**Five Kernels of Corn Thanksgiving Tradition**

Most of us are familiar with the story of the first Thanksgiving in 1621. We are far less familiar with the period the Pilgrims called the “starving time.” Following the Thanksgiving celebration that we are acquainted with, the Pilgrims struggled with provisions and their food supply declined through the winter of 1622. The Pilgrims put much of their hope in the fall harvest of corn but it was a dismal failure. The food shortage was severe and the rations continued to decrease. At one point during 1623, the daily provisions were five grains of corn each day. The Pilgrims survived on just FIVE KERNELS of corn a day. As spring came, the Pilgrims planted corn and hoped for a bountiful harvest. Sadly, a severe drought struck and soon withered the crop; however, in the following weeks, the rains came, the corn revived and the crop was spared. Later that same month another ship of colonists arrived with supplies. The harvest of 1623 was the best yet in Plymouth and gave hope that they would never face starvation again. The tradition of giving five kernels of corn began with the celebration of Forefather’s Day on December 22, 1820. There were two reasons for the five kernels: the first was to remember the sacrifice and the suffering of the Pilgrims; the second was to count personal blessings. Today, the five kernels of corn are a way to remember the sacrifices of the past and to show thankfulness for favor.

Those five kernels of corn were a *blessing*. This Thanksgiving consider placing five kernels of corn (corn, popcorn seeds, candy corn, etc.) at each guest’s place setting.

Spend a few minutes before the meal going around the table and having everyone **share things that they are thankful for**—a reminder of those five kernels of corn.

*Or you could present a symbolic meaning of each kernel like this example:*

1. *The first kernel reminds us that God loves us.*
2. *The second kernel reminds us that God provides for all our needs.*
3. *The third kernel reminds us of the friends God has given us—just as the American Indians were friends to the Pilgrims.*
4. *The fourth kernel reminds us of all the people God has given us who love us.*
5. *And the fifth kernel reminds us that God hears our prayers and answers us.*

God gets us through **the lean times**. The **Five Kernels of Corn Thanksgiving Tradition** is just the thing your family needs to celebrate the goodness of our great God!