

# *the* *Thanksgiving* *Reader*



For more information, visit  
[www.TheThanksgivingReader.com](http://www.TheThanksgivingReader.com)

# Thanksgiving

## The Best Holiday of the Year

This is a holiday about gratitude, about family and about possibility. It brings people together to not only celebrate the end of the harvest, but to look one in another in the eye and share something magical.

I'm hoping that this year, you and your family will help us start a new holiday tradition.

The idea is simple: At your Thanksgiving celebration (and yes, it's okay to use it outside the US), consider going around the table and having each person read a section aloud.

Before the meal starts, all you need to do is put one page on each person's chair and follow the simple steps.

During the ten or fifteen minutes your family spends reading together, millions of people will all be reading the same words, thinking about the same issues, connecting with each other over the essence of what we celebrate.

After all the travel and the cooking and the hassle, for these few minutes, perhaps we can all breathe the same air and think hard about what we're thankful for.

Thank you for being part of this, something bigger than each of us.



**The Thanksgiving Reader was created by Seth Godin. Art Direction:** Alex Miles Younger.

**Special thanks to** Casper Ter Tuile, Chelsea Sukhov, Gretchen Rubin, Susan Piver, Dan Pink, Pamela Slim, Anne Marie Miller, Niki Papadopoulos, Arianna Huffington, Kevin Kelly, Anne Kreamer, Brian Koppelman, Liz Danzico, Debbie Millman, Willie Jackson, Wes Kao, Helene Godin and you & your family.

Images: Viintage.com and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Pomological Watercolor Collection. Rare and Special Collections, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD 20705

# *A note to the host:*

**This Thanksgiving Reader is designed to be read, out loud, together.**

Some of the readings are for individuals, some are for pairs (responsive), some are for the entire group as one. You don't have to hand out all of the readings, and we've included a range of topics here.

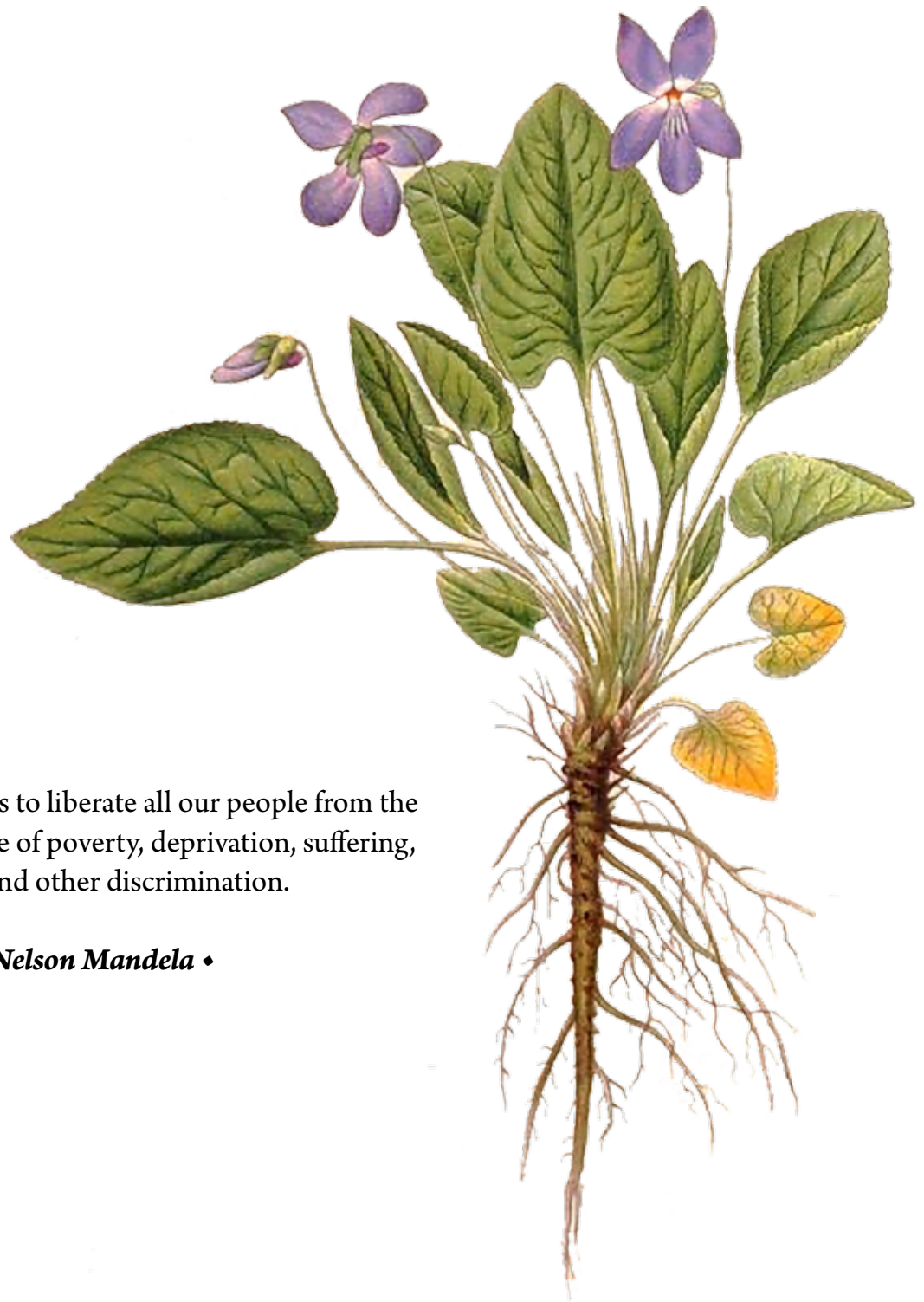
Of course, if you have something you'd like to add, please do!

Every family deserves its own tradition.



*Put one reading on each person's seat.*

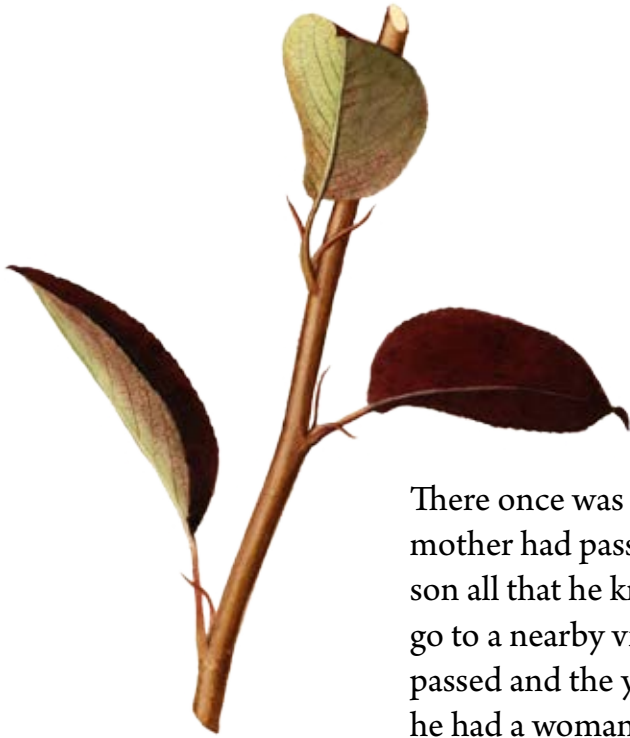
**[The next 17 pages are the readings]**



We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination.

♦ *Nelson Mandela* ♦





There once was a man, who was raising his young son. The mother had passed away in childbirth and he was teaching his son all that he knew. This son, grew up and in time wanted to go to a nearby village and find him a companion. Many months passed and the young man returned to his home, and with him he had a woman, his wife. They lived in the home of his father.

Shortly after, they had a son. And the father, now a grandfather, began teaching this young boy all that he knew: how to respect the forest, the animals and life. The mother, tiring of sharing her home with the old man, told her husband that she wanted the old man out.

The father spoke "I cannot; this is his home and he built it for us." She spoke, "If you do not make him leave then I will take our son and I will leave." The father agreed and spoke to his son. "My son, tomorrow I want you to take Grandpa out and leave him. Give him this blanket." The young boy cried. "Why do you do this? Grandpa has been teaching me all that I know. Why do I have to do this to him?" The father spoke. "Son, follow the wishes of your father." So the next morning, the father went hunting to the North. The son took Grandpa as far as he could walk to the South.

That evening the young boy was sitting on the bed crying when his father came in. He saw the blanket on the bed. "Son, I thought I told you to give Grandpa the blanket?" "I gave Grandpa half of the blanket. The other half, I will give to you some day." The mother and father understood the message. And they went and brought Grandpa back.



You can't carve up the world.  
It's not a pie.

• *Patti Smith* •

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life.

It turns what we have into enough, and more.

It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity.

It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. It turns problems into gifts, failures into successes, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important events.

It can turn an existence into a real life, and disconnected situations into important and beneficial lessons. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.

♦ *Melody Beattie* ♦





There is so much to be thankful for each day.

Today we take the time to pause and acknowledge this special season of harvest and its traditions of sharing with those less fortunate.

We take time to notice the labor of others, from farm to table, that culminates in this feast.

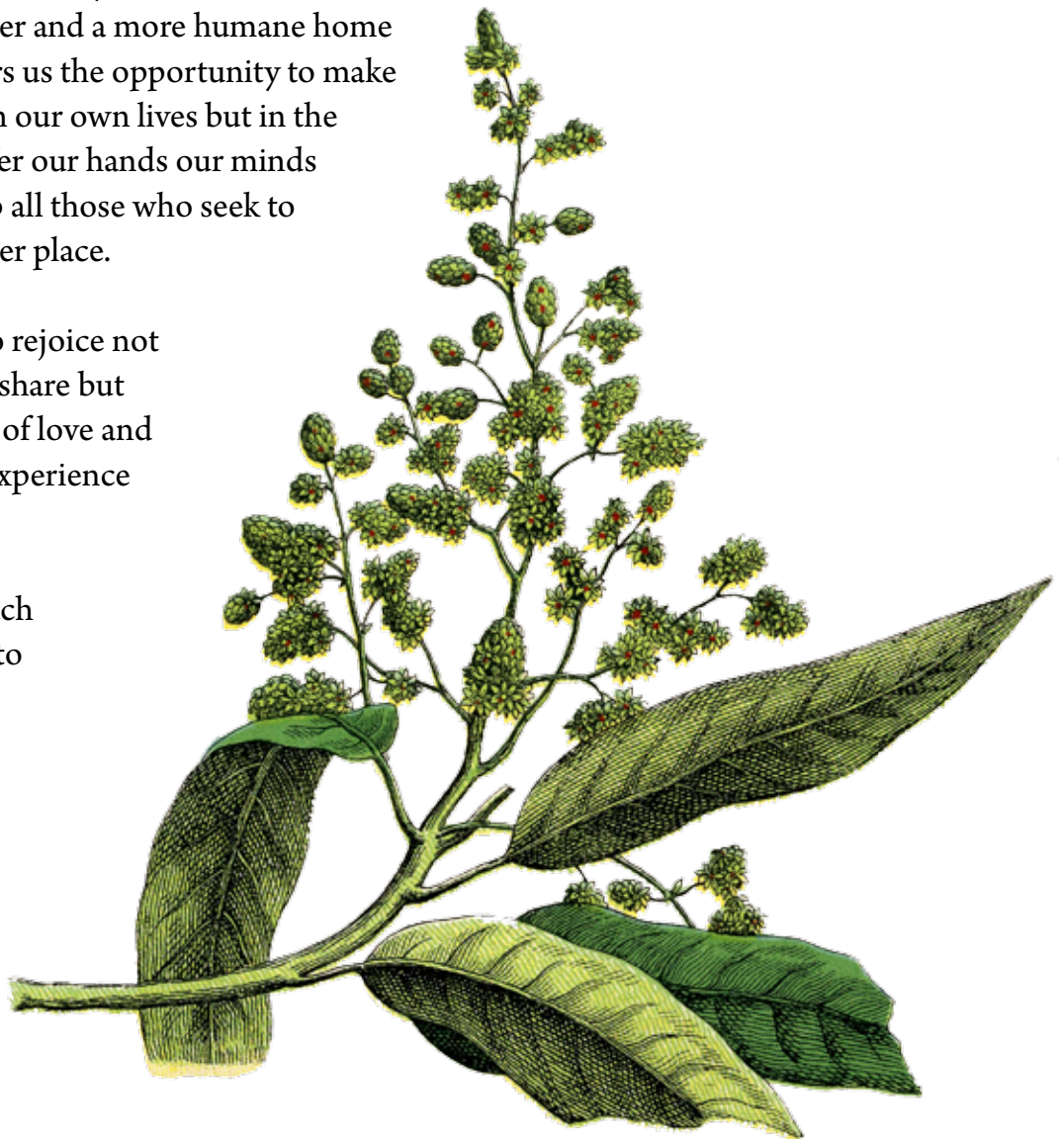
Today we pause to recognize how fortunate we are and to be grateful for the bounty we share with friends, family and loved ones, be they with us or far away.

We take pause to celebrate that we each can and do make meaning for our own lives; by the deeds we do, to make the world a better and a more humane home for all. Every day offers us the opportunity to make a difference not just in our own lives but in the lives of others. We offer our hands our minds and our hearts to help all those who seek to make the world a better place.

Today we take time to rejoice not just with the food we share but also the give and take of love and compassion that we experience each day.

We are Thankful to each of you for being here to share today with us.

♦ **Rebecca Hale** ♦





*This is a responsive reading, it's on two different sheets, you and someone else alternate, you read the bold lines.*

**Live your life that the fear of death can never enter your heart.**

Trouble no one about his religion.

**Respect others in their views and demand that they respect yours.**

Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life.

**Seek to make your life long and of service to your people.**

Prepare a noble death song for the day when you go over the great divide.

**Always give a word or sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, or even a stranger, if in a lonely place.**

Show respect to all people, but grovel to none.

**When you rise in the morning, give thanks for the light, for your life, for your strength.**

Give thanks for your food and for the joy of living.

**If you see no reason to give thanks, the fault lies in yourself.**

♦ *Tecumseh, Shawnee* ♦



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***As I Walk with Beauty***

As I walk, as I walk  
The universe is walking with me  
In beauty it walks before me  
In beauty it walks behind me  
In beauty it walks below me  
In beauty it walks above me  
Beauty is on every side

♦ ***Traditional Navajo Prayer*** ♦





This food is the gift of the whole universe—the earth, the sky, and  
much hard work.  
May we live in a way that makes us worthy to receive it.  
May we transform our unskillful states of mind, especially our greed.  
May we take only foods that nourish us and prevent illness.  
We accept this food so that we may realize the path of practice.

♦ *Traditional, via Thich Naht Hanh* ♦





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two different sheets, you and someone  
else alternate, you read the bold lines.*

**Thank you for teaching me how to love.**

Thank you for teaching me not to be afraid, or to be afraid and to live anyway.

**Thank you for showing me what is possible.**

Thank you for teaching me to care.

**Thank you for helping me become confident enough that I didn't need your help  
(now, I only *want* your help.)**

Thank you for showing me that I'm worth it.

**Thank you for letting me help you.**

Thank you for letting me sit with me fear, so that I could learn to live.

**Thank you for being there when being alone just wasn't enough.**





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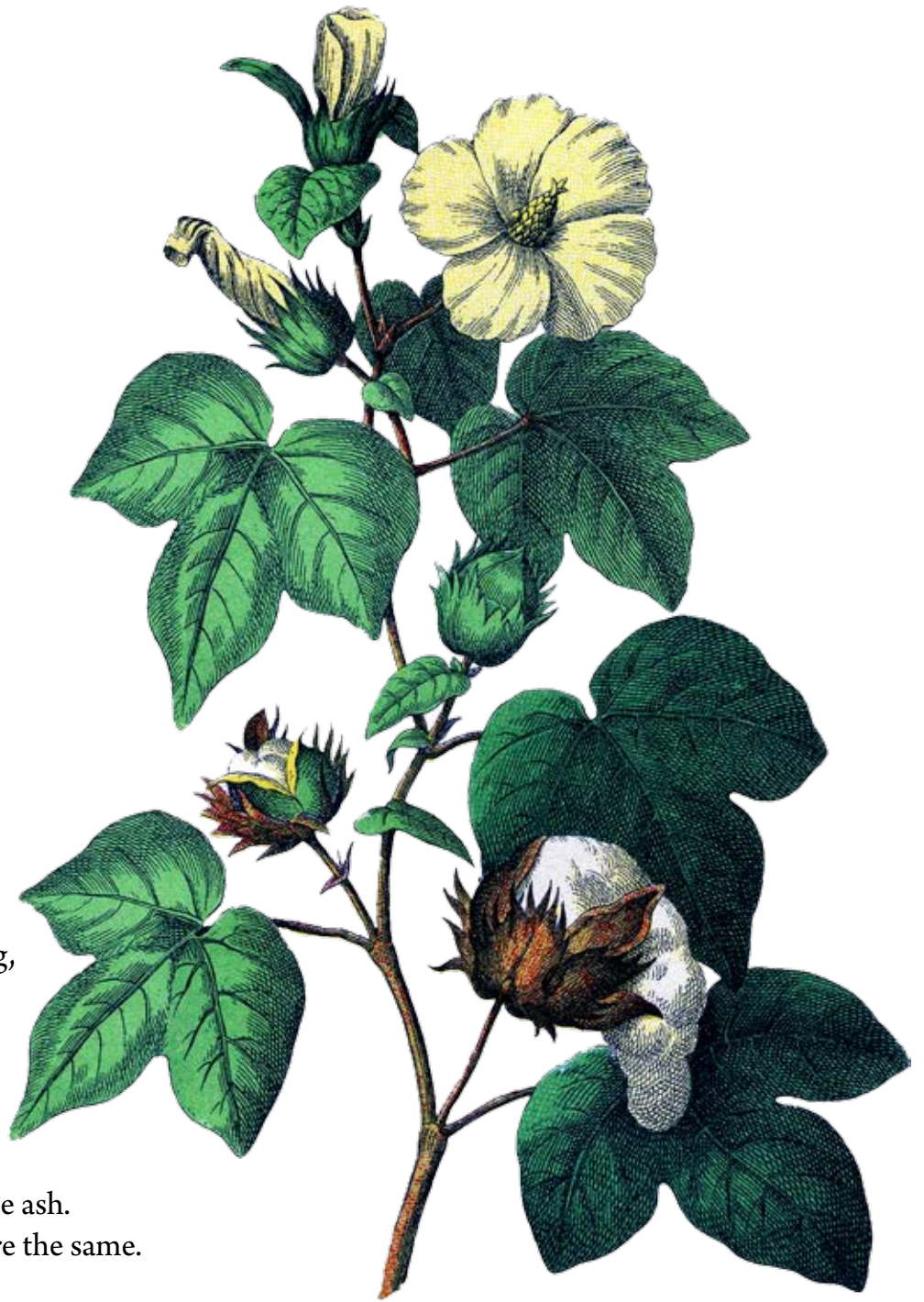
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*"It goes without saying,"*  
they say.  
Without expressing  
simple joy  
anxiety  
gratitude  
flusteredness  
love  
anger!  
or thanks.  
It just goes without saying,  
most of the time  
and we go  
looking  
watching  
waiting  
not noticing the oak or the ash.  
The marks in the leaves are the same.  
Right?  
Anyway,  
no one is saying anyway.



But what if it went *with* saying.  
They'd say,  
*"It goes with saying."*  
And we might say,  
thanks.



### ***The Messenger***

My work is loving the world.  
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird—equal seekers of sweetness.  
Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.  
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.  
Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?  
Am I no longer young, and still not half-perfect?  
Let me keep my mind on what matters, which is my work,  
which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished.  
The phoebe, the delphinium. The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.  
Which is mostly rejoicing, since all ingredients are here,  
which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart  
and these body-clothes, a mouth with which to give shouts of joy to the moth  
and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam, telling them all,  
over and over, how it is that we live forever.

♦ ***Mary Oliver*** ♦



***Thanksgiving Day Prayer***

For the wide sky and the blessed sun,  
For the salt sea and the running water,  
For the everlasting hills  
And the never-resting winds,  
For trees and the common grass underfoot.  
We thank you for our senses  
By which we hear the songs of birds,  
And see the splendor of the summer fields,  
And taste of the autumn fruits,  
And rejoice in the feel of the snow,  
And smell the breath of the spring.  
Grant us a heart wide open to all this beauty.

♦ ***Walter Rauschenbusch*** ♦







### ***On Friendship***

And a youth said, Speak to us of Friendship.  
And he answered, saying:  
Your friend is your needs answered.  
He is your field which you sow with love and reap with thanksgiving.  
And he is your board and your fireside.  
For you come to him with your hunger, and you seek him for peace.  
When your friend speaks his mind you fear not the “nay” in your own mind,  
nor do you withhold the “ay.”  
And when he is silent your heart ceases not to listen to his heart;  
For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires, all expectations  
are born and shared, with joy that is unacclaimed.  
When you part from your friend, you grieve not;  
for that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence, as the  
mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.  
And let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening of the spirit.  
For love that seeks aught but the disclosure of its own mystery is not love  
but a net cast forth: and only the unprofitable is caught.  
And let your best be for your friend.  
If he must know the ebb of your tide, let him know of its flood also.  
For what is your friend that you should seek him with hours to kill?  
Seek him always with hours to live.  
For it is his to fill your need, but not your emptiness.  
And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and the sharing of  
pleasures.  
For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed.

♦ ***Kahlil Gibran, from The Prophet*** ♦



I think that we can't go around measuring our goodness by what we don't do—by what we deny ourselves, what we resist, and who we exclude. I think we've got to measure goodness by what we embrace, what we create, and who we include.

♦ *Robert Nelson Jacobs* ♦





***A quiet moment***

Let's all sit, silently, and feel the magic in the room,  
the possibility of connection and the optimism we  
gain when we know we are in it together.

*We've found that starting and ending the Thanksgiving ceremony with a group reading brings even more magic to the table. If you'd like to do this, put a copy on every person's seat (or every other person's seat and ask people to share).*

**[ 8 copies of the group readings ]**

# *To be read together*

## *To begin:*

We are never as alive as when we are together.  
Speaking together, as one, amplifies our spirit.  
Generosity and thanks bind our community together.

## *At the conclusion:*

May you experience happiness. May you bring light to someone else's life.  
May you abide in joy. And may you allow yourself to feel gratitude, and  
to multiply that feeling by sharing it with those around you.

*Take a moment, now, and go around the table and share what you're grateful for.*



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*If you want, you can use the questions to keep  
the conversation going throughout the meal.*

**[Bonus Material]**

## *Questions to discuss:*

What's the value of gratitude? Why does it even matter?

Why aren't people, especially Americans, more grateful?

What can we do to feel grateful the other 364 days of the year?

Are older people more grateful than younger people? Or is it the reverse?

We all know the value of connections, but where did the barriers come from and what can we do to topple them?

Who's the most grateful person you know? Who's your gratitude role model?

What is something—a conversation, advice you received, etc.—you became grateful for only well after it occurred? Why did it take you so long?

Have you lived a life that deserves gratitude from others?

