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## Teachable Moments at the Thanksgiving Table

**FIVE KERNELS OF CORN PER DAY. THAT'S WHAT EACH PILGRIM HAD TO LIVE ON IN THE BRUTAL WINTER MONTHS OF 1621.**

No, not exactly! This legend began in the U.S. around the 1800's. But like so many good stories, there is a *kernel* of truth to the tale. (Pun intended!)

After celebrating an abundant harvest with the Wampanoag native peoples in 1621, the Pilgrims welcomed a ship from England, filled with 35 new colonists. The arriving colonists brought lots of smiles – but no extra food. Supplies quickly dwindled, especially when additional settlers arrived that winter. To avoid starvation in the years between 1622 and 1623, the fragile colony prayed to God, rationed their food, bartered with ship captains and native neighbors, harvested what they could, and hunted and fished for any edible creatures and plants in the wild. The governor of the colony, William Bradford, recorded that in 1623 the settlement had neither corn nor bread – sometimes for two or three months at a time – but he never wrote of a daily rationing of five kernels per person.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the historical inaccuracies, you can still use corn kernels as a symbol to teach your kids about gratefulness and God's provision. Barbara Rainey, of FamilyLife®, tells of a Thanksgiving tradition she started with her family.<sup>2</sup> First, she sets the table with only five kernels of corn on each plate. Next, her family reads a book about some of the joys and struggles of the Plymouth colonists. Then, they pass a small basket around the table five times. When the basket passes, each family member drops in a kernel of corn and says something for which he or she is thankful. Finally, the family holds hands and prays to thank God for His many blessings.

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Michael Scarbrough, from Awana® headquarters, remembers when his grandmother did a similar Thanksgiving activity with corn. She asked everyone to imagine surviving on only a few kernels of corn. Then she asked them to compare the corn pieces to the feast they were about to enjoy. Michael said this activity made him much more reflective and grateful for Thanksgiving dinner that year.

Would an activity like this work in your home? Whether you celebrate Thanksgiving

in October (Canada), November (U.S.A.) or at some other time, you can talk about your nation's history or the people in your community and the world today that suffer hunger. God has given us so much – let's use Thanksgiving to remind our children and ourselves to be grateful – AND generous!



<sup>1</sup>William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, edited by Samuel Eliot Morison, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY, 1952, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>Barbara Rainey, *Thanksgiving: A Time to Remember* Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2002, p. 55.

## Thanksgiving Traditions

We asked 10 parents of young children to tell us their Thanksgiving and Christmas traditions. (We noticed most of them had a lot more to say about Christmas, which made us think that parents might be in need of more creative, faith-filled traditions for Thanksgiving.) Beyond the food, the parades, the football and the “go-around-the-table-and-say-what-you’re-thankful-for” routine, here are a few ideas the parents told us:

“Our extended family gets together alone in a church. Each family member takes a turn expressing gratitude to God for something that happened over the past year. At home, we make turkey handprints or leaves out of construction paper, and the children write something for which they are thankful on their crafts.”

“Last year, my son and I read books from the library about the history behind Thanksgiving. As Cameron gets older, we would like to volunteer as a family at a local soup kitchen.”

“On each of the six days before Thanksgiving, we focus on a different theme: God’s Word, protection, freedom, health, salvation and provision. Each family member writes (or says) one thing he or she is thankful for that relates to that theme. Last year, for the “health” category, my son said he was thankful he didn’t get swine flu! Every year we look over the list from the previous year and marvel at God’s goodness. We usually send thank-you cards to individuals during this time too.”



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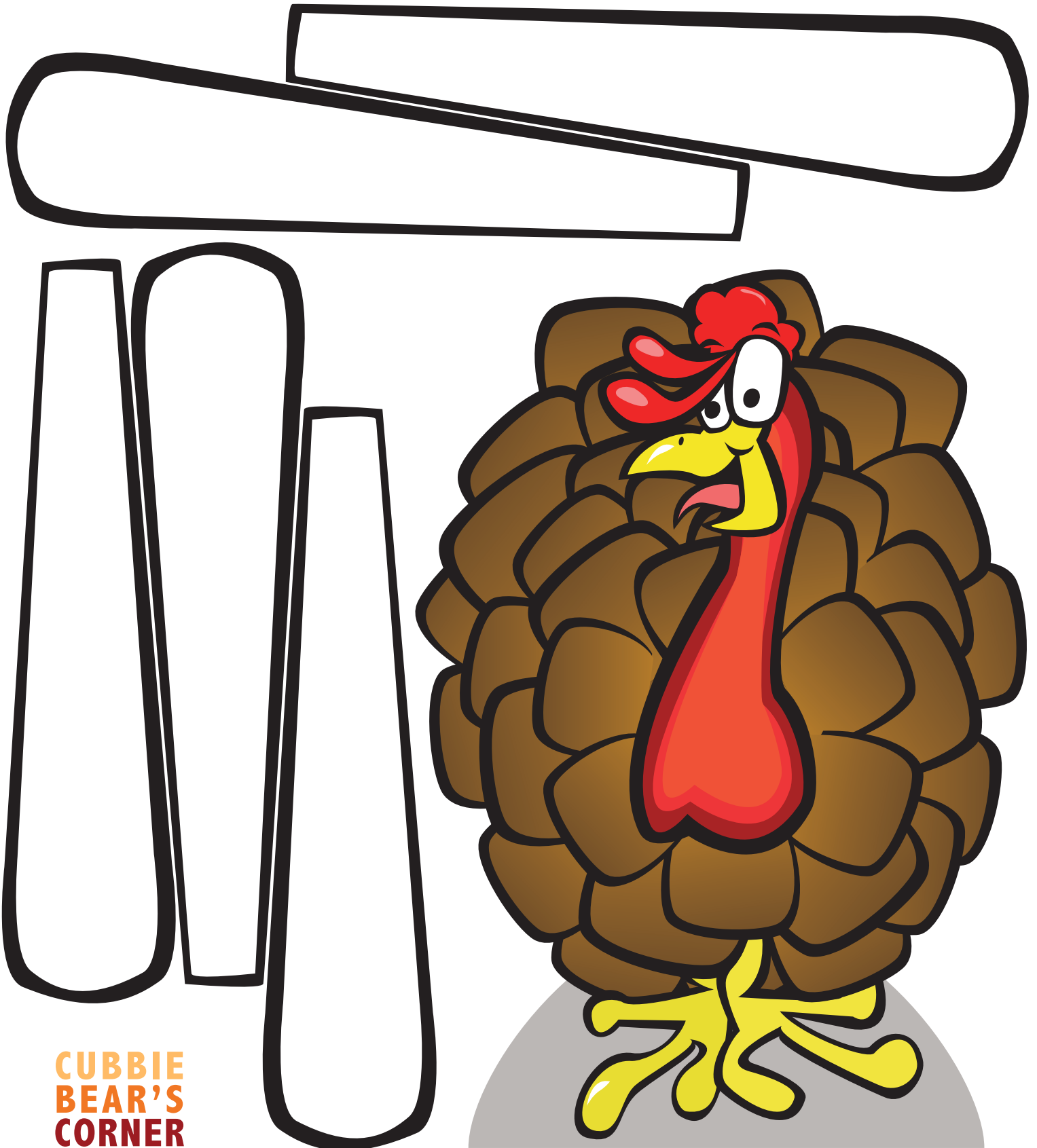
## I N Q U I R I N G M I N D S

By now, you can tell that your preschool child loves to ask questions – especially questions about God. Here’s a typical question and a way you might answer it.

**Question:** Who created God?

**Answer:** No one created God. God has always been alive. He was the first person to start creating things; and He is the only person who can make something from nothing. Can you make something from nothing? (Ask your child to name some things she makes. Help her identify the materials she starts with. For example, she needs crayons to make a picture.)

**Directions:** Photocopy this picture onto sturdy paper. You or your child can cut out the turkey and feathers. For each feather, ask your child to name something for which he is thankful. Write his answers on the feathers, or ask him to draw pictures of his answers. Glue the feathers on the turkey. After the glue dries, attach an empty bathroom tissue roll to the back of the turkey and stand it upright as a table centerpiece.



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**November 2010**

Inspiration and ideas for parents of preschoolers

## Our Club News