

Family tradition allows game maker to give thanks, give to ministry

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LEXINGTON, Ky.—Louie Stotz is ready to share his family's Thanksgiving tradition with your family—and percent of the profits with Mission Arlington.

For 31 years, the Stotz family has played the Thanksgiving game.

"Thirty-one years ago, my wife and I were asked to host the Thanksgiving meal for my mother-in-law. Our mothers alternated each year as hostess, and that year my mother-in-law was flying in from the Mayo Clinic, and we were asked to stand in for her," Stotz recalled.

The weather was bad that year, and her plane was delayed.

"You don't start Thanksgiving without your mother-in-law—you just don't. I think that may be biblical truth," he quipped.

Louie Stotz says his Thanksgiving board game can add some reality to holiday get togethers through "thanksgiving, thanks-guessing and thanks-sharing."

"So, stalling for time, I said, 'We're going to play a game.' And we've been playing every year since."

Stotz acknowledges the game has evolved a bit since that first off-the-cuff endeavor, but in essence, it's still the same game. It involves three primary

facets—thanksgiving, thanks-guessing and thanks-sharing.

Players start off by writing down things they are thankful for that have happened since the last time the game was played.

“But you have to think about it. If you’ve just had a baby and you put down ‘I’m thankful for my new baby,’ it’ll make it pretty easy to figure out.”

As players guess who is thankful for what, they can Shoot the Turkey for extra points.

“It’s a competitive game. Guys especially seem to love it, but for most everyone, once you play it, you’re hooked,” Stotz said.

About two years ago, Stotz’s son-in-law, Tim Lester, told him the game was too good to keep within the family. “He said, ‘You’ve got to share this game with the world. It’s wholesome, it’s fun and I’ve seen it change people’s lives,’” Stotz related.

His son-in-law was working for the Commonwealth of Kentucky at the time. Stotz told him that if he was that convinced, he would match his salary if he wanted to prepare and market the game to the public.

The Thanksgiving Game can be found on Amazon, LifeWay Christian Bookstores and Cracker Barrel Old Country Stores. The game sells for \$19.99, and 5 percent of the profits will go to Mission Arlington.

Several years ago, Stotz, who teaches a Sunday school class for college-aged young people, was asked to come to Mission Arlington with an eye toward starting a similar ministry in Lexington.

During that visit, a story was related that on several occasions the feeding of the many who come for the Thanksgiving meal was miraculous, because it was believed that not enough food would be on hand, but God always has provided.

Upon hearing that story, Stotz said he knew why he had been asked to come.

Mission Lexington now is up and running, and “we’re splitting a tithe of the profits to each of those organizations, so each will get about 5 percent after expenses,” he explained.

Stotz stressed making a lot of money is not his goal.

“My whole thought for many years is that we waste Thanksgiving. This gives people an opportunity to have meaningful conversations about meaningful things. We’ve seen the Holy Spirit open up hearts through this game, because sometimes we’ve had people participate that you weren’t sure they had anything to be thankful for.”