Bob: Based on what we have found from some interviews with men and women on the street, there are a lot of grownups who need to go back to history class.

Man: When did the pilgrims come to America?

Man: The pilgrims – [laughs].

Man: A long time ago.

Man: The pilgrims, uh …

Man: My mind is blank.

Woman: Sixteen – [giggles].

Woman: Well, "1642 Columbus sailed the ocean blue," but that's all I know.

Woman: [giggles] – I don't know, the 1700s, I have no idea.

[musical transition]

Bob: If you're as bad as those folks are, then you need to stay with us for the next few minutes as we have a little history lesson on the air and get you ready for Thanksgiving.

[musical transition]

Bob: And welcome to FamilyLife Today, thanks for joining us on the Wednesday edition. You've heard the old joke, right, you know, if April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring? Pilgrims. You've heard that, haven't you?

Barbara: I don't think I have.
Bob: You've never heard that joke? Oh, that's an old one, yeah, if April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring – pilgrims. Isn't that cute, huh? I thought that was appropriate since this …

Dennis: We're going to have a spot on our website at FamilyLife.com for listeners to respond to Bob's bad jokes.

Barbara: Bad jokes.

Bob: This week we are revisiting the story of the Mayflower and of the pilgrims and the landing in the Plymouth Colony, because, of course, later this month we'll be celebrating Thanksgiving, and we're hoping that those families won't simply celebrate with turkey and football, but will celebrate with some reflection on not only the spiritual heritage of the holiday but the history as well – what God did through the lives of the pilgrims to establish this nation.

Dennis: And as Barbara and I have celebrated Thanksgiving, one of the things we've done over the years is Barbara has read the story of Thanksgiving from a number of books that she would piece together and finally I encouraged her; Bob, you did, and others, to write a book, which she did, called “Thanksgiving: A Time to Remember,” where she put the story together in her own words, and we actually went back to Plymouth and visited that spot where they landed. And, you know, I think most of us were so removed from our historical roots, we don't think about what it would have been like to have been in a boat, a small boat – this was not a giant boat, but a small boat – I mean, they were dependent upon God, and He providentially led them to a spot that was absolutely magnificent.

Bob: Now, in the harbor, at Plymouth Harbor, is there a replica of the Mayflower?

Barbara: There is, yeah.

Bob: Did you tour it?

Barbara: Uh-huh, we went on it, and it is amazingly small.

Dennis: You can't believe how small it is.

Barbara: It really is.

Dennis: It's smaller …

Barbara: You go downstairs, and you look, and you think there were 102 passengers down here – that doesn't count the sailors and the crewmen – but you go down where they lived, and there are no rooms, there are no walled-off portions. There was the captain's quarters, and he allowed some of the sick passengers to have it from time to time, but the pilgrims were stuck underneath
the main deck. And there were animals all over the place, too, because they had to bring their own food, so they brought lots of animals that were sharing their quarters with them.

**Bob:** Well, and then, as you said, when they landed, the first night onshore, I guess you slept out under the stars, because there was nothing but the stars to sleep under, were there?

**Barbara:** If you slept onshore, that's what you slept under. Most of the pilgrims stayed on ship for quite a while, because there was no place to live on land.

**Dennis:** There were safety issues. I mean, they didn't know who was in the thickets and the woods, and there were a lot of Indians in the area, but a tribe had been wiped out by a disease and basically they landed in the single spot that didn't have a group of natives there who would threaten their lives.

**Bob:** Well, this week we've been listening, we've been revisiting that story. Not only did you write about it in the book, "Thanksgiving, A Time to Remember," but that now has become an audio book that families can listen to together at Thanksgiving time, either as they travel on their way to celebrate Thanksgiving or as a part of the Thanksgiving celebration itself. And we're at the point in the story where the boat has landed, and the colony is just beginning.

[musical transition]

Narrator: With land clearly in sight, brownish bluffs and treetops on the horizon, the Mayflower sailed slowly up the coastline, staying out to sea far enough to avoid the treacherous shoals and rocks nearer shore. The passengers eagerly eyed what they could see of what is now the northern tip of Cape Cod.

Because of the difficult seas they had encountered, the pilgrims had made their landfall about 60 miles north of their intended destination at the mouth of the Hudson River. The leaders on board wondered what to do. Should they sail back to the south where their charter with the Virginia Company would be in effect? Or should they find a suitable harbor and settle here? Had God, in His Providence, led them to this spot?

After much debate and prayer, they decided to stay and build their settlement in "New England." When all of the passengers heard of this decision, confusion and some dissension broke out. The bonded servants aboard argued that this plan changed the terms of their work agreement. Fear arose that these men would declare their independence and leave the pilgrims with a depleted labor supply. Something needed to be done to bring about unity.

For an entire day, November the 10th, 1620, a discussion went on in the main cabin of the Mayflower.
Pilgrim: Mr. Bradford, sir, this land we have come upon, Ship's Master Jones saith not to be in the Virginias at all.

William Bradford: True enough, Mr. Travor, we knoweth not with certainty what land God has set us upon, but we believe it to be a good land called "Plymouth," by the Cape of Cod.

Pilgrim: Best for us if it is a fat land, for our stores are well nigh eaten through already.

Pilgrim: And if our stores be depleted, we who must do the work are better served in the Virginias. We know but little of this land nor the people thereof nor whether our labors will be blessed here.

Pilgrim: Methinks you'll do the labor for which you have been indentured, as you have so signed in troth.

Pilgrim: We'll do no labor outside the king's protection, which we have not here in Plymouth.

William Bradford: Good men, good men, peace be among us all. Our quarrels must not divide us.

Pilgrim: Master Bradford, we have no quarrel with you, but that contract, which united us, is of no good effect without the king's awareness.

William Bradford: Thou hast given thy pledge for one year's service.

Pilgrim: Not outside the Virginias.

William Bradford: Good men, we must see that these issues, which divide us, will undo us. The land at the Hudson River hath eluded our grasp by the Providence of God. Is it not? The Lord has driven us by His power to this land of Plymouth. Therefore, being here, we must remain here at present for the winter is upon us, and whether we be of the saints or the strangers, we must make a new agreement.

Pilgrim: Under whose authority?

William Bradford: Under the authority we carry as Christian Englishmen, and with a clear conscience …

Narrator: As the ship worked its way around the tip of the Cape, searching for a coastal inlet to enter and drop anchor, the debate continued. Finally, several of
the leaders drafted an agreement – the Mayflower Compact, which was to become one of the more important documents in American history.

The major points of the agreement were explained to the passengers, and all adult males were asked to sign the Compact before the ship dropped anchor.

**Pilgrim:** It is settled then? We covenant together one and all? Therefore, in the name of God …

Narrator: The key clauses contained these words – "Having undertaken for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, we do, by these present, solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and of one another covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid." With the Compact signed, a hedge against revolt was in place.

Next, the last bit of business was conducted – the election of John Carver as governor of the colony for a one-year term. By this time the Mayflower had sailed beyond the end of the Cape and turned into a bay. The pilgrims saw more clearly the landscape of sandhills and thickets of short piney woods.

At 10 a.m. Captain Jones ordered the anchor dropped. It was Saturday morning, November the 11th, 1620. William Bradford wrote later of this moment …

**William Bradford:** I cannot but stand half amazed at this poor people’s present condition. Being thus passed the vast ocean and a sea of troubles, they have now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weatherbeaten bodies. What could have now sustained them but the spirit of God and His grace?

Narrator: Bradford also noted the custom of the pilgrims to honor God and give thanks in all things.

**William Bradford:** They fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element.

Narrator: A party of men armed with muskets and axes were sent ashore to explore the land and secure firewood, since they had none left on the ship. The group returned in the afternoon with juniper logs, which soon were burning in cooking fires on board. The pilgrims enjoyed their first hot meal in weeks.

Although everyone was eager to go ashore and begin construction of the settlement, because the next day was Sunday, all work stopped and the Sabbath
was observed, as usual, with prayer, meditation, singing of Psalms, and a
sermon by William Brewster. It was a custom they observed faithfully every
week in all circumstances in allegiance to the Fourth Commandment.

In the days that followed several expeditions were made to explore the area to
seek the best location for a settlement. Winter weather now made this effort
miserable. The pilgrim men and the sailors who chose to go along, endured
freezing rain and rough waves as they rode across the bay. One day they met
Indians onshore without incident, but the next day were attacked. Though many
arrows were shot at the men and musket fire was returned, no one was injured.
Again, the pilgrims gave thanks to God for His protection and deliverance. They
called the place "First Encounter," as it is still called to this day.

In spite of these difficulties the men were successful, having slowly made their
way by land and by sea around the interior of the Cape, they eventually found an
ideal spot on the mainland that had fertile soil, four spring-fed creeks, and a large
section of ground already cleared and ready for planting. The men rejoiced at
their discovery.

During these explorations, many colonists back on board the Mayflower became
gravely ill, and a few died, including William Bradford's young wife, Dorothy May.
There was little time for mourning and sadness. Their desperate condition
demanded that they all work, especially the men, to establish the colony. It
wasn't until December the 11th, a month after they had first dropped anchor, that
a landing was made at what was to become the permanent settlement.

Plans had been made to first build a meeting house, and then 19 family
dwellings, the unmarried men having been assigned to live with families. These
buildings were to be simple, one-room, frame houses, about 18 by 14 feet in size
with a fireplace and sleeping loft. There was no glass for the windows, and the
roofs were made of thatch, which the settlers had used in England. Construction
finally began in late December.

A disheartening setback occurred in mid-January when the thatch roof of the
newly completed meeting house caught fire. Fortunately, the settlers put out the
flames before the whole building burned. By the end of January, several family
dwellings were partially built, but most of the pilgrims were still living in temporary
quarters – in the meeting house and on the Mayflower.

Captain Jones had graciously agreed to delay his return with the Mayflower to
England. He knew that the settlers needed its protection. Perhaps the pilgrims
had felt that the worst was over when they finally set foot on solid ground again,
but their relief was only momentary. Though they were hard workers, they
couldn't build their dwellings quickly enough, and they could only endure the
harsh winter weather without ill effect for so long.
As the weeks went by, the weather grew worse. In the coldest stretch of winter, after many had suffered long with head colds, a flu-like illness swept through the colony. This disease, called "the general sickness," had made much of the community desperately ill. Coughing and gasping for breath, most of the settlers were unable to leave their beds. Few were spared. William Bradford, Governor Carver, and other leaders fell sick, too.

During the worst of the epidemic, on any given day, only six or seven out of the 100 colonists might be strong enough to help tend the sick. The pilgrims began to die in alarming numbers, often two or three each day. The men strong enough to work carried the bodies out for burial at night. This was a tactic to hide the worsening situation in the colony from any Indians who might be spying from the nearby woods.

One of the men who remained healthy and tirelessly helped the others was the military leader, Captain Miles Standish. Even after his own wife, Rose, died on January the 21st, Standish continued to serve the others faithfully. The epidemic also struck the sailors on board the Mayflower. Those pilgrims still on their feet ministered to the sick sailors, too, prompting one of the sailors, a man who had ridiculed and cursed the God-fearing passengers during the sea crossing to say, "You, I now see, show your love like Christians, indeed, one to another. But we let one another lie and die like dogs."

February brought the worst of the weather and the sickness. Freezing rains pounded the crude dwellings, stripping much of the clay from the cracks between boards and allowing the wailing cold wind to penetrate the houses. Both the sick and healthy struggled to stay warm. Seventeen persons died during the month.

Indians were sighted on several occasions. Since the intentions of the native people were unknown, the colonists were very fearful. Under the leadership of Captain Standish, the men who were not too ill practiced military drills and shared guard duty at night.

[ Musical transition ]

Bob: That's part 3 of the pilgrims' story from the book, "Thanksgiving: A Time to Remember," and you have to imagine, at least I do, that there were some nights in some cabins when a wife turned to her husband and said, "Are you sure this was the right thing to do? Are you sure you heard God in the decision to come over here?" How many times did they second-guess — did God bring us out here to allow us to die?

Barbara: There's no way to know that, of course, but I just wonder, because of the character that is pretty clear about these people, that their hope was so securely in God, and that they had prayed much about this decision to sail to the New World, they may have wondered that, but I really don't know that they
voiced it, like we would feel comfortable doing today. I feel like they probably were pretty confident in their decision even though it was really tough.

**Dennis:** You know, a number of our kids have kept diaries, and I've run into people who have kept diaries growing up, and the diaries that they've discovered from this time don't contain a bunch of complaining, griping pages questioning God and His leadership to bring them to this place to see many of their family members perish. The diaries were about the Providential care and protection and provision of God, and even though they paid an enormous price. Do you remember, Barbara, the number who had lost spouses?

**Barbara:** Well, there were a lot who died, but I think the number that I remember is that there were only four families who survived intact without either a husband or a wife dying, and that's not a very big number.

**Bob:** And, you know, here is what strikes me about that. We often look back on our circumstances, and if our circumstances have been positive, then we say, "Well, it must have been the Lord's will," right? "Because we did this action, and we prospered, and so it must have been God's will that we do it."

But let's say we take some action, stepping out in faith, believing that this is what God would have us do, and it doesn't turn out well. We get fired from the job, or we wind up in an area of the country where we don't make friends with people or, you know, do we look back on hard circumstances and say, "Well, I must have been out of God's will because I'm not experiencing blessing," or do we say, as Job said, "In the good times and in the bad times, blessed be the name of the Lord," right?

**Barbara:** That's right. And that was their attitude, and I think that is one of the things that challenges me so much every year when I read this story, because it's such a contrast to the way we live, and we do look at our circumstances and say, "God is blessing me" when things are good and when things aren't good we blame God, and we don't see the way they saw it – that God is sovereign, and that He is working things into our lives even in the hard times. And they were much more aware of that than we were. They knew that God was building character and preparing them for purposes that they couldn't see yet, and we don't see that anymore.

**Dennis:** And I think we do equate the will of God with something that's pleasant not something that is purposeful suffering. And as Barbara has read these stories over the years, I think one of the greatest ways they have ministered to me is just to remind me that the freedom we enjoy as Americans did not come about through some kind of easy believe-ism but through a costly faith, a sacrificial faith, that people paid for with their lives.
**Bob:** To join with Jesus and the fellowship of His sufferings, that's how the Bible describes it. That's a doctrine we don't spend a lot of time visiting these days, but it may be one we need to revisit.

**Dennis:** I think we do. And, frankly, I'd just like to challenge every family, whether you're a single-parent family, an intact family, blended family, or maybe even a single – I'd like to challenge you to get this audiobook and Barbara's book, if you don't already have it, and take it back home with you for Thanksgiving. And this year refuse to be a part of a Thanksgiving celebration that's just about food. Instead, bring some meaning and purpose to your time by revisiting our spiritual heritage and where we came from as followers of Christ.

And I promise you, you will start thinking about Thanksgiving and your own life in some fresh, meaningful ways.

**Bob:** And, in fact, if you're the one planning the meal for your family, our team has put together a resources that's designed to help guide you through how to make the Thanksgiving meal more meaningful – kind of a step-by-step recipe, if you will, for what the spiritual side of your Thanksgiving meal can look like. And if you go online at FamilyLife.com and want to order a copy of Barbara's book, "Thanksgiving, A Time to Remember," we're going to send you not only the book but the audiobook as well – the Thanksgiving instrumental music CD is included with that, and so is this recipe for a spiritually meaningful Thanksgiving meal celebration, and we'll include that along with the other resources when you order online at FamilyLife.com. When you get to the home page, on the right side of the screen, you see a box that says "Today's Broadcast," and if you click there, it will take you to an area of the site where there is more information about the resources we've talked about here today.

Or you can call 1-800-FLTODAY, that's 1-800-358-6329, 1-800-F-as-in-family, L-as-in-life, and then the word TODAY, and just ask for a copy of Barbara's book on Thanksgiving. We'll send the whole package out to you. We're making it available at a discounted rate this year so that listeners can get multiple copies, if they'd like. Again, all the details are online, or you can order them by calling 1-800-FLTODAY.

You know, one of the things we are particularly thankful for here at FamilyLife is the number of listeners who get in touch with us from time to time and say "FamilyLife is making a difference in my family. You guys are helping me in my marriage, you're helping raise our kids, you're helping our family be more biblically centered."

Our goal, as a ministry, is to provide practical, biblical help for your marriage and your family. And we appreciate hearing from those of you who say that's happening for us, and we want to help support the ministry by making that
contribution to keep the program on the air in this city and in other cities all around the country.

That is very gratifying for us to hear, we appreciate those of you who call, whether you are able to help with a donation or not. This month, if you are able to help with a donation, we have a thank you gift we’d like to send you. It’s a prayer guide for parents to help you begin praying for specific character qualities to be developed in your child’s life. The book is called "While They Were Sleeping," and each week you pray for something different – for teachability or humility or obedience or discernment or purity – and you may just have a newborn baby, or you may have kids who are teenagers. You need to be praying for your children throughout the years as you raise your sons and your daughters. This prayer guide helps you do that.

Again, we’d love to send it out to you as our way of saying thank you for your support of this ministry this month. When you make a donation of any amount to the ministry of FamilyLife Today, you can request it, and if you make that donation online, the way to request the book is when you come to a keycode box on the donation form, type the word "sleep" in there, for the book "While They Were Sleeping."

Or call 1-800-FLTODAY, you can make a donation to the ministry online and then just ask for a copy of the prayer guide for parents, "While They Were Sleeping." Again, we’re happy to send it out to you, and we do appreciate your partnership with us.

Now, tomorrow we want to talk about the very first Thanksgiving meal, the meal that was shared between the pilgrims and the Indians, and I hope you can be back with us for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine. We'll see you back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas – help for today; hope for tomorrow.

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