

CoreGroup Guide | Three Weeks of Thanks - Part 2

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Welcome

Welcome to the second week of thanks. We opened this series last week with a discussion of giving thanks during seasons of joy. In her sermon, Pastor Sarah reminded us that even though we are created for gratitude we are often distracted by looking ahead instead of embracing the wonders of the present, and our thanks goes unexpressed. The story of the ten healed lepers in which only one returns to offer thanks to Jesus was a thoughtful example. This week we want to consider what giving thanks looks like when things are not going so well – when we are in a season of struggle.

Opening Prayer

Abba, God, here we are again offering thanks for this group. Thank you for each one. Thank you for the joys of our lives and for the struggles. Thank you for the warmth of support we share with one another. Be among us in our talk. May our words be kind. Amen.

Ice Breaker

For many families, Thanksgiving means a football game on TV. Sometimes the outcome even affects the mood at the table. What is your favorite team – either college or pro? Or if you don't have any interest in football, what other sport or activity has become a traditional part of your holiday celebrations?

The Head

According to a quick google search, Oxford Languages defines *struggle* as, “a forceful or violent effort to get free of restraint or restriction.” This could take the form of carrying a heavy load or swimming against the current. Struggles in our lives may look like financial worries, health issues, relationship challenges, or any number of ways in which we feel inadequate. Paul's word of thanks to the Philippians can be an encouragement to us when we are feeling overwhelmed by the struggle. Most likely this letter was written from prison to the church Paul helped to establish in a Roman colony in Greece.

Philippians 4: 11-13

I'm not saying this because I need anything, for I have learned how to be content in any circumstance. I know the experience of being in need and of having more than enough; I have learned the secret to being content in any and every circumstance, whether full or hungry or whether having plenty or being poor. I can endure all these things through the power of the one who gives me strength.

- What are some specific things Paul says that he has learned?
- Using what else you know of Paul, what experiences might have contributed to his contentment as he writes from prison?

- What phrase indicates that there will be more struggles to come?
- Last week we learned that gratitude is communal. In what ways do Paul's words encourage the church at Philippi to be thankful? How about at the Gathering?

The Heart

In the midst of our own struggles it is not so easy to remain as confident as Paul. Think about a season of struggle you have endured. Sometimes remembering past struggles can give us hope for our present concerns and for the days ahead. Past experience helps us to reframe our mindset by accepting the situation and focusing on what we can control.

- What is something you have learned from prior experience with struggle?
- Have you expressed thanks to God and/or to others who may have helped you? Why or why not?
- How could acceptance of your current circumstances lead to gratitude?
- What are some aspects of your current struggles that are cause for thankfulness?
- What makes offering thanks difficult?

The Hands

Struggle is life. Life is a struggle. We are always at odds with something in one way or another. Financial, health, relational, societal issues will not just disappear and never bother us again. Still, contentment and peace are possible. Contentment is not the opposite of struggle. It does not imply that the struggle does not continue or that it should not continue. But contentment does require us to stop long enough to notice what is good about our circumstances and share that goodness with others. Practicing gratitude is a significant way we can do that.

This week begin to reframe your mindset by doing one or more of these things:

- Name the ways in which you are carrying a heavy load.
- Identify the ways in which you are swimming against the current.
- Write down what you can control in these situations.
- Remember what past experience has taught you about struggle.
- Ask for help
- Accept help when it is offered
- Give help
- Say thank you for what you see as good

Which of these actions might you consider doing this week? Share any steps you took with your group next week!

Closing Prayer

Thank you, God, for this time of discussion. Let it be a reminder to us this week, that you are with us. May we remember to give thanks, to you our creator and to those around us. Keep us in your Spirit that we would be the love of Christ. In his name we pray, Amen.

Going Deeper

Job is a study in struggle and yet gives thanks always to God. Even as friends and family discourage him, and he has his own spiritual doubts, Job does not waver in his faith.

Job 19:25

I know that my redeemer is alive and afterward he'll rise upon the dust. After my skin has been torn apart this way – then from my flesh I'll see God.

James is a book of wisdom and guidance for church communities facing times of trial.

James 1:3-4

My brothers and sisters, whenever you face various trials, consider it all joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance complete its work, so that you may be complete and whole, lacking in nothing.

Is James suggesting that struggle has a significant result? Are we to be thankful for the struggle?

Additional Resources

Voskamp, Ann, [One Thousand Gifts](#), Zondervan 2010.

“How do we find joy in the midst of deadlines, debt, drama and daily duties? What does a life of gratitude look like when your days are gritty, long, and sometimes dark? What is God providing here and now?”

From Pastor Charity

Food Drive

<https://subspla.sh/hm2p8cf>

Bring your items on Sunday, November 23. Check the link for more details. This is one way a CoreGroup can make a BIG difference providing much needed support together.