Date: 11/23/19

Title: Thanksgiving Mystery Word

Theme: It is good to give thanks to God for His goodness and keep Him at the center of our lives.

Object: Giant letters spelling the word PILGRIMS, each letter to be held up by a child.

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NKJV) 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

This verse tells us to give thanks in everything.

Can anyone guess why I chose this verse for today?

What holiday is coming up next week? (Thanksgiving!!! My favorite holiday! A day devoted to giving thanks to God!)

We need to give thanks to God on Thanksgiving, but we also need to make every day a day for giving thanks to God.

Today, in honor of Thanksgiving, we have a “mystery word challenge.”

I’m going to tell you the story of the first Thanksgiving, and each part of the story has a letter that goes along with it.

The letters spell out a mystery word, and when you think you know the mystery word, put up your hand.

Our first letter is “S.” Who wants to hold up the letter “S” for me?

The story of Thanksgiving begins many years ago in England, a country thousands of miles away across the Atlantic Ocean. In England, King James I said that everyone had to belong to the same church: the Church of England. Now there were some people who didn’t think the Church of England was obeying what was written in the Bible and they wanted to form a separate church that would follow God’s word. These people were called Separatists. “S” is for Separatists.

Our next letter is “R.” The Separatists were persecuted in England. Some lost their jobs and some were thrown in jail. So a group of separatists moved to Holland to try to find religious freedom. They didn’t like Holland very much, so they decided to come to America to find Religious Freedom. “R” is for Religious freedom.

Our next letter is “M.” And so a group of Separatists, 101 in all, set sail from England to find religious freedom in America. Does anyone know the name of the ship they sailed on? The Mayflower. “M” is for Mayflower.

Our next letter is “P.” The Mayflower sailed from Plymouth, England in September 1620 and arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts in December of 1620. The colony they established there was Plymouth colony. And they even had a rock called Plymouth Rock. “P” is for Plymouth.

Our next letter is “I.” The first winter in America was very hard for the colonists. They didn’t have proper food and shelter, and they didn’t know how to live in this new land. There were no stores where they could buy things they needed. So many of the colonists got ill and died.   
By April of 1621 almost half of the colonists had died. “I” is for illness.

Our next letter is also “I.” We can thank God that the Mayflower landed where there were friendly Indians. The Indians taught the colonists how to fish and hunt and plant corn. The Indians taught the colonists how to survive in America. “I” is for Indians.

Our next letter is “G.” The first summer in America was a good one. And by the fall, they had a great harvest. They had 20 acres of Indian corn. So in the autumn of 1621, the governor of Plymouth colony proclaimed a 3-day feast. They invited all their Indian friends and had lots of good food. The colonists thanked God that He had given them such a good harvest. “G” is for God. God should always be at the center of our Thanksgiving.

Well, that’s the story of the first Thanksgiving. But I have one more letter here. Thanksgiving didn’t become a national holiday until 1863 when president Lincoln established the last Thursday in November as a day for prayer and giving of thanks to God. So our last letter is “L” for Lincoln.

Now can anyone guess the mystery word? Maybe its all scrambled up? [Unscramble to spell PILGRIMS]

The mystery word is Pilgrims! The Separatists who left England and became colonists in America are called Pilgrims.

Because of their love for God the Pilgrims were willing to leave their homes and come to this country so they could worship God according to the Bible.

The most important thing about a Pilgrim is the “G” in the middle.

God is at the center of a Pilgrim’s life.

I hope that you will be like a Pilgrim and put God at the center of your life.

And Thanksgiving is a great time to remember that that’s just where God belongs.

How many would like to have Jesus right here in their hearts today?