In Other Words...

A Research Service For Christian Communicators

November 2026

ATTITUDE: Health psychologist Kari Leibowitz moved to Tromsø, Norway in 2014 expecting the Arctic winter to crush her spirits. Winters there are long, cold & snowy, and for about two months the sun never clears the horizon. Yet her new neighbors kept saying how eager they were for winter to arrive. In her book *How to Winter*, Leibowitz says the difference is mindset, and she offers a simple way to change yours: speak kindly about the weather. Most weather talk is complaining, which keeps our focus on what's wrong. She suggests spending a week offering positive comments about winter to at least one person daily. "It trains you to notice different kinds of things." That principle applies to far more than just the weather (Philippians 4:8). *Time, 12/9/2024, p.17*

FAMILY: Robert Fulghum devoted a chapter to crayons in his classic book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. So someone wisely noted, "We could learn a lot from crayons: some are sharp, some are pretty, some are dull, and some have weird names, but they all have to live in the same box." That's a good description of most families at the holidays. Gather everyone around the Thanksgiving table and you'll find a colorful mix of personalities, opinions, and quirks, but they still belong in the same box, and they're far better together. *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten, Robert Fulghum, 1989, p.49; Preaching Now, 8/15/2023*

GRATITUDE: In the 1965 film *Shenandoah*, Jimmy Stewart (1908-1997) plays Charlie Anderson, a stubborn, self-reliant Virginia widower raising a large farm family. He prays at meals only because he promised his late wife, and his prayer gives God little credit: "Lord, we cleared this land, we plowed it..." and on through every chore the family did, ending with a grudging thanks "anyway." Then the Civil War takes nearly everything he loves. Two of his sons and a daughter-in-law are killed, and his youngest boy is captured by Union soldiers. Later, at a quiet family meal, Charlie starts the familiar prayer but chokes up and can't finish it. As pastor John Ortberg notes, "Ironically, it is loss and pain that open the door to gratitude." Pride seldom says thanks, but brokenness often leads us to be grateful (James 1:17). *When the Game Is Over, It All Goes Back in the Box, John Ortberg, 2007, p.148*

HEAVEN: Joni Eareckson Tada was 17 when a diving accident in 1967 left her a quadriplegic. Yet a healed body isn't what she longs for most: "Don't assume that all I ever do is dream about springing out of this wheelchair, jumping up, dancing, kicking, doing aerobics. No, I'm looking forward to heaven because of a new heart, a heart free of sin, sorrow, selfishness. That beats having a new body any day." Heaven's greatest gift won't be what changes in our bodies, but what changes in our hearts (1 John 3:2). *Mature Living, April 2019, p.14*

PERSPECTIVE: On Sunday, November 1st, most Americans will "fall back" an hour as Daylight Saving Time ends, and Harry Truman (1884-1972) would have grumbled about it. The 33rd president had no use for time zones or daylight saving. A man of the 1800s at heart, he avoided air-conditioning and despised talking on the telephone. Truman also liked to wear two watches. One kept Eastern Standard Time for the official business of Washington. The other stayed on Missouri time, which he called "real time." Followers of Christ wear two watches as well. One keeps up with this world's schedules, deadlines, and appointments. The other is set to eternity, and that's the only one that tells real time (2 Corinthians 4:18). *History Matters, David McCullough, 2025, p.80*

RELATIONSHIPS: When Steve Jobs brought Ron Johnson to Apple in 2000 to launch its retail stores, most computer stores cared only about making the sale. Johnson wanted customers served, not sold. He told Jobs that as technology advanced, people would value relationships even more, and every relationship calls for one of three things: "launching, deepening, or restoring." So the front of each store became the place where customers' connection with Apple began, and the back was where it grew and got repaired. Today more than 530 Apple Stores in 27 countries welcome well over a million visitors a day. Those same three verbs belong in the vocabulary of all relationships as we begin them, deepen them, and periodically have to restore them. *Shop Different, Ron Johnson, 2026, p.81*

SELF: Evangelist D.L. Moody (1837-1899) observed, “Moses spent 40 years thinking he was somebody; 40 years learning he was nobody; and 40 years discovering what God can do with a nobody.” Dying to self is foundational to following Christ, and Moses’ life reveals the cycle that leads to complete surrender. *TheBriefing.net, 4/5/2024*

SPIRITUAL WARFARE: Tom Skerritt (1933-2026) died October 21. Before Hollywood, the Emmy-winning actor spent four years in the Air Force, and he was memorable as Commander Mike "Viper" Metcalf, Tom Cruise's flight instructor in *Top Gun.* Viper greeted his elite pilots with a warning: "This school is about combat. There are no points for second place." Believers need the same reminder. The Christian life isn't a training exercise or a scrimmage; we face a real enemy in a real battle in real time (Ephesians 6:12). Train like it. *Houston Chronicle, 10/23/2026, p.A4*

THANKSGIVING: In September 1780, General Benedict Arnold plotted to surrender West Point to the British. It collapsed when militiamen caught British Major John André with the plans in his boot. Arnold escaped, but the fort was saved. The army's orders on September 26 branded it "treason of the blackest dye" and called its timely discovery "the most convincing proof that the liberties of America are the object of Divine protection." Congress agreed, setting aside December 7, 1780 as a national day of thanksgiving and prayer for God's rescue of Washington and the army "at the moment when treason was ripened for execution." Take time to thank God for the disasters He prevented that you never even saw coming (Psalm 121:7-8). *Congressional Record, 9/26/00, p.H8067*

THANKSGIVING: On Thanksgiving Day 2025, 57.2 million people watched the Dallas Cowboys beat the Kansas City Chiefs 31-28. It was the NFL's most-watched regular-season game ever. Football has been part of the holiday since November 30, 1876, when the Intercollegiate Football Association scheduled its championship on Thanksgiving Day, just 13 years after Lincoln declared the national day of thanks. With people off work, organizers expected bigger crowds. That first Yale-Princeton contest drew fewer than 1,000 spectators. By 1893 the crowd topped 40,000, and soon colleges and high schools nationwide had Thanksgiving games. Football was attached to Thanksgiving to borrow some of the holiday's popularity, and it worked. Enjoy the games, but don't let the sideshow crowd out the main event of gratitude (Psalm 100:4). *Saturday Evening Post, November/December 2025, p.44; NFL.com*

THANKSGIVING: In August 1939, Franklin Roosevelt (1882-1945) announced he was moving Thanksgiving from November 30 up to November 23, to give retailers an extra Christmas shopping week. He called the holiday "a perfectly movable feast," but the country disagreed. Critics called it "Franksgiving," and a Gallup poll found 62% of Americans were against the switch. Twenty-two states adopted the new date, 23 kept the old, and Texas, Colorado & Mississippi celebrated both. Amid the angry telegrams, F.P. Archer of Miami struck another tone: "Please inform those who disagree with your advance Thanksgiving date that every day is Thanksgiving in Florida." Gratitude isn't bound to a date or calendar (1 Thessalonians 5:18). *Saturday Evening Post, November/December 2022, p.64*

WORSHIP: In 1974, Laurie Klein was a lonely young mother in an Oregon mobile home. She and her husband were broke, and they had no friends living close nor a church to call home. One morning she rose before their baby woke up, took her Bible and guitar, and realized she had nothing left to give. So, she prayed, "If You want to hear me sing, would You give me something You would like to hear?" As she strummed, a short chorus poured out: "I love You, Lord, and I lift my voice to worship You." She called it a gift from God, and *I Love You, Lord* soon spread to churches everywhere. Worship is an expression of thanks to God for who He is and what He's done even when we don't feel like it…and that becomes 'a sweet, sweet sound in His ear.' *Mature Living, February 2018, p.11; GodTube.com*

EVERYDAY HUMOR

KNOWLEDGE: In *Peanuts,* Peppermint Patty has plenty of talents, but schoolwork isn't one of them. After fumbling yet another question in class, she let out a sigh: "Everything I know, I know at the wrong time." Most of us can relate, since hindsight has a way of making brilliant scholars of us all. *Houston Chronicle, 10/12/2026, p.A13*

MARRIAGE: With Thanksgiving dinner on the way, kitchens are about to get crowded. One wife summed up the challenge of cooking alongside her husband: "Marriage is just your spouse perpetually standing in front of the kitchen drawer or cabinet you need to open." The holidays reveal how true that is. *Reader's Digest, June 2022, p.23*

OBEDIENCE: In *Family Circus,* Billy was walking to school with a friend when he shared his latest discovery: "I figured out a system for getting along with my mom. She tells me what to do and I do it." Simple, but brilliant...and it works with our heavenly Father too. *Houston Chronicle, 10/13/2026, p.A12*

THANKSGIVING: In a *Saturday Evening Post* cartoon, a boy looked up from his school paper in disbelief: "This blew my mind—according to this, they didn't have any football games at the first Thanksgiving." The Pilgrims had to wait another 255 years, yet they somehow survived. *Saturday Evening Post, November/December 2025, p.24*

TIME: *Ziggy* arrived at work late only to find his boss frowning at his watch, so he said, "To my defense, this is the earliest I've ever been late!" Some may be using that on time-change-Sunday. *Houston Chronicle, 2/23/2026, p.A12*

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