



On your marks

Harvest Thanksgiving provides us not only with an important opportunity to say thank you to God for all that we enjoy in this world but also to refocus our efforts on caring for others who are less fortunate than ourselves. Jesus promises us in Luke 6:38 (CEV): 'If you give to others, you will be given a full amount in return. It will be packed down, shaken together, and spilling over into your lap. The way you treat others is the way you will be treated.' It was perhaps with this teaching in mind that St. Paul recalls one of the sayings of Jesus in Acts 20:35 (CEV): 'More blessings come from giving than from receiving.'

Get set

What follows is a simple faith at home fundraising challenge linked to harvest. Maybe family groups could be encouraged to take these ideas home to work through together in the weeks leading up to your church's harvest service. Any money raised from 'harvesting the home' in this way could then go towards a particular mission or aid agency supported by your church, or a local community food bank or other charity.

You will need to print off the ideas below. Each idea could be one day's challenge for a family, and it could be extended to the homes of nearby friends and relatives, or it could be part of a take-home sheet following a Messy Church.

You will also need a special harvest collection box - this could be a decorated shoebox using food pictures from magazines. At the end of the week, decide which of the seven Bible verses you'd like to put on the front of your box, if you are taking it to church as part of your Harvest Thanksgiving offering.

Go!

This is a seven-day harvest fundraiser. For each day, there is a Bible verse that encourages us to respond with compassion as part of our harvest offering this year with a fun Bible link for each food.

1. Fish day

If you give to others, you will be given a full amount in return. Luke 6:38

Put 5p in your collection box for every fish finger, every tin of tuna or any other fish items you can find in your house.

Bible fish facts

- Jonah was never swallowed by a whale but the Bible calls the creature a big fish. Holy mackerel!



- When Jesus fed the 5000 he used bread and fish. In some early depictions of The Last Supper, Jesus is shown breaking bread and sharing fish as the communion food.

2. **Potato day**

Our God has blessed the earth with a wonderful harvest! Psalm 67:6

Put 5p in your collection box for every potato, every packet of crisps or similar that you can find in your house.

Bible potato facts

- In the past, some Christian denominations have declared that potatoes are a suspect food simply because they are not mentioned anywhere in the Bible! Other vegetables are mentioned and, in fact, Daniel and his friends opted for a completely vegetarian diet when in exile in Babylon, refusing the pagan meat offered to them by their captors. God made sure they stayed just as healthy eating vegetables as eating red meat. Potatoes were introduced into England by the adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh in the 16th century.

3. **Rice day**

Have faith in God, who is rich and blesses us with everything we need to enjoy life. 1 Timothy 6:17

Put 5p in your collection box for every different type of rice in your home and also any rice cakes you can find.

Bible rice facts

- Various grains are mentioned in the Bible, but not rice specifically. These were usually prepared by soaking, fermenting or allowing them to sprout before they were eaten.
- For two-thirds of the world population, rice is the staple diet.
- Abraham was promised a family that would be as many as the stars in the sky or the grains of sand in the desert (Genesis 22:17). When talking about this verse and this promise in some parts of the world where deserts are unknown, the idea of a great family 'as many as the grains of rice in the storehouse' may be more appropriate!

4. **Cereal day**

More blessings come from giving than from receiving. Acts 20:35

Put 5p in your collection box for every different cereal packet you can find at home.

Bible cereal facts

- Wheat is mentioned in the Bible in many places. Famously, Joseph in his role as Prime Minister of Egypt stored up wheat from the good years of harvest to prepare for the famine that was to

come. Bread made from wheat was a staple food and Jesus talked about the kingdom of God being like a woman baking bread. She added a small amount of yeast (leaven) to make the dough rise.

- Just as a seed of wheat needs to be buried under the earth before it can grow to become the stalk and then the full grain in the ear, in the same way Jesus said he had to die before he could rise again and bring in the harvest of the kingdom (John 12:24).

5. **Spice day**

As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest. Genesis 8:22

Put 5p in your collection box for every spice jar in your kitchen.

Bible spice facts

- Lots of spices make an appearance in the Bible: Aloes were part of the mixture used as a perfume to anoint the body of Jesus; bitter herbs were included in the Passover meal; frankincense and myrrh were among the gifts brought by the wise men to the baby Jesus; and Jesus' parable of the mustard seed growing to huge proportions is a powerful picture of how the kingdom of God comes from small beginnings.

6. **Banana day**

The Lord blesses everyone who freely gives food to the poor. Proverbs 22:9

Put 5p in your collection box for every banana you can find at home and a further 2p for every other piece of fruit you come across.

Bible banana facts

- Bananas are so common in some parts of the world that the word for banana is often also the word for food. In one Ugandan version of the Bible, in John 6:48, Jesus' words are translated as 'I am the banana of life'.

7. **Nut day**

We will celebrate and shout as we bring in the crops. Psalm 126:6

Put 5p in your collection box for every sort of nut you can find in your house and a further 2p for every other variety of nut you can name.

Bible nut facts

- Pistachios and almonds are the two nuts mentioned in the Bible.
- Jeremiah began his prophecy by being asked to notice an almond branch ripening early. It was a picture for him that God would do what he had promised (Jeremiah 1:11).



Extra activity

As an additional activity, you might like to work together as a family to find out where each of the foods in the ideas come from - you could then create a world map showing the origin of all the foods in your kitchen. When you have finished, pause and thank God for the huge variety of things to eat that he has given to us all:

I have provided all kinds of fruit and grain for you to eat. And I have given the green plants as food for everything else that breathes. These will be food for animals, both wild and tame, and for birds. God looked at what he had done. All of it was very good! Genesis 1:29-31

I wonder how much money you raise from your 'harvest home' you will give away.