

Where Do I Put the Pilgrims?

by Janet Denison

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Parents have a rough November these days. Nothing excites our kids more than Christmas. I was watching the television and saw the ad for the Toys R Us “Great Big Book of Awesome.” It came out while the trick or treaters were counting their Snickers bars! How wound up, distracted, and impatient are kids going to be? December 25th is still a long way off, especially if you are a child. And where does Thanksgiving fit it? Pilgrims and Christmas trees just don’t belong together.

Toys R Us just called it the “Big Book” when my boys were young. It came out the Sunday after Thanksgiving in those days. I used to tell my boys to put initials by their top ten most-wished-for toys. They spend most of Sunday afternoon laying on the floor, side by side, pencils in hand, putting initials by their favorite toys. They knew that they had to keep the prices in mind and not choose too many expensive items. They figured out that if they each chose the same thing, it was one less toy in the house. So they planned to share, making the book much more of an event.

If my boys had looked over that book while snacking on Halloween candy, I’m not sure they would have wanted what was under the tree by Christmas. They thought those four weeks seemed like an eternity. I don’t know if their spirit of sharing would have survived eight or nine.

What are you going to do to make certain your kids have a Thanksgiving celebration amidst the premature Christmas rush? The first Christmas celebrated didn't occur until AD 336, and Easter became an official church holiday around AD 325. But the Bible teaches us to "give thanks" from Genesis forward.

So consider a few ways to help keep Thanksgiving front and center during the month of November.

- Buy an age-appropriate book about Thanksgiving. Read it or, if old enough, have your children read it and talk about why the pilgrims wanted to give thanks . . . and why they should want to do the same.
- Google information about the first American Thanksgiving and make sure your kids understand the historical facts.
- Make or buy a pumpkin pie and deliver it to someone who has been kind to your family this year.
- Memorize a verse each week about being thankful to God for our blessings.
- Let the kids help get the house ready, the table set, and the food prepared (even though it will probably really slow you down to ask them!) They will be more likely to celebrate the holiday if they have helped to prepare for it.
- Consider asking a college student to share your holiday. Often students, especially those from other countries, are left in the dorm over the holiday because they can't afford to go home twice and choose to wait until Christmas.
- Let your kids make the plan for how to accommodate the company. Hopefully, they will choose to give up their space if someone else needs it.
- And use the month of November to help them earn some money for Christmas gift giving. They can wash potatoes, make beds, vacuum, and rake leaves. They will feel good about using their own money to buy gifts for their family.

Thanksgiving is getting buried under piles of tinsel and lights. Slow down the Christmas hype and help your children celebrate an important American holiday—and an important spiritual holiday. Psalm 107:1 says, "*Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!*" That Great Big Awesome book can wait. Three weeks from now, when you bow your heads to pray over the Thanksgiving turkey, sneak a peek at your kids. If they are truly thankful to God in those moments, you will be too.