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Thanksgiving

DEVOTIONS

FOR HOMESCHOOL MOMS

PERFECTION | THANKFULNESS
CONTENTMENT | LOVE



NOTGRASS
HISTORY

PERFECTION

A Perfect Turkey

I had been twenty-one years old for twenty-five days when I married Ray in 1974. I joined him in Lexington, Kentucky, where he was working on his Masters in history. We were about four hours away from my folks and about five from Ray's. The company where I worked gave us one day off for Thanksgiving; I had to be back at work on Friday. So, what should we do?

I certainly had never cooked a Thanksgiving dinner. I felt too young. Thanksgiving dinners are what grandmothers cook, not twenty-one-year-olds. But what could I do? I bought a turkey, called my grandmother to find out how to cook it and how to make dressing, and we invited friends to our house for Thanksgiving dinner. I've cooked many turkeys since then—but not without mishap.

A few years later, while we were living in Mississippi, some older ladies in our congregation invited me to attend a Home Demonstration Club meeting. This club and others like it across the country taught women how to cook and do crafts and other homemaking skills. That day they were teaching a new way to cook turkeys. The instructions said to oil a brown paper grocery bag, put the turkey inside, close the bag with something like staples or paperclips, and bake the turkey upside down for a specific period of time. The result was to be a moist turkey.

Getting a brown paper grocery bag back then was no problem because that's how I always brought my groceries home from the store. A store usually had specially purchased paper bags with its name and logo printed on one side. If the store used any plastic bags, they were only for something wet or frozen. I remember when even special bags for ice cream were made from layers of brown paper.

At Thanksgiving that year, I got out one of my grocery bags, oiled it, slipped my turkey inside, and put it in the oven upside down. After the specified time, I got it out of the oven and pulled out my turkey. It was beautiful and moist and delicious and right there on its lower side was the store logo! Oops! Should have used a plain paper bag!

Then there was the year that I got the turkey out of the oven and promptly dropped it on the kitchen floor. You know what I did then? That's right! I picked it up, put it on the platter, and served it!

I guess it would have been nice in some ways always to have cooked the perfect turkey, but who would want to hear those stories? That's no fun. Trying to have the perfect homeschool? Give it up. Instead, give your kids some good stories to tell—on you!



*For of His fullness we have all received,
and grace upon grace.*

THANKFULNESS

Thankfulness and Pinched Noses

Isn't it wonderful that we as a nation continue to set aside a day to be thankful? God has given us abundant reasons to have grateful hearts. Blessings abound every day of our lives. Therefore, our grateful hearts overflow with thanksgiving.

While we wonder if the turkey will be moist, we are thankful we have food. While we hurry to get the children out the door to Grandma's, we are thankful for the children and for Grandma. While we wish we were in a one-horse sleigh instead of a car in the midst of a three-mile traffic jam, we are thankful we can get to our loved ones in hours or days instead of weeks or month—and that we have loved ones who care that we come.

Isn't prayer wonderful? People don't always answer our texts or calls or emails. They are not always available when we want to rejoice or to weep with them, but God is. We can pray to Him anytime and anywhere. We have a listener. What a blessing.

The Bible gives examples of ways that people have prayed.

When Daniel knew that prayer to anyone besides the king had become illegal, "he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously" (Daniel 6:10, NASB).

King Solomon prayed "kneeling on his knees with his hands spread toward heaven" (1 Kings 8:54, NASB).

When Jesus saw the tax collector pray, the tax collector was "standing some distance away" and "was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me the sinner!'" (Luke 18:13, NASB).

When I was a girl, I noticed that one of the ladies at our church gently pinched her upper nose between her thumb and her index finger when she prayed. Because I thought this woman was a spiritual giant, I thought that when I grew up, I would also pinch my nose when I prayed. Sometimes I would even give it a try back then. I would sneak my fingers to my nose while everyone else had their eyes closed during a prayer.



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THANKFULNESS

Thankfulness and Pinched Noses

Jesus' disciples knew exactly where to go to learn to pray:

*It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place,
after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him,
"Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."
And He said to them, "When you pray, say:
'Father, hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation.'"
Matthew 6:9-13, NASB*

Evidently Jesus did not say anything that day about kneeling or folding hands or bowing heads or even pinching noses. Instead He taught His disciples that God was their Father and that they should talk to Him about their deepest needs. Paul later taught us to pray without ceasing while giving thanks in everything.

As we teach our children to pray, let's teach them the devotion and attitude God wants from their prayers.

*Devote yourselves to prayer,
keeping alert in it with an attitude
of thanksgiving;
Colossians 4:2, NASB*

CONTENTMENT

Holiday Prep

With holiday preparations fully under way, are you stressed yet?

For years we enjoyed hosting relatives, and often friends, too, on the Sunday before Thanksgiving Day. That meant that my stressful days were on the Saturday and Sunday before Thanksgiving. One year I was not only washing special dishes and cooking, I was also trying to get my house in more order following our many home improvement projects. My list was long.

I was up very, very late Saturday night, up briefly at 4:00 a.m. to put the turkey in the oven, and up at 6-ish to hit the ground running and bustle about until church time. As I walked across our ancient bedroom floor to the closet, I got a splinter in my foot. My feet were cold so I put one big fleece-lined clog on my unsplintered left foot, carried the heavy, bulky right clog, and hobbled very awkwardly down the stairs. It felt so weird. My left clog put that foot a lot higher off the ground than my right foot.



I was also trying to make sure that my right heel hit each stair just right so that I didn't land on my arch and push the splinter farther in. I felt like someone who had forgotten how to walk!

Our home improvement projects had given me the impetus to decorate for Christmas early. As I walked down the stairs, I noticed that the garland on the staircase had come apart. I was glad that, though the glass ball attached to that piece was hanging precariously, it had not broken. I held onto the dangling garland, while standing on the stairs like Diddle Diddle Dumpling with one shoe off and one shoe on, explaining to Ray that I needed a green twist tie to repair the garland and telling him where he could find the tweezers to get out the splinter.

Ray found the twist tie, while I kept holding on. I repaired the garland and hobbled to the bathroom where my sweet husband pulled out the splinter. I only thought I needed to hit the ground running. Sometimes we think we are going to run, not realizing that we need to hobble for a little while first.

*The mind of man plans his way.
But the Lord directs his steps.*

Proverbs 16:9 NASB

LOVE

Peaceful Tghianiknsg

This Thanksgiving devo sizzled on the back burner of my mind for a while before I wrote it. I hope I get it right and that it blesses you. That is my only intention. I long to be more like Jesus. He could say a few words in a parable and every open, listening heart was blessed.

I appreciate the homeschool mamas who have trusted me with your stories. My heart aches for those of you whose families are causing pain, especially as you head into the Thanksgiving and Christmas season. You and all the others in your situation are the reason for these thoughts.

I think most of us—probably all of us—long for a truly joyous experience during this wonderful time. We want so desperately to be with those we love and to share happy and peaceful times. We also want desperately for those we love to want to be with us—and to let us know that.

While some people will do whatever it takes to be with kith and kin, not everyone feels that way. So many things can get in the way. Sometimes it's parents who aren't together anymore. Sometimes it's a spouse who walked away. Sometimes it's relatives who still hurt so much from things that happened to them long ago that they simply don't know how to love us in a way that feels good and right. Sometimes it is mixed up priorities. Sometimes it's just plain selfishness. Sometimes we just don't know what is in the way of that love that we long for—we just know that something is. And sometimes our loved ones are doing the very best they can in their circumstances; and we would understand, if only we knew.

I well remember a holiday when one of my relatives had a mistaken view of the way I was taking care of a family responsibility. I tried and tried to make things right. I called. I texted. I emailed, but this person wouldn't even talk to me. I longed to be with this person's family one holiday, but we weren't invited. Even calls on that day were left unanswered. It was months before I was finally able to force a face-to-face meeting. As we talked that day, it seemed as if the scales fell off this person's eyes and I could finally be seen for who I really am. I know what it feels like for a precious holiday to be like the title to this blog—a Thanksgiving that is all mixed up.



*... sometimes our
loved ones are
doing the very best
they can in their
circumstances. ...*

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LOVE

Peaceful Tghianiknsg

Sometimes it's really hard to trust that God loves you when other people treat you in a way that says you aren't important, whether they are aware of what they are doing or whether they have no idea at all that they are doing it. It's especially hard when it is people who ought to know better. At times like that, it helps me to remember who hurt Jesus. It was the people who ought to have known better.

I pray that God will give you peace, that He will help you live these Thanksgiving holidays in a way that blesses others, and that He will help you open your eyes and heart to the love He has for you. You are the apple of His eye.



*Keep me as the apple of the eye;
Hide me in the shadow of Your wing.*

Psalm 17:8, NASB

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