

## **HORN OF THANKS**

Cover a large bulletin board with a colorful horn of plenty drawn on butcher paper. Encourage the kids to write thank-you notes to anyone in the group. The thank-you note may be to other kids in the group or to leaders. Each thank-you note should be placed in an envelope with the recipient's name on the outside and tacked to the horn of plenty. The kids should watch the board for notes addressed to them. (Note: Make sure that everyone in the group receives a note.) You might have an evening meeting where the kids write thank-you notes to everyone in the group. There are a lot of options, but one thing is for sure . . . we all like to feel like people are glad we're around.

## **IN EVERYTHING, GIVE THANKS**

For a special program on giving thanks to God for everything, invite a Christian to come to your group meeting who is obviously handicapped in some way

(blind, confined to a wheelchair, etc.). Then interview him or her before the group, asking questions similar to these:

1. Many Christians believe that we should thank God for our troubles or for bad things that happen. How do you feel about this?
2. What have you found to be thankful for in the midst of your own suffering with your handicap?
3. What is the best thing God has done for you? What is the thing for which you are most thankful?
4. What is the hardest thing that you have found to give thanks to God for? Are there things that you have found you cannot really thank God for?

After the interview, give the group some time to question your guest, then give each person in the group the following questions. Ask them to work through these questions on their own.

1. Are there things in my life that I have found difficult to thank God for? Can I thank him now for those things?
2. Complete this sentence: When someone thanks me for something, I feel . . .
3. When was the last time that you thanked someone for something?
4. Make a list of some things that you need to thank God for.
5. Make a list of people whom you need to thank for something.

This exercise can then be followed up with some small group sharing or by a time of commitment. Focus on our need to be more grateful for the many things we take for granted in life or don't feel very thankful for.

## **MY REASONS FOR THANKSGIVING**

Give each person a pencil and paper. On the paper should be printed the words: MY REASONS FOR THANKSGIVING. If you can't print it ahead of time, have each person write it across the top of the page. Then have each person write down as many things as he can think of that he is thankful for—using only the letters in the statement at the top of the page. No letter may be used more times than it appears in the statement. Set a time limit of around ten minutes. It makes a fun game but also a good discussion starter on the topic of giving thanks.

## **TURKEY TEST**

To get a few groans (or gobbles) from your kids, give them this little Thanksgiving quiz:

1. What part of the turkey is like a story?
2. Why is a glutton like a turkey?
3. What part of a turkey is like part of a sentence?
4. What part of the turkey does the farmer watch most anxiously?
5. What part of the turkey do you keep on the dressing table?
6. What part of the turkey makes the most noise?
7. What are the turkey's last clothes?

### **Answers:**

1. The tail.
2. He gobbles.
3. The claws.
4. The crop.
5. The comb.
6. The drumstick.
7. His dressing.

## **PSALM OF THANKSGIVING**

Here's a good creative worship idea that would be most effective at Thanksgiving. Of course, it could be used any other time of the year as well. Have your group meet in small groups and study Psalm 136. They will readily see the repetitious pattern that exists. Point out that in the first nine verses, the psalmist thanks God for the great things he has done for all mankind, and the remainder of the psalm gives thanks for particular actions of God that the Israelites and David would be especially thankful for.

Now challenge each youth to write a statement of thankfulness for one thing he is glad God has done. Combine all the statements and a short psalm will have been created. Later on, in the worship service, have a representative (a good loud reader) from each small group be ready with his group's psalm in hand. Begin with someone leading the congregation in a responsive reading of the first nine verses of Psalm 136. The leader will read the first half of each verse, and the congregation will respond, "for his steadfast love endures for ever" (RSV). At the conclusion of the first nine verses go right into the psalms you've recently composed. Have each group reader read one line from his group's psalm with the congregation continuing to respond in the same way. Rotate among the readers until all the psalms are complete. Having the readers stand in various parts of the room will create an effective antiphonal reading.

## **THANK-YOU NOTES TO GOD**

Young people are often much better at writing their thoughts down than expressing them verbally. This written exercise would be excellent at Thanksgiving, Christmas, or any other time you want to give kids a chance to thank God for his many gifts to us.

Go to a stationery store and pick up a box of "thank-you" cards or note paper, and have the kids write out a thank-you letter to God. You might want to do this following a time of meditation or Bible reading that focuses in on the generous giving nature of God. After the letters have been written, allow the kids to read them aloud if they feel comfortable doing so.