

CoreGroup Guide | Three Weeks of Thanks - Part 1

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Welcome

Hello friends! Welcome to the first week of a new sermon series titled “Three Weeks of Thanks.” In this series, we will take a deep dive into giving thanks during hectic times. Showing gratitude can be tricky when life gets in the way and thanking God and others in authentic ways may not even cross our minds. It's not that we don't feel the emotion, but distractions can (and do!) keep our attention away from our gratitude. This week, we look at how even the most joyous occasions can keep us from a quick thank you. First, let's start with a prayer.

Opening Prayer

Hey God, it seems especially appropriate to say thank you for this group and for the time we get to spend together today to strengthen our faith and to discuss difficult things. Please bless our time together. Help us feel your presence and guide us in our discussion. It is in your name we pray, amen.

Ice Breaker

As we reflect on our upcoming national holiday of giving thanks, the menus of the past may be on our minds. What is your all time favorite side dish or appetizer for holiday celebrations?

The Head

Our reading this week is taken from the New Testament book of Luke. Now history holds that Luke was a doctor, or a healer, before he became a disciple. So, certain miracles of healing, like the one below, probably resonated deeply with Luke. It's also important to point out that during this time, people with certain diseases were forced to live outside the city walls away from others. They were treated poorly by the masses and it is here that we often find Jesus.

Luke 17:11-18

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten men with skin diseases approached him. Keeping their distance from him, they raised their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, show us mercy!” When Jesus saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” As they left, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw that he had been healed, returned and praised God with a loud voice. He fell on his face at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus replied, “Weren’t ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? No one returned to praise God except this foreigner?” Then Jesus said to him, “Get up and go. Your faith has healed you.”

- In some instances, the miracles Jesus performs are preceded with prayers or some other action like laying hands on someone. What makes this miracle a mic-drop moment?
- Since the city was located on the border between Samaria and Galilee, it is understandable that a Samaritan would be one of the ten diseased people. Samaria was a culturally-mixed society that practiced elements of paganism mixed in with the Jewish religion. Because of that, they were often despised by the Israelites. How do you think the disciples would have responded after seeing this interaction? What would they have thought or felt about a “thank you” from a Samaritan?
- What is the tone of Jesus’ response at the end of this passage? What do you think he was thinking or feeling as he spoke about the other nine men?
- Why do you think the other nine did not give thanks to Jesus after they were healed?

The Heart

Other Bible translations identify the skin disease in this story as leprosy. The Bible does not mention how long people lived with leprosy, but we can surmise it could be quite painful. The symptoms of leprosy include skin lesions, nerve pain and numbness, poor eyesight, muscle weakness, and other possible deformities. Culturally, people with leprosy were labeled as unclean and they were treated as outcasts. So when Jesus healed these ten men, it was a significant, joyous, life-changing event as they would finally be free from constant pain and would be allowed to return to family and friends. Our own experiences include joyous times too. Maybe not as dramatic as this miracle, but definitely joyous enough to praise God.

- The nine who left without thanking Jesus feels familiar. Honestly, if you were in this situation, would you be the one who thanked Jesus, or would you be one of the nine?
- What are some joyous events that you have experienced lately?
- What does joy feel like to you?
- How is it possible that the experience of joy distracts us from thanking God?
- Why is it important to be thankful towards God during times of joy?
- How does joy contribute to a life of gratitude?

The Hands

The good thing about thanking God, whether you do that on the regular or not enough, is that it's something we can always improve on and it's something we can be intentional about. God appreciates receiving our gratitude always, even in the good times. It's like God wants to share the experience with us, just like any great parent, coach, or friend. Additionally, God wants us to be mindful of our blessings as a way to stay connected.

- What are some helpful ways to remember to say thank you to God during times of joy?
- What are some useful methods to convey our thanks to God?
- What benefits do we receive when we approach God with thankful hearts?
- How can we help others to express thankfulness?

Closing Prayer

Lord, we close our time together this day with thankful hearts. You provide us with many blessings and we are in awe of your dedication to us. Please guide this week as we navigate this season and help us to live with gratitude towards you. It is in your name we pray, amen.

Going Deeper

2 Samuel 7:18-29 is David's prayer of thanksgiving when God establishes his throne demonstrates gratitude in joy.

Then King David went and sat in the Lord's presence. He asked: Who am I, Lord God, and of what significance is my family that you have brought me this far? But even this was too small in your eyes, Lord God! Now you have also spoken about your servant's dynasty in the future and the generation to come, Lord God!

What more can David say to you? You know your servant, Lord God. For the sake of your word and according to your own will, you have done this great thing so that your servant would know it.

That is why you are so great, Lord God! No one can compare to you, no god except you, just as we have always heard with our own ears.

And who can compare to your people Israel? They are the one nation on earth that God redeemed as his own people, establishing his name by doing great and awesome things for them, by driving out nations and their gods before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt. You established your people Israel as your own people forever, and you, Lord, became their God.

Now, Lord God, confirm forever the promise you have made about your servant and his dynasty. Do just as you have promised so that your name will be great forever when people say, "The Lord of heavenly forces is Israel's God!" May your servant David's household be established before you, because you, Lord of heavenly forces, Israel's God, have revealed to your servant that you will build a dynasty for him. That is why your servant has found the courage to pray this prayer to you.

Lord God, you are truly God! Your words are trustworthy, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. So now willingly bless your servant's dynasty so that it might continue forever before you, because you, Lord God, have promised. Let your servant's dynasty be blessed forever by your blessing.

From Pastor Charity

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