Families

How your influence plays out during Thanksgiving depends upon the type of family that you have gathering together.

Will yours be...

A “together” family?

A “touchy” family?

A “tense” family?

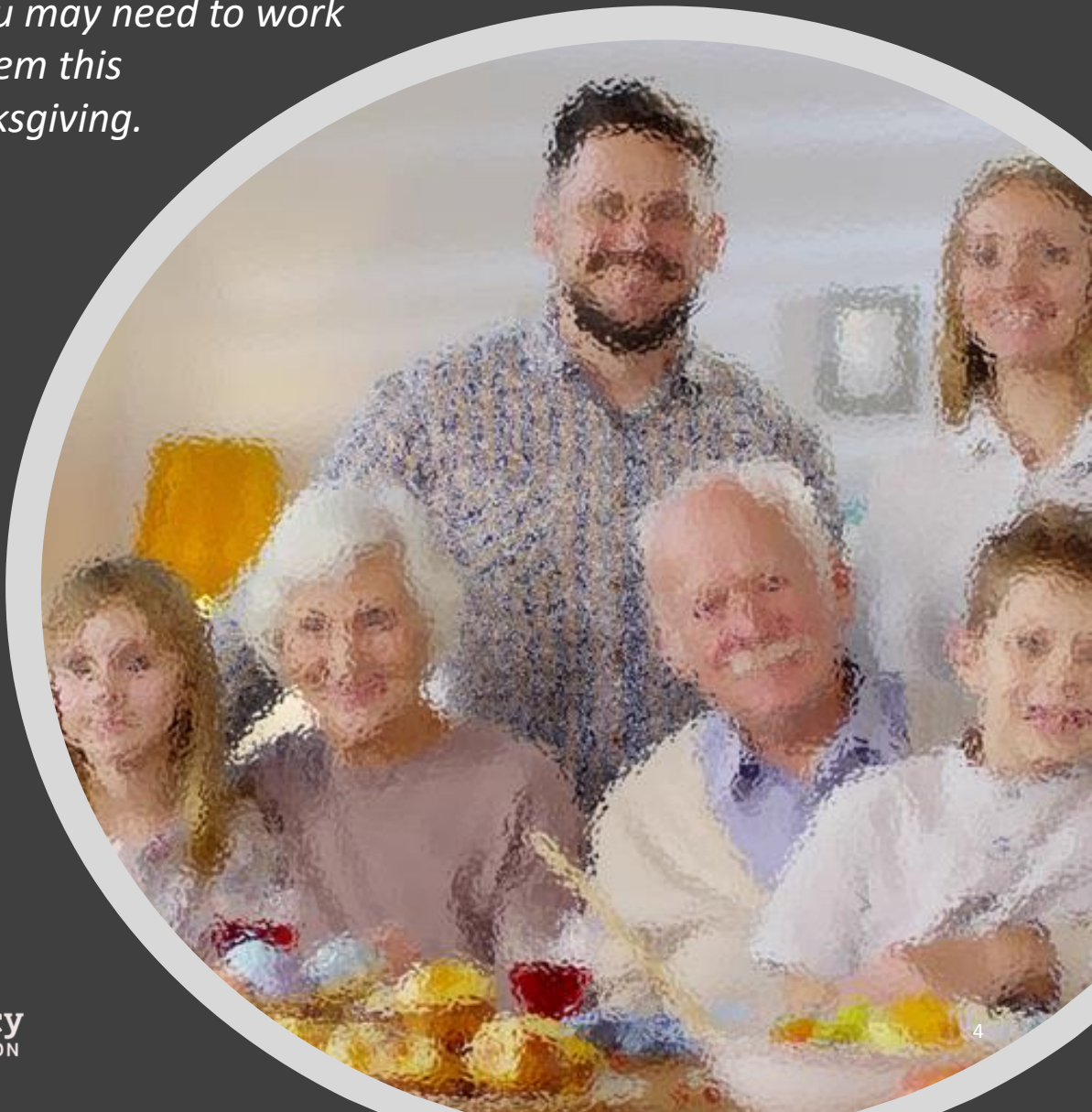
The "Together" Family

Everyone is comfortable with one another. The family looks forward to being together, and once everyone is there, hugs, laughter, and conversation fill the home. You, as the grandparent, feel free to inject a focus on your Christian faith into the day's events.



The “Touchy” Family

The picture is a little blurry; the conversation will be fine if Uncle Bob doesn't show up, if everyone avoids talking about politics, or no one comments about Aunt Trudy's casserole. As a grandparent wanting to influence, you must plan your strategy and tread carefully so that Thanksgiving is meaningful and progress is made. Remember, influence happens through relationships – so you may need to work on them this Thanksgiving.



The "Tense" Family

You know Thanksgiving will be uncomfortable; in fact, you dread the drama that is sure to spoil the holiday. Resentful attitudes, bad decisions everyone knows about, broken relationships, or something worse make the Thanksgiving table more toxic than thankful. Grandparents may need to strategize for small victories. Think about how you can demonstrate grace. It may be that you love unconditionally and simply represent Jesus well in all your interactions.



Which Will Your Family Be?



Together?



Touchy?



Tense?

As an intentional Christian grandparent, you want to seize the opportunity that the holiday brings and impact your family spiritually. However, the kind of family gathering that you anticipate will affect your strategy. The following pages give you a suggested strategy, plus practical ideas for each kind of situation. You may want to set your own strategy, and combine ideas to find those that will work in your family's Thanksgiving.

*I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds – Psalm 91*

The Together Family

Your strategy:

Leverage good relationships to impact spiritually

Give thanks to God before the meal:

1. Read Scripture before you pray (Psalm 100 is a great one to use)
2. Plan your prayer – or at least think through what you want to communicate as people listen to you pray so it is both worshipful and impactful.
3. Make it fresh and meaningful through something new: a new posture, write it out, and read it in unison, or have different family members read parts of it. Make it a poem (a lighthearted example is on the right).

Lord, so oftentimes, as any other day
When we sit down to our meal and pray
We hurry along and make fast the blessing
Thanks, amen. Now please pass the dressing
We're slaves to the olfactory overload
We must rush our prayer before the food gets cold
But Lord, I'd like to take a few minutes more
To really give thanks to what I'm thankful for
For my family, my health, a nice soft bed
My friends, my freedom, a roof over my head
I'm thankful right now to be surrounded by those
Whose lives touch me more than they'll ever possibly know
Thankful Lord, that You've blessed me beyond measure
Thankful that in my heart lives life's greatest treasure
That You, dear Jesus, reside in that place
And I'm ever so grateful for Your unending grace
So please, heavenly Father, bless this food You've provided
And bless each and every person invited.
Amen!

- Scott Wesemann

Give thanks to one another after you eat.

1. Everyone stays for conversation
2. Some practical ideas:
 - Draw names to share a thankful thought about each person.
 - Ahead of time, create a gratitude jar or pumpkin and ask people to write what they're thankful for on a paper to put in the jar or on the pumpkin.



- Recognize acts of giving that family members did throughout the previous year.

A time of Blessing

1. Have a special ceremony (tradition) of pronouncing a blessing on each family member. Grandparents, this is your role. You can do one of the following:
 - Use the Levitical blessing:

*The Lord bless you
and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon
you and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance [c] upon
you and give you peace.*

Numbers 6:24-26

- Use a different Scripture of your choice that communicates God's blessing.
- Create a custom blessing.
- Whichever you do, include a meaningful touch, words of love and affirmation, and a positive picture of God's favor upon them.

Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. – Colossians 3:13

The Touchy Family

Your strategy:

Engage everyone in meaningful conversations

Have non-threatening but guided group conversation

1. Before the meal, place **5 kernels of corn** on each plate (research this tradition, and then tell everyone you will explain the kernels after the meal). It is something the Pilgrims did in the years after that first Thanksgiving, so they could remember the time where food was so scarce that they were allotted five kernels of corn per person per day.
2. **Play a Pilgrim trivia game.** Many are available on the internet; do your homework and make sure you are up on the facts. Especially, be ready to explain the kernels of corn.
3. **Tell the story of Squanto** (a summary is on the next page. While some details are uncertain, it is still a great story of how God used an unlikely person to save the Pilgrims during that first winter.
4. Place a rear-view mirror (buy one at an auto parts store) on the table. Have a conversation around “when you look at 2021 in your rear-view mirror, what do you see?” Pass the mirror around, and each one shares when they get the mirror. Use your turn to include a faith perspective – make it a testimony of God’s goodness and faithfulness..

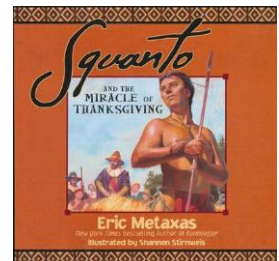


The Story of Squanto

Most of us know the story of the first Thanksgiving -- at least, we know the Pilgrim version. But how many of us know the Indian viewpoint? No, I'm not talking about some revisionist, politically correct version of history. I'm talking about the amazing story of the way God used an Indian named Squanto as a special instrument of His providence. Historical accounts of Squanto's life vary, but historians believe that around 1608 -- more than a decade before the Pilgrims arrived -- a group of English traders sailed to what is today Plymouth, Massachusetts. When the trusting Wampanoag Indians came out to trade, the traders took them prisoner, transported them to Spain, and sold them into slavery. It was an unimaginable horror. But God had an amazing plan for one of the captured Indians -- a boy named Squanto. Squanto was bought by a well-meaning Spanish monk, who treated him well and taught him the Christian faith. Squanto eventually made his way to England and worked in the stables of a man named John Slaney. Slaney sympathized with Squanto's desire to return home, and he promised to put the Indian on the first vessel bound for America. It wasn't until 1618 -- ten years after Squanto was first kidnapped -- that a ship was found. Finally, after a decade of exile and heartbreak, Squanto was on his way home. But when he arrived in Massachusetts, more heartbreak awaited him. An epidemic had wiped out Squanto's entire village. We can only imagine what must have gone through Squanto's mind: Why had God allowed him to return home, against all odds, only to find his loved ones dead? A year later, the answer

came. A shiplot of English families arrived and settled on the very land once occupied by Squanto's people. Squanto went to meet them, greeting the startled Pilgrims in English. According to the diary of Pilgrim Governor William Bradford, Squanto "became a special instrument sent of God for [our] good . . . He showed [us] how to plant [our] corn, where to take fish and to procure other commodities . . . and was also [our] pilot to bring [us] to unknown places for [our] profit, and never left [us] till he died." When Squanto lay dying of a fever, Bradford wrote that their Indian friend "desir[ed] the Governor to pray for him, that he might go to the Englishmen's God in heaven." Squanto bequeathed his possessions to the Pilgrims "as remembrances of his love." Who but God could so miraculously convert a lonely Indian and then use him to save a struggling band of Englishmen? It is reminiscent of the biblical story of Joseph, who was also sold into slavery -- and whom God, likewise, used as a special instrument for good. Squanto's life story is remarkable, and we ought to make sure our children and grandchildren learn about it. Sadly, most books about Squanto omit references to his Christian faith. But I'm delighted to say that Eric Metaxas has written a wonderful children's book called Squanto And The Miracle Of Thanksgiving.

I highly recommend it. It will teach your kids about the "special instrument sent of God" who changed the course of American history.



Copyright (c) 2003, 2005.
From Breakpoint, Nov 4, 2005,
a ministry of Prison Fellowship.

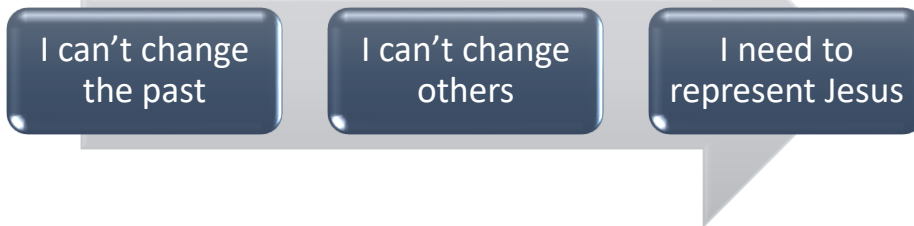
The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.. Full of grace and truth -- John 1:14

The Tense Family

Your strategy:

Take a step toward better relationships

Focus on these:



Families are tense usually because of something that happened in the past or because of personal conflicts. When we come to accept the truth that, as much as we would like to, we can't change the past and we can't change others either, we are freed to work on the present. As an intentional Christian grandparent, you must represent Jesus to your family. While you may not be able to bring up spiritual things, you can demonstrate grace – which is so impactful. Here are three things to do:

1. Determine that you won't contribute to the tension. While you can't control what others do, your continued efforts at being gracious won't go unnoticed, even if they are not recognized at the time.
2. Pray earnestly that God might work a victory in family relationships during the Thanksgiving day.
3. Actively show grace. There are some practical ideas on the next page to help you know what this looks like.

10 Ways to Demonstrate Grace at Thanksgiving:

- 1. Show an interest in the interests of others.** Think ahead of time how you might initiate conversations around what others would enjoy talking about. You may need to identify ahead of time: "...my brother-in-law loves fishing, so I need to think what questions I can ask him about that..." This leads to suggestion #2:
- 2. Be a question-asker.** It is fascinating how often Jesus asked questions. In fact, He often asked questions as an answer to questions; He concern was to draw the thinking of the other person out into the conversation.
- 3. Play a non-threatening, conversation-generating game,** like Apples to Apples.
- 4. Zip your lip.** You may be tempted to correct someone, chastise someone, or simply insert your contrasting opinion. Think about whether the Thanksgiving day is the appropriate time to share your thoughts. If something comes up that really needs to be address with another family member, how about a response something like this: "How about if we have lunch together next week where we can discuss this better?"
- 5. Be aware of your body language.** If your words say one thing, and your face says something else, your family members will believe your face, not your words. Determine that your unspoken messages are ones of unconditional love.
- 6. Seek to meet the needs of others.** Yes, it's hard to read what is going on in someone else; ask God to give you discernment. Do they need a loving hand on the shoulder? Affirmation? A listening ear?
- 7. Respond with a smile and with calmness** if someone says something irritating and hurtful.
- 8. Avoid "fighting words"** – words that, either intended or unintended, provoke a response. Think through your language: phrases like "you people," or "if you'd only..." can interpreted as judgmental or hurtful.
- 9. Forgive and forget, even if they don't deserve it.** That is what Jesus did for us, isn't it?
- 10. Ask for forgiveness, even if you weren't at fault.** If you *were* at fault, then it isn't grace to ask for it – it is obedience to God's commands. However, if you weren't at fault, then asking for forgiveness is one of the best ways to show grace. And don't qualify it. That ruins it completely.

Demonstrating grace is perhaps the most healing thing you can possibly do to heal a tension-filled family. Let the Holy Spirit guide you.

This Thanksgiving might just be the day that you see a different direction begin to form for your family relationships.