Week Seven: How to Be Thankful – Leader Guide

September 13, 2014

Are you thankful? It can be easy to give the credit for our blessings to someone, or something, other than God. But learning to recognize the provider of our blessings and return to God with gratitude allows us to experience the fullness of our relationship with Him. In this study, we will discuss the benefits of gratefulness, and identify key blessings we are thankful for.

Where Am I Today?

1) Q. Do you think that people are naturally thankful to God? If not, why?

   A. Answers may vary; however you will most likely hear most people answer "no." This makes perfect sense because people are naturally sinful; they don't naturally worship God. It stands to reason that our sin nature would cause us to be ungrateful and take credit for things ourselves. We are much more likely to give ourselves glory than to direct it towards God.

2) Q. Do you know someone who is a very grateful person? What stands out to you about them?

   A. Personal experience will vary. Hopefully you can draw out observations such as the person’s level of joy and contentment. You may also consider digging a little deeper and asking those in your group whether they consider themselves thankful people.
Into the Bible

3) Q. Re-read the account of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19. In verses 15 and 16 we see three important observations: he praised in a loud voice, he fell on his face, and he was a Samaritan. What is the significance of each? How do you see these characteristics in people whom you consider thankful?

   A. There is some room for interpretation here. It is clear from his loud voice that he was unashamed of thanking Jesus publicly. The fact that he fell on his face shows that he took a position of humble submission to Jesus because of the miracle He had done. Because he was a Samaritan, he was the least likely of the ten to praise Jesus, but he did. It is often the people who seem least deserving of blessings that appreciate them the most. Those we may consider "worthy" of blessings can easily take them for granted. You will notice that thankful people are unashamed, humble, and often seem unworthy to be blessed.

4) Q. When we choose to be thankful in the same way that the leper was, it has a tremendous impact on our life from the inside out. Read Philippians 4:6-7. How does being thankful help us to experience the peace of God?

   A. Understanding the greater scope of our lives gives us a perspective that allows for peace. When we recognize that everything comes from God, is used by God, and will ultimately give God glory, we can rest in His strength. Anxiety, for example, comes from the desire to control things that have not yet happened. When we can thank God in all circumstances, we no longer need to control them because we trust God.

5) Q. Although some people may not feel there is much in their lives to be thankful for, for the believer there is one thing we can always return to. Read Colossians 1:11-14. What is the one thing we can always express thanks for as Christians? How does that help us have perspective on our other blessings?

   A. The one thing we can always be thankful for is our salvation. Other things in our lives may change and evolve, but our salvation never will. It can provide the framework through which we see everything else in our lives, helping us to understand how the good and bad are all being used for the glory of God.
How Does This Apply?

6) Q. As you have reflected on the weekly message and processed this idea today, share with the group some of the things you are most thankful for. Consider both good circumstances and seemingly bad circumstances alike.

A. Answers will vary. This is a good chance for the group to connect with one another personally. Be prepared for, and encourage, group members to share very personal thanksgivings. As the leader, direct people to be authentic and transparent with one another. Try to get past surface-level answers and dig deeper. It would be wonderful if someone in the group would share a difficult circumstance that they are thankful for. Perhaps you, as the leader, could seed this idea with your own example.

7) Q. We can certainly be thankful for blessings, not only outside of our group, but also within it. Take a moment as a group to share with each other some things you are thankful to the group for. Consider thanking someone personally for something they have done, said, or are.

A. Responses will vary. This could potentially be a very moving time for your group and a time of great connection. Encourage people to thank others for the way they have encouraged them, supported them, their honesty during Life Group, etc. Again, it will be very helpful for you to get the conversation going and moving in a personal direction by being vulnerable and authentic about the impact the group has had on your life.

Continue Learning on Your Own

8) Q. This week, read Psalm 107. As you read, write down a list of things you can be thankful for based on the examples you see in the text. Allow the Holy Spirit to show you what each verse can mean to you and your gratitude.