



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: God's Providence, Part 1: The Voyage of the Mayflower

Guest(s): Dr. Jerry Newcombe

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Welcome into Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host here at Family Talk. I also serve as president of the American Association of Christian Counselors, and executive director of the Liberty University Global Center for Mental Health, Addiction and Recovery. Happy Thanksgiving to you and your family.

Hey, I have a question for you. Did you know that last year, 2021, was the 400th anniversary of the first Thanksgiving celebration for the pilgrims? It's amazing. As I speak, there are probably many of us who are finalizing preparations and plans for our Thanksgiving feast tomorrow with family and friends. It's a special time around the dinner table. One of my favorite. Expressing gratitude for those around us and for the Lord and His many blessings. It was only through God's providence that America is here today.

His hand has been on our nation today and also during the fateful voyage the pilgrims had taken on the Mayflower ship many years ago in search for religious freedom. Our guest today on the program knows a lot about that subject and has a passion for bringing it to light. In fact, he has a new historical faith-based documentary out that tells the stories of the Puritans, and religious freedom and the role Christianity played in the settlement of our founding colonies. His name, Dr. Jerry Newcombe.

Let me tell you a little bit about him. Dr. Newcombe is widely known for his affiliation service with the Dr. D James Kennedy Ministries. He has proudly worked there nonstop since 1985. 37 years in various ministerial and communications capacities. He currently serves as executive director of the Providence Forum, which is an outreach of Dr. James Kennedy's ministries. Jerry is also the author or co-author of over 30 books discussing our country's history from a Christian perspective.

He's the host and senior producer for the Truth that Transforms program with Dr. James Kennedy's Ministries. He serves as an assistant pastor at New Presbyterian Church in Wilton Manors, Florida. Jerry's been happily married to his wife since June of 1980. They have two children, three grandchildren. What a blessing. It's great to have you, Jerry. Welcome back to Family Talk. Dr. Dobson sends his regards.

Jerry Newcombe: Oh thank you, Dr. Clinton. This is a privilege. And hello to Dr. Dobson.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jerry, tomorrow is Thanksgiving. Many of our listeners are maybe in the kitchen right now preparing their special dishes for tomorrow's celebration. By the way, I don't like turkey. I prefer ham, if you can believe that. Maybe grandma's special recipe handed down through the generations, all of it kind of with a thanks and a praise to God with our families. Others listening right now might be on their way to the grocery store, I don't know, in the car rushing pick up last minute items.

No matter where they are, I wanted to slow it down here for a moment and talk to you about the holidays and what it really means. What some 401 years ago was the very first documented Thanksgiving meal that was served in the Plymouth Colony. I think 1621. Simply amazing. There's a lot of detailed information. I didn't really understand that until I was prepping here and going through this, Jerry. But around that first gathering, some of those details. Maybe you could take us back there.

The colonists, they were outnumbered more than two to one by the Native American guests. Edward Winslow was a separatist who had traveled on the Mayflower in 1620. He was one of several senior leaders on the ship, and also later at the Plymouth Colony, he wrote, and I quote, "Many of the Indians coming among us and amongst us, their greatest king, with some 90 men. The preceding winter had been harsh on the colonists, 78% ..." I couldn't believe this. "78% of the women who had traveled on the Mayflower had perished that winter, leaving only around 50 colonists to attend the very first Thanksgiving. Jerry, what did you find out? You're the historian here. Take us back, and what was it like for them?"

Jerry Newcombe: Well, it was very difficult to survive. Their goal in coming over in the first place, they just wanted to worship Jesus Christ in the purity of the gospel and not be harassed by the government. And initially they were from England, and they were from mid England about 400 miles or whatever north of London. And they finally, after they had become a church body and so forth, which was illegal at the time, reading from the Bible was illegal and so forth. They managed to make it over to Holland, which they stayed there for about 12 years. But that became so difficult. They realized that to retain the purity of their congregation, now that Jamestown had become a permanent settlement, "Why don't we go to the new world? We'll go to the northern part of Virginia, where we could still be a part of the British settlement and get permission to do all this." And they did.

And so they were literally sailing for the northern parts of Virginia, which at that time, Virginia's map was much larger. They got blown off course, they were providentially hindered. They were up there in New England, Cape Cod, which they were not prepared to do. And some of the hired strangers that were aboard the Mayflower were even talking about the possibility of striking out on their own, since they were under no government's jurisdiction. The pilgrims made world history on November 11th, 1620. They wrote up an agreement for self-government under God, which is called the Mayflower Compact. And historians tell us that was the first step toward ultimately the creation of the Declaration of Independence about 150 years later, and the U.S. Constitution. Agreements under God for self-government. In other words, in the cabinet of the Mayflower, America was born in effect in 1620. So that's a lot to be thankful for.

Okay, so then after they created the Mayflower Compact and then they were looking around for places to settle, and they finally found Plymouth in early December, then as you mentioned, the winter came and so many of their numbers died. As you noted, there was only even four married women that survived that brutal winter. In fact, it's as if many of them, a lot of it was starvation, because they had very little food amongst them, including some corn that they had found. And then they later even repaid back to the Indians. Some of those women essentially fed their children. The children had the highest survival rate among the people on the Mayflower. It's as if some of those women literally sacrificed their own portion so that their children could live, and then they themselves died. That's amazing.

So then by the time you get to the harvest time in the fall of 1621, now they could see it's beginning to become permanent, despite all the deaths that they had experienced in the winter several months before.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When people talk about Thanksgiving, they always go back to the fact that this is an American holiday, an American tradition, and we are grateful to God for our nation, and then we're thankful for everything else in our life. But Jerry, you've always had a deep affection in your heart for looking at our Judeo-Christian heritage. And you take us right back to these moments. Anchor us there a little bit more as we are pondering Thanksgiving, and then to step us into that word, what it really means to give thanks. What they must have been through and how hard it is at times to give thanks, especially when it seems like the wheels are coming off, and life's not the way it's supposed to be.

Jerry Newcombe: That's a great point. Well, the Apostle Paul tells us, "Give thanks in all circumstances." And I think the pilgrims followed that model. They gave thanks in all circumstances, and they practiced this tradition on a regular basis, and then later on, George Washington, who became our first president under the U.S. Constitution, he made Thanksgiving a holiday. He called for the first National Day of Thanksgiving. That was in 1789, the first year he was the President.

By the way, the very men who gave us the First Amendment, which is often distorted today to mean we have to have this strict separation of church and state, by which they often mean that separation of God and state, which is not something the founders would've ever agreed with. But anyway, that first Congress gave us the First Amendment. They also said to George Washington, "Hey, now that we've been able in peace and felicity to create our own agreement for government, the Constitution, how is this government going to work, why don't you declare a national day of Thanksgiving to God?" And he did. 1789. And it's a beautiful proclamation. October 3rd, 1789. You can read it online. Remember that date, October 3rd, 1789. He declared it for the next month.

And then it was Lincoln, talk about difficult days, it was Lincoln during the difficult days and dark days of the Civil War where we weren't even sure if we would survive as one nation, much less one nation under God. It was Lincoln who said, "Let's have Thanksgiving as an annual holiday." And so really, ever since the days of the Civil War, America has had an annual reminder of our Judeo-Christian roots. It's called Thanksgiving.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jerry, we're thankful for God's goodness and grace. I know around the table tomorrow we'll be talking about name two things that you're really thankful for. My mother started that tradition in our family. And Jerry, a lot of people say, "I'm thankful for our family. I'm thankful for how God's taken care of us. I'm thankful for health." For those early settlers, we're thankful in particular too for the freedoms that they now had. Even though there was hardship, freedom was at the very core of their being in this moment. Wasn't it?

Jerry Newcombe: It was. It was the whole reason that they sacrificed everything so that they could come here and worship Jesus Christ in the purity of their conscience. And it's interesting, if I could give a quick contrast. The pilgrims were separatists. They believed, as they would read the Bible, and this is going back to the late 1500s. As they would read the Bible and then they would compare what they would see in the Church of England at the time, they felt like, "Wow, these two are incongruous. We need to get back to biblical salvation," and so for the core message. And meanwhile, their spiritual cousins, the Puritans who were a much, much larger number, they thought, "Well, let's stay within the Church of England to work for its purity. And so they ended up being called Puritans.

And what ended up happening was in 1620, the pilgrims came here, blown off course, as I said, they started this toe hold in New England, and then after them, about 10 years later, the Puritan started following and wave after wave, a mass migration. So much so that by the 1690s or thereabout, the pilgrims had lost all their distinct identity. They didn't even exist for all practical purposes. Everything was engulfed by the Puritans. But I think that's just a very interesting point, because the persecution in England got so bad against the Puritans that by the time of the 1640s, literally. England experienced its major civil war and religion really was the driving force because of the denial of freedom for the

Puritans to practice their faith in the purity of the gospel. And so many came here, but many stayed there and fought.

And one man who was on his way to migrate to America was Oliver Cromwell. And when the religious conflicts raged around him in mid England, he decided to stay and fight, and he ended up winning and was victorious. And for about 15 years or so, they had the Republic. Short lived. He died in 1658 and his son took over, and then within a year or two they brought back Charles II, who was a lot nicer to the religious dissonance, whereas his father, Charles I, had been an extreme oppressor against the religious nonconformance.

You've heard of the Star Chamber. Well, a lot of those victims in the Star Chamber, which is in Westminster Abbey, they were Puritans. And they were cut in their noses, and they had their foreheads branded, "SL," seditious liable, all these kind of terrible things. So they paid a high price just to live out the purity of the gospel. But those puritans made a huge impact on America because thanks to the pilgrims coming first, the Puritans were able to create their city on a hill, and then some of the Puritans that left Boston, then they went on to found Connecticut, which today calls itself, to this day, the Constitution State, because they created the first fully developed constitution, which talks about the purity and liberty of the gospel of our Lord Jesus. This is what they were all about. They're the ones who started Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth. I'm talking about the Puritans.

So America owes a great debt to the Puritans who set out to create the city on a hill. But no pilgrims, you wouldn't probably wouldn't have had the Puritans. Certainly not in New England, the way it all worked out.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

You're listening to Family Talk, a division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host. Our special guest, Dr. Jerry Newcombe. He serves as executive director of the Providence Forum. He is a historian. Fascinating discussion with him today. Best-selling author. You probably also recognize his name from being the senior producer and the on-air host of *Truth that Transforms*. It's a flagship television broadcast of an old friend of Dr. Dobson's, Dr. D James Kennedy and his ministries down there. Jerry again, a delightful conversation with you.

My dad served in World War II. He would tell us the stories of what it was like to be in the South Pacific on the USS Pennsylvania back in the day. When he came back stateside, he told us that he kissed the ground when he got back to America. He was so happy and thankful to God. Jerry, he was a pastor for almost 60 years in the hills of central Pennsylvania. My dad taught us to love God, and he taught us that freedom wasn't free.

Jerry Newcombe:

Wow.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

And he said, "If you would learn the sacrifices that have gone before you to enjoy the freedoms that you have, you would look at this country differently."

Jerry, you guys are working on a new documentary. *A City On a Hill*. Really comes from, what? I think what Matthew 5:14, right? *A City On a Hill*. Jesus said, "Cannot be hidden." In this documentary, you're on a mission. It's something that just came out, and it's connecting dots here because this conversation about Thanksgiving, very first Thanksgiving, and where we're going in this country. Jerry, take us to what's in your heart. Why did you feel it was really important at this time? Give us that elevator pitch on the documentary, *A City On a Hill*.

Jerry Newcombe:

Sure. The *City on a Hill* documentary essentially picks up where the pilgrims left off. So in other words, I start with the Puritans, who founded Boston. That was the original, the City on a Hill. John Winthrop, their leader, said aboard the ship, *Arabella*, "For we shall be as a city on a hill. The eyes of all the world shall be upon us." And his hearers, of course knew he's quoting from Jesus Christ with that phrase. But that became, in effect, a metaphor of what America could become. And one man that really appreciated that metaphor was Ronald Reagan.

And he talked about how America can be and should be that city on a hill. And that documentary, by the way, opens up with Boston and Winthrop and so forth, and goes into Connecticut and Rhode Island and deals with, well, what about the Salem witchcraft trials, which is a very aboriginal, and not the summon substance of the Puritans, which is a real shame. It's like people know about the Puritans more from something like that that was an ugly exception, not what they should be known of. They should be remembered for Harvard and Yale and Dartmouth, and the *New England Primer*, and mass literacy. Literacy for the masses. That is a Christian invention.

This special closes with William Penn. A whole section on William Penn, the devout Quaker, founder of Penns Woods. When he found out that Charles II, the king in England was willing to give him this large land in the new world, and he wanted to name it in honor of his father, Sir Admiral Penn, who served under Charles II, William Penn the younger thought that is pretty vain to have this colony named after our family name. Just call it Sylvania, woods. But the Charles II said, "No, we're going to call it Pennsylvania." So this is his father. But William Penn, the Quaker, really set so much in motion for what later became the United States too. He made huge contributions. His city, Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, which comes right from the Bible, that became the cultural capital of America.

Historian Paul Johnson, whom we really rely on a lot, he's still alive, by the way. British historian Paul Johnson wrote a book called *A History of the American People*. And he said that in a sense, Philadelphia was the last outpost of the Puritans in early America, colonial America. That's very substantial. It was in Philadelphia that of course they wrote the Declaration of Independence, and

where they wrote the Constitution and so forth. Then it was the first ... Well, it wasn't the very first capital, because when George Washington was sworn and he was sworn in New York City, and then almost, I'm not sure exactly when, but just within months they moved it back to Philadelphia as the capital of the country, until they made Washington, D.C. to become the capital.

But Philadelphia was extremely important, but it was all built on one thing. This again goes back to Jesus and the golden rule. Or the Sermon on the Mount, because the Sermon of the Mount, that's where we get city on a hill. But we also get the golden rule. As Dr. Peter Lilach explains in our documentary, *The City on a Hill*, when Penn was sent to the tower, meaning he was punished for his views, he was sent to jail in England, because of his religious non-conformance. He said, "I didn't like that, and so I determined that I would create a place, a large place, a holy experiment where people could be free to believe what they wanted to believe." But basically it still wanted a godly framework in terms of their morality. So God was never thrown out of this scenario.

And in fact, both William Penn and Roger Williams, about 75 years or whatever before him, the one who founded Rhode Island, Rhode Island became this little sliver where they made ... This is a place where people could believe what they wanted to believe and not be bothered for their opinions. Pennsylvania rather became this large place, same thing. But virtually all these people were believers in the Judeo-Christian God. They didn't all fit in the same denominations though.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jerry, we're fighting time, and I know we've got a lot we want to talk about tomorrow, as we continue this conversation and the amazing work that you're doing, and how you're giving a gift to all of us, as we understand history, our roots, and the significance of our Judeo-Christian heritage and more.

Jerry, as we go, we're only one generation away from forgetting the God of our fathers.

Jerry Newcombe: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: One generation away from forgetting our history, our roots, and what connects things together. But as we leave, and we're going to talk about this tomorrow, we'll talk about the what's happening in our schools and the *New York Times* 1619 project, those kind of things and how they're influencing culture. But Jerry, what's that one thing you want to make sure we take with us today as we prepare our hearts for tomorrow, as we reflect on our nation, everything we're going through, it's been a pretty tough go over the last couple of years. What are some seeds here that we can just reflect on and be thankful for?

Jerry Newcombe: We should be thankful for everything God has given us. And Dr. D James Kennedy once preached a whole message about gratitude and why it's so important, and he called it the Christian's magic wand. Because living a life of

gratitude and Thanksgiving changes everything. And frankly, a lot of our founders were men of great Thanksgiving. So we should be grateful even through it all, because tomorrow is a new day, and today's a new day. Be grateful every day and it will change your life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: 1 Chronicles 16:34 says, "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endures forever," and He's been good to us. God's great, and His steadfast love," the Psalmist declares, "Is what it's all about."

Jerry, what a delightful conversation. Thank you for reminding us of our Judeo-Christian heritage, and I can't wait tomorrow to talk a lot about our generations today, and where we're going, and maybe some more about the work and the new documentaries that you're coming out with to help us strengthen our hearts, and help us to be bold and courageous for such a time as this.

Jerry, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire team here at Family Talk, we salute you and pray God gives you ongoing strength, and thank you for joining us.

Jerry Newcombe: Thank you, and happy Thanksgiving to you and yours.

Roger Marsh: Well, we have so much to be thankful for here on this Thanksgiving week, and how humbling it is that the events of over 400 years ago led to the formation of the country that we call home today. I really had no idea how touch and go things were for the pilgrims, and how much they suffered to make a new home for themselves and their families.

This is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and we've just heard part one of this powerful conversation featuring our own Dr. Tim Clinton, as he caught up last week with Dr. Jerry Newcombe. Now, if you missed any part of today's conversation, or you'd like to access part two once it is posted overnight, because tomorrow will be of course busy in the midst of your celebratory meal preparations, just visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

This is the season of thinking about what we are grateful for. Our kids, grandkids, of course, good health, making it through a tough situation, maybe that special person in your life. In 2 Corinthians chapter nine, verse 11, Paul writes, "You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us, your generosity will result in Thanksgiving to God." That is a powerful passage indeed.

And I just want to say from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are truly thankful for you, our listeners. It's because of your generosity and your prayers that we remain on the air. We cherish your friendship, and we are able to do so much here at the ministry because of your

kindness, your recommendations, your prayers, and your faithful financial support.

By the way, if you are feeling moved to make a donation to Family Talk right now, you can always make a secure tax deductible donation to the JDFI Online. Again, that address is drjamesdobson.org, or you can give a gift over the phone when you call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of me, my wife Lisa, and all of our kids and grandkids, along with Dr. Dobson of course and his wife Shirley, and their kids and grandkids, and our co-host, Dr. Tim Clinton and his wife Julie and their kids, and from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thank you for letting us be a part of your day. We hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving, and be sure to join us again tomorrow for a special celebration right here on the next edition of Family Talk.

Announcer:

This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.