

middle school



Lesson 12 / November 17, 2024

Turkey Pardons

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1



Lesson 12

Focus:

God calls us to trust in Him.

Lesson 12

Bible Basis:

Genesis 22:1-12

Lesson 12

Memory Verse:

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
—Deuteronomy 6:5

Students will discuss the peace that can come with trusting one's future to God.

Materials:

- Internet access

Thanksgiving is coming up in just a couple of weeks! There's a lot to love about Thanksgiving week:

- You only have two or three days of school.
- The Christmas season gets underway in stores.
- Many people get to see their extended family.
- And of course, there's the FOOD! Turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, pie, rolls, green beans . . . it makes you hungry just thinking about it.

➤ What's your favorite thing about Thanksgiving? (Accept all reasonable answers.)

Just about everyone can appreciate something about Thanksgiving. There's only one exception: the poor turkeys. One day, you're gobbling along in the barnyard; the next day, you're on a plate. It's tough being a turkey at Thanksgiving.

But there's hope—even for turkeys! For many years, there's been a tradition that the President of the United States pardons two turkeys from their fate right before the holiday. Instead of turning into drumsticks, these two gobblers get to live out their natural lives at a turkey-friendly spot in Virginia.

However, this hasn't always been a presidential tradition. Let's take a look at this video for a history on these turkey pardons. (Encourage students to be respectful, rather than offering commentary on the different presidents shown in the video.)

Show your students this video [4:32; start at 1:22; stop at 3:34].

The history of the presidential turkey pardon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=id69ZdHyEOM>

Imagine you're a turkey. Thanksgiving is coming, and you're starting to get nervous. Every year you've had turkey buddies mysteriously disappear at this time—never to be heard from again. And the legend handed down is that they ended up on a dinner table. But this year, you hear a rumor from one of the cows. You're not going to land on the dinner table—you're going to go to the White House for a presidential pardon!

> Do you think you would believe the rumor? If you did, what do you think you would be feeling? (You would probably feel relieved.)

> What if you didn't trust the cow—or maybe you didn't trust the president to actually pardon you. Then how would you feel? (In that case, you would continue to be anxious about your fate.)

Year after year, turkeys trust the different presidents with their futures. Trusting can be scary sometimes.

> Can you tell about a scary time when you had to trust someone else with what was going to happen to you? How did it turn out? (Allow students to share situations even if they didn't have a good outcome. Be prepared to share your own experience.)

Today we're going to talk about a time in Abraham's life where he had every reason not to trust his future to God. In fact, he had every reason to run in the opposite direction! But somehow, he found the faith to follow the Lord anyway. Let's take a look.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

Turkey Pardons

for use as
STEP 4 

Lesson 12**Focus:**

God calls us to trust in Him.

Lesson 12**Bible Basis:**

Genesis 22:1-12

Lesson 12**Memory Verse:**

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
—Deuteronomy 6:5

Materials:

- Heavy rock
- Small rocks (1 per student; 2 to 3 inches in diameter)
- Fine-tipped permanent marker

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring fine-tipped markers and small rocks with them to class. You can display a heavy rock (or an image of one) via your video chat software.

It's scary to be a turkey at Thanksgiving. It's also scary sometimes to be a human being. When we trust God to guide our futures—especially the parts we're worried about—He can bring us peace. But it's hard: Are we willing to trust God as much as Abraham did? Will we let the Lord take charge of *everything*?

Ask your students to think of something that's worrying them because they don't know how it will turn out. **Maybe you aren't sure if you'll make the softball team in the spring, or whether you'll pass the math test you have to take this week, or whether your crush will like you back. Maybe it's something even bigger, like whether your parents' marriage will survive.**

Direct your students' attention to the large rock you have sitting in the room (or on screen). **Pretend that this rock is the event in the future that worries you. Just like that nagging worry that won't leave your mind, imagine you have to carry this object with you at all times. Picture taking it with you to lunch after church, and home, and to bed, and to the bathroom, and to school . . . you get the idea.**

➤ **How would you feel if you actually had to tote this rock everywhere?** (The item would undoubtedly feel very heavy after a while—not to mention annoying!)

When we try to carry our worries about the future, they get really heavy after a while—just like this rock. That's because we aren't supposed to be carry them at all! Instead, we're supposed to leave our worries in the hands of God. Psalm 68 says that God “daily bears our burdens” (Psalm 68:19b, NIV).

Today, will you trust God with that thing in the future you're worried about? It might turn out just like you're hoping—God loves to give good gifts to His children, including you! But then again, it may not turn out the way you expect because God has a better plan. Will you surrender it to the Lord anyway? You can stop carrying around the weight of worry!

Invite your students to come to the rock and, one at a time, lift or try to lift it. If your class is meeting online, demonstrate how heavy the rock is as you lift it. **As you set it back down, say—either out loud or in your head—the thing in the future that you're surrendering to God. Remember, the Lord can lift the weight of worry from your shoulders. But you'll have to make a decision to trust Him.**

Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). Have your students write the word TRUST on their rock as a way to remember to trust God with every burden they have.

Giving control of your future to God is tough sometimes. Maybe before you leave the room, you'll be tempted to pick up the burden of your worry again. But don't do it—leave the future in God's hands!

Abraham trusted God so much that he was willing to surrender everything to the Lord—even his only son. If you do the same, you'll honor God the way that Abraham did. And you know what? You'll worry a lot less, too.

Close in prayer, asking God to lovingly attend to every concern that was surrendered by your students today.

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