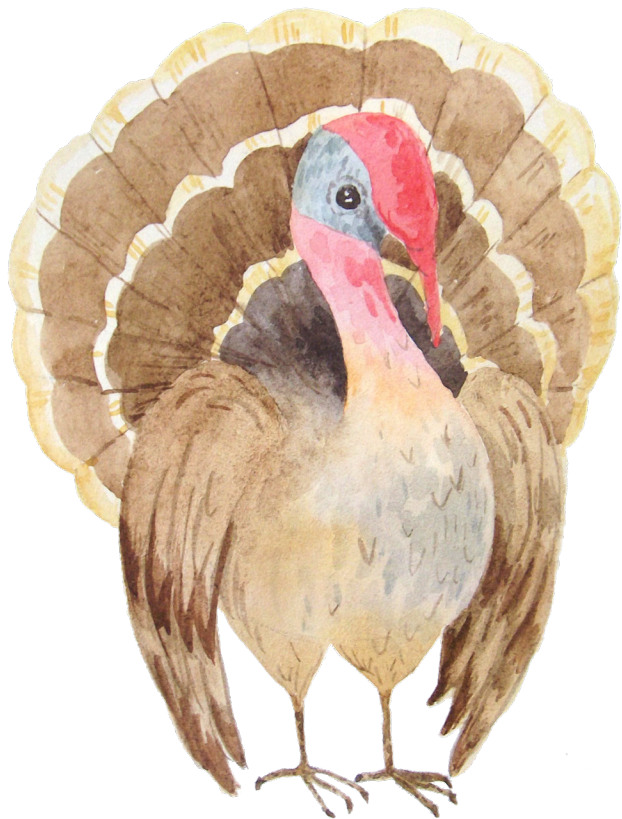


Thanks- Giving

for Your Whole Family

Your Guide to an
Intentional Month of:

- Generosity
- Kindness
- Service
- Encouragement
- Family Fun!



Life, Abundantly

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Welcome Friend!

I am so so so excited that you have found Thanks-GIVING For Your Whole Family! The fall months and the holiday season have always been near and dear to my heart. I love the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings- cool crisp air, pumpkin pie scented candles, marshmallow-loaded hot cocoa, a crackling fire, and all of my loved ones close at hand.

I've always felt challenged by the month of November. October is always filled with festivities related to the freshly-cooling weather and pumpkin-everything! And of course, we never gloss over December, because: **Christmas**. But I think November (and Thanksgiving) truly deserve their own due attention in our hearts for several reasons!

In it's own right, the Thanksgiving holiday is a time to really reflect upon what the early American settlers faced in their hardships to win political and religious freedom as well as what the Native Americans endured as all of the world begun to flock into their hidden land. ***But in the midst of all the many trials in that season of life- commonality, decency, and service took root and flourished among strangers. Peace reigned.***

I think the fact that we have a month of Thanks-GIVING preceding the month we celebrate the birth of our Savior is the perfect opportunity to carve out space in our hearts to enter into a month of absolute awe and worship.

Nothing makes space in our hearts like gratitude. In the pages that follow, I am going to detail the heart behind this "unit study" of sorts. But first, I'd like to give you an overview of everything that's included:

- Month of Thanks-GIVING Guide
- Month of Thanks-GIVING Daily Plan
- Month of Thanks-GIVING Ideas

What is a Month of Thanks-GIVING?

November is traditionally the month that we give thanks... and it's become quite the trend on Facebook to post one thing each day that you're thankful for all through November. I think this is a fun way to reflect on all of our blessings as we approach the holiday season. However, the Lord has recently placed something on my heart that I would like to begin as a tradition (and CHALLENGE!) for my family. It's a tradition/challenge that I'd like to share and would be blessed for you to join us!

This year, rather than take 30 seconds and think of a thing I can SAY thanks for each day, I'd like to take time {real time} to reflect on a way to GIVE THANKS. The Lord GAVE His only begotten son so that we may have everlasting life. As we walk through November, we have an opportunity to create space for truly worshiping this gift by focusing on GIVING good gifts ourselves.

Here's the plan: each week of November will have a theme of giving. We will give our Attention, our Service, our Compassion, and our Gifts.

Week 1: Our Attention

Draw near, O nations, to hear, and give attention, O peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. (Isaiah 34:1)

God commands our attention. He gave us life, a home, a family, food, eternal salvation and grace... He gives A LOT. He also gives us attention. Every single time we bow our head or groan in frustration or sing a song of worship, He is there- listening, answering, going before us. He never fails to attend to us, perfectly and justly, and, in response, he asks for us to GIVE ATTENTION.

Give attention to HIM, His Word, His Son, His Will, His Plan, His Earth, His Children, His Church. He doesn't want passive service and empty words... He wants our ATTENTION. So let's give it.

THE CHALLENGE: Each of these 7 days should be about intentional thoughtfulness and focus. One challenge would be to begin each day with 10-15 minutes of attention ONLY on the Lord and His Word. Let's start our day with prayer and worship, without distraction, even if we have to get up an hour early to get this time to ourselves. He gives us EVERYTHING, so let's give Him our attention, first thing- right where He belongs.

We all have people, things, or areas in our lives that we push to the back burner. Maybe it's distant relatives, old friends, our husbands, our hallway closet- whatever it is that you IGNORE, be intentional. Make a plan to have one thing/person/place each day that you give your attention to. Call your grandma, give your husband a back rub or give your dog a bath.

Let's give attention to those things/people in your life that are there because God blessed us with them.

Even if it's just about being a more focused, involved parent... let's be intentional. Shut off facebook, pinterest, whatever else and give our undivided attention where it belongs.

Giving our ATTENTION to the people, places and things God has placed into our lives tells Him THANK YOU for these blessings.

Week 2: Our Service

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. John 13: 12-17

It's certainly no secret that Jesus was a servant-leader. He inspired those around him into following him not through commands, shouting, intimidation or fear, but through SERVICE. He healed, he encouraged, he taught, he WASHED FEET.

He came from Heaven into the dirt of a stable and began a life of SERVICE to all of those around him. He died in service of OUR sins.

THE CHALLENGE: This week is about serving others. You may say "Hey! I'm a wife/mom/whatever and I SERVE people all day long!" That may be true, and likely is, however... where are our hearts when we serve? Are we doing just what we can to get by? Are we serving others with resentment or anger? Are we feeling unrecognized and under-appreciated? Are we gritting our teeth and white-knuckling it? OR are we serving with a humble heart out of worship to our Father? Are we taking the time to LOVE and serve those who have no one to LOVE them? Are we sitting with the widow or holding the orphan?

Personally, I fall more into the grumpy/selfish servant more times than not. Let's challenge ourselves to SERVE others for these 7 days.

- » Can we find a nursing home to visit and bless those who have no one?
- » Can we volunteer to help the single mom down the street have the night to herself?
- » Can we feed your baby and tame your toddler with a Joy-Filled heart because they are there and healthy and alive and precious?

Can we step outside of our day-to-day hustle and mess to find another of God's children that our experiences and talents and presence could bless immensely? Let's be creative! In what way can we be a Do-er of the Word and not just a Hearer?

Week 3: Our Compassion

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothes yourselves with compassion... Colossians 3:12

How much are we blessed when we're having a rotten day and someone looks passed our disheveled grump to tells us that we look beautiful? What about those crazy trips to Target with insane toddlers having meltdown and someone stops to tell us that we are doing a good job? How much does an encouraging word, of compassion rather than judgment, lift your mood and change the direction of your day?

THE CHALLENGE: As the children of God- the Body of Christ- we are to clothe ourselves with compassion. When we look upon one another with compassion, empathy and understanding, we stop judging one another and look for a way to lift each other up. We become encouragers!

As mothers/wives, our MISSION is to encourage those God has gifted to us to live boldly for Christ. We are to encourage them in their walk with God... speaking words of LIFE, FAITH and LOVE into their hearts.

Some of us are natural encouragers and others are not. For me personally, it's not a strong suit. I can be naturally pessimistic and see what needs "improvement" rather than note all that's already been accomplished. AND sometimes, the only time I give the encouragement is to soften the criticism *palm to face*.

This week, I will be praying for the words my children and husband crave to hear from me... just the good, just the joy, just the "GREAT JOB!" and a high-five. No if, ands, or buts. Sometimes our children need our correction, but more often than not, they simply crave our compassion, praise, and encouragement. Let's pour it on- for our children, our husbands, our neighbors, our friends, our SISTERS.

Week 4: Our Gifts

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in it's various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

We all have different gifts that God has blessed us with... it's what makes us a unique and COMPLETE body. This week, after we have THANKED GOD with our attention, service and encouragement, let's Thanks-Give with our gifts and talents. This could be financially or it could be a physical talent.

THE CHALLENGE: Can you sing? You could visit that nursing home and perform. Are you a teacher? How about you start that Bible Study you've been thinking about.

We have all been stitched together in such a way, in such a place, and at such a time, specifically to perform duties that will fulfill God's purposes for us- all the while glorifying Him.

What special things has God woven into the fabric of your being that you can share with others? What has He woven into your children that they could learn to utilize to bring Him glory and to bless others?

Now would be a great time to take a spiritual giftings test or discuss our children's gifts with them. Let's take this time to demonstrate to them how we can use all that God has blessed us with (physically, spiritually, emotionally and financially) to show His love to the world around us.

In closing

God is a big GIVER. Give is the verb of the Bible, as recently stated by our Pastor during his series on generosity. Thanks-GIVING need not be about lip-service to those in our lives. Thanks-GIVING should be about GIVING in response to our Thanks. It should be our worship.

Not just on paper, but in our hearts, with our hands, out in the world. Like Jesus. He wasn't just a guy on paper.. he was all heart, using his hands, out in the world. He GAVE it all, he served, he encouraged, he attended. He is our Master and our model. For 30 days, let's really GIVE.

Your family Plan

So what now? I hope you're feeling encouraged and inspired to join our family in preparing our hearts for the joy, praise, and busyness of December with a month of joy-centered giving in November. Here's all you will need to do:

- » Print the next page (daily plans) which includes the outline of each week's focus.
- » You can place this on your fridge or any other convenient location.
- » Look through the suggestions I've shared on that page.
- » As a family, decide which ones you would like to do. You obviously don't have to do them all!
- » Below, I'm also including space for your own ideas!
- » Go to lifeabundantlyblog.com/lifeabundantlyblog/smored to download your S'Mored packet! (see Day 24)
- » Optional: Print the blank leaf page after the calendar. Use these to record a daily gratitude and hang in a window, over the mantle, or on a gratitude tree.
- » Optional: Use the leaves as "coins" that your children earn for each unprompted act of generosity or kindness. Develop your own system of reward or value for each "leaf coin".

Our Family's Ideas for Attention + Service + Compassion + Gifts

Your Thanks-Giving November // Day-to-Day

Week 1: Our Attention

Day 1- Make your plans for the week, collecting any supplies that are needed.

Day 2- Challenge yourself to begin the daily habit of time in God's Word.

Day 3- Choose a person or project, as a family to attend to today.

Day 4- Who might be feeling overlooked in your family? Give that person special attention today.

Day 5- What's one decision you could make today to attend to your health better?

Day 6- Is there a space in your home that is crying out for your attention? Take some time to de-clutter and donate.

Day 7- Whoever it is that you may be avoiding- seek that person out today and make amends.

Week 2: Our Service

Day 8- Make your plans for the week, collecting any supplies you might need.

Day 9- Heart Check: Is your service to your family Christ-driven or is there something else (like anxiety, fear, or comparison)?

Day 10- Choose a person or project to serve as a family today.

Day 11- Do you serve as a member of your church? If not, seek out a way to serve in your Church in the coming month.

Day 12- Choose a single mom or widow to shower with love today.

Day 13- Visit a nursing home or Children's hospital to share small gifts.

Day 14- Pray for God to show you one special area that you need to focus on serving in today.

Week 3: Our Compassion

Day 15- Make your plans for the week, collecting any supplies you might need.

Day 16- Find one person to speak an extra helping of kinds words to.

Day 17- Do a pre-Christmas purge and donate any good quality items to a local charity.

Day 18- Have your family create cards to hand out to your church family.

Day 19- Write an encouraging letter to a family or friend who is too far away to visit.

Day 20- Spend time with a friend who may not be looking forward to the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons.

Day 21- How can you show an extra measure of compassion to your children today?

Week 4: Our Gifts

(Omit whichever day Thanksgiving falls on this year.)

Day 22- Make your plans for the week, collecting any supplies you might need.

Day 23- Plan to skip Black Friday and look for ways to serve the homeless community in your area.

Day 23- Give a special offering to your church if you are able.

Day 24- Create "S'Mored Baskets" and deliver to surprise a friend.

Day 25- Do you have a neighbor who would be delighted to receive a fresh batch of cookies?

Day 26- Plan ahead to spend some time caroling this Christmas season at a local nursing home or fire/police department.

Day 27- Do a spiritual gift inventory with your family.

Day 28- Spend some time in prayer, asking God to reveal your particular talents, and ask Him for ways you can share those with others.

