

The Gratitude Feast

The Open-Mic Testimony Night Launch Kit

Your 3-week countdown to a room where students actually want to talk.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Psalm 103:1–4

BOTTOM LINE

Gratitude spoken out loud builds everyone's faith, including your own.

WHAT THIS NIGHT IS

The optional Week 5 capstone for November, *The Gratitude Feast*, replaces the standard lesson layout with a **student-led, open-mic testimony night**. Students share what God has done in their lives over the year, and the room learns that hearing one person's story builds everyone else's faith.

WHY IT NEEDS A LAUNCH KIT

An open mic with middle or high schoolers is terrifying for a leader. If nobody talks, the room goes dead cold. This is the night that requires **the most preparation of any optional week** in the curriculum, and all of it happens backstage: choosing who shares first, reshaping the room, and setting a safe, vulnerable atmosphere before anyone walks in.

Leader Note: Some students are walking into hard family situations this month. Invite; never pressure. Radical gratitude is not toxic positivity, and every student should feel free to just listen. The night itself is in the November chapter. This appendix covers everything that happens **before** the doors open.

YOUR COUNTDOWN AT A GLANCE

 3 WEEKS OUT <i>Priming the Room</i>	 2 WEEKS OUT <i>The Environment</i>	 1 WEEK OUT <i>The Parent Cue</i>	 THE NIGHT <i>The Atmosphere Shift</i>
Choose and prepare 3–4 adult leaders and 2–3 students to share first. ▶ Page 284	Trade the rows of chairs for a giant circle or a cozy coffeehouse. ▶ Page 285	Send parents one message that gets students thinking about what they're thankful for. ▶ Page 285	Soft music all evening, and an adult story that makes it safe to step up. ▶ Page 285

◆ THE NIGHT AT A GLANCE

3–4 adult leaders primed	2–3 students primed	60 seconds set the bar	3 prompts on screen
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3 WEEKS OUT: Priming the Room

MOST IMPORTANT STEP

Prime **3–4 adult leaders and 2–3 students in advance** to share first. The first 60 seconds from an adult sets the entire bar for the night, so don't skip this prep. Here is how to choose them.

2–3 STUDENTS	3–4 ADULT LEADERS
LOOK FOR - Real transformation during the <i>ROOTED</i> year: someone visibly different than they were in January. - Honesty over polish. They don't need to be a natural public speaker. STEER CLEAR OF A student in a raw, unresolved season right now, or anyone who would be doing it to be seen.	LOOK FOR - Volunteers who aren't afraid to be emotionally honest in front of students. - A breakthrough story with some humor in it: funny but deeply personal is the sweet spot. STEER CLEAR OF Anyone who will preach, tack on a lesson, or tell a tidy story with no struggle in it.

◆ THE 60-SECOND STORY SHAPE

1 WHERE I WAS <i>About 15 seconds</i> The honest starting point. A little humor is welcome.	2 WHAT GOD DID <i>About 30 seconds</i> The breakthrough. Specific, not vague.	3 WHAT I'M THANKFUL FOR <i>About 15 seconds</i> Land it on gratitude, then stop talking.
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◆ PRIMING CHECKLIST

☐	Make your shortlist. Walk back through the year and jot down the students who have visibly changed.
☐	Ask each student privately. Face to face, never as a group announcement. Explain the why, and give them an easy way to say no.
☐	Brief the adults on the standard. Share the 60-second shape and the first-minute goal: honest, a little funny, and thankful at the end.

💬 INVITATION TO A PRIMED STUDENT · In person or by text

Hey [name], I've watched you grow so much this year, and I'd love for you to be one of the first to share at our Gratitude Feast on [date]. It's only 60 seconds: one story of something God did for you. No pressure at all, and you can say no. Would you be up for it?

💬 INVITATION TO A PRIMED ADULT LEADER · In person or by text

[Name], would you be willing to share first at our Gratitude Feast on [date]? I'm looking for a 60-second story of something God did in your life this year: honest, a little funny if that's true to you, and ending on what you're thankful for. Your story will set the tone for the whole room.

2 WEEKS OUT: The Environment

NO ROWS OF CHAIRS

Don't leave rows of chairs. Rows say "lecture," and nobody opens their heart to the back of someone's head. Pick one look and commit to it.

The Giant Circle **SIMPLE**

Every chair in one big circle, with no front and no back. Adult leaders sit spread out among the students, not clustered together.

The Coffeehouse **COZY**

Rugs, stools, lamps or string lights, and small side tables. Optional: a simple table of snacks to honor the name "Feast."

- **Keep the jar in the center.** Set the large empty jar and the basket of stones or marbles where everyone can see them.
- **Pick one microphone.** A physical mic that gets passed, or a clear spot where students step up to speak.

1 WEEK OUT: The Parent Cue

SEND IT NOW

TEXT / EMAIL TO PARENTS

Parents, next week is our Gratitude Feast. We are holding an open mic night for kids to celebrate how God has grown them this year. Ask your student this week what they are most thankful for to help them process their thoughts before Wednesday!

Swap in your meeting day. Send it as a text if that's how your parents actually read messages.

THE NIGHT: The Atmosphere Shift

SOFT MUSIC THROUGHOUT

The First 60 Seconds: Have soft music playing throughout the entire evening, and let an adult go first. If a leader shares a funny but deeply personal story of breakthrough, the students will feel safe to step up to the microphone.

◆ IF THE ROOM GOES QUIET

IF ...	THEN ...
The silence stretches.	Don't rush to fill it. Read one of the three prompts aloud again and give everyone 30 seconds to think.
Nobody steps up.	Send in a second primed adult or student. A story from someone they trust makes the next one easier.
Talking feels too big.	Offer a lower-stakes door: one word of gratitude around the circle, or a note handed to a leader to read aloud.
Someone finishes sharing.	Clap and celebrate, every single time. That applause is what makes the next student brave.

★ NOVEMBER CLOSING HERE ★

Forget not all His benefits.

Close by pointing to the jar of stones, then send them home with the Thanksgiving Table Challenge.