

Week 4

November 29, 2020



Group Discussion Guide

(~90 minutes needed)

*The group guides for the **Grateful** series will be a bit different than previous ones. You'll find these to be more prescriptive. Hopefully, you'll find them to be centering as we press into practicing the way of Jesus. You'll want to review this ahead of time and get any supplies for the night ready.*

Begin with 5 minutes of silence + prayer (7-10 minutes)

For this final week, begin your gathering with five minutes together in prayerful silence.

Why silence? Our world is so busy and distracted, with technology filling in any gaps in between. With all that moving, it can be hard to hear others and hear the voice of God. As we gather together, let's press pause and enter into a moment of quiet so that we can hear what God is saying directly to us and through others.

Once finished with a few moments of quiet centering, have a specified person in the group pray this prayer of thanksgiving from the Book of Common Prayer (we'll return to it next week too for this series).

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

Read this overview (1 minute)

God's word says, "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever." We have spent the last three weeks talking about the power of gratitude, the internal challenges to gratitude, and the external challenges of gratitude. This week we get to talk about the *practice* of gratitude.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called not to just follow Jesus in spirit, but we are called to live out our beliefs in practical, tangible ways. Gratitude, like love and hope, is a virtue. This means it is muscle-like; the more we practice it, the stronger it grows. If we practice gratitude, we are sure to be one step closer to becoming a more grateful people.

Scripture + Debrief in small groups (15-20 minutes)

Split your group into triads to read the following Scriptures and debrief the sermon together.

- What is something you are grateful for from today?
- Read **Matthew 7:24-27; Philippians 4:9; 1 Timothy 4:7-8.**
- What is the relationship between being a disciple of Jesus and practicing what Jesus tells us to do?
- How did Sunday's message deepen your faith? How did it challenge you as a disciple of Jesus?
- How can you better incorporate gratitude into your daily, weekly, and monthly rhythms?

Transition back to one large group (5 minutes)

Ask a few questions about each person's time in their smaller groups:

- What were some the things that came from your smaller group discussions?
- How was your daily Examen this past week? (If someone didn't do the daily Examen from last week, encourage your group to press into the Examen for this week.)

Practice gratitude as a community right now (15-20 minutes)

This week for your practice, come together as a group and pray a gratitude liturgy. It will most likely feel odd, out-of-sorts, and peculiar at first. Experiment with it. Give it a try. There's nothing wrong with giggling or "messing up".

Many times when others express gratitude, we can succumb to feelings of entitlement, greed, comparison, or foolishness as we talked about in week two of this series.

The goal of a practice like this is to intertwine the gratefulness we feel as individuals with the hearts and minds of our trusted community. That way what *you* are grateful for becomes what *I* am grateful for. If one person is thankful, we are all thankful. If one member of our body expresses gratitude, we all empathize with that member and express gratitude with them.

So, for this practice...Gather everyone in a circle (socially distanced of course) and explain the goal of this practice. This prayer liturgy will consist of Scripture and call and response. Share how this will look from the info below and encourage everyone to be vulnerable and bold in their expressions of thanks. Encourage people to share the big things they are thankful for as well as the small things.

Create a calm, prayerful atmosphere (you might start with a minute of silence). Begin by having one person read **Psalm 136:1-9** aloud.

Once the Scripture has been read, you'll want to, as the leader, begin by sharing the gratitude items below and by having the group say aloud the boldened response portion.

Speaker: Lord God, Creator, Ruler, and Redeemer of Heaven and Earth, we come before you now to offer our humble thanks for your gracious gifts present in our lives – for the things we know about and for the things we don't, for things apparent and for things hidden to us, for things seen and for things unseen.

Speaker: For every good and perfect gift Lord God
All: We give you thanks

Speaker: For our redemption through the blood of Christ our sacrificial lamb, Lord God
All: We give you thanks

Speaker: For the Spirit's work among us to transform us into the likeness of Your Son, Lord God
All: We give you thanks

Speaker: For your unwavering disposition of love towards us, your children, Lord God
All: We give you thanks

The floor will then be open for someone to share something they are grateful for. That person will express their thanks to God out loud by using the pattern exemplified above ("For _____ Lord God..."). In response, the community will say aloud, "We give you thanks."

Once ample time has subsided, as the speaker, close your prayer time together by praying the following:

Speaker: Above all, we give you thanks for the great mercies and promises given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. To him be praise and glory, with you, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

When you have finished praying, work through these discussion questions as a large group (10-15 minutes)

- What was this practice like for you? How did it feel?
- What did you like about this practice?
- How can our life group begin to incorporate gratitude practices as a community?

Finish with prayer (10 minutes)

Like each week, finish your group session with prayer. You might designate someone in your group to write down everyone's prayer requests and then send them to the whole group for everyone to be praying about through the week.

- What is on your heart that you need prayer for?
- Who in your life needs prayer?

Have someone close your time together by interceding for the requests that were shared.