

LIFE GROUPS

Thanksgiving Sunday

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: When people celebrate Thanksgiving together, what are some common reasons they give for being thankful?

Read back through the passage before going through the questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What is your biggest takeaway? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**

2. **READ PSALM 54:6-7. How did the sacrifice David offered further exhibit his confidence in God to act on his behalf? How can remembering God's work in your life lead you to trust Him more in the present and future?**

David showed great confidence that God would hear his prayers and act for his benefit. David exhibited this confidence through an offering that praised God for His work in the past and celebrated God's work in the future. David recalled what he had seen God do in the past as a means of confidence that God had not abandoned him and would continue to work in the future. We should do the same as we face hardship. Looking at God's past grace can provide confidence in His present and future grace, even when we don't yet see it.

3. READ PSALM 100. What reasons does the psalmist give to praise God? Which reason most motivates you to praise Him?

a. Who might not think God is good (v. 5)? Why might someone feel this way? How should Christians respond to such an attitude?

4. READ PSALM 107:1-3. What attribute of the Lord does the psalmist command his readers to give thanks for? How might forgetting this attribute of God keep us from being thankful?

Psalm 107 was probably written shortly after the Israelites were allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the temple after the Babylonian exile. The Psalm begins with a call to Israel to give thanks to the Lord for the salvation He provided them before citing four unique dire situations from which God redeemed them.

5. READ PSALM 107:4-32. What do each of these situations have in common? Why did God allow these people to face such dire situations?

Each of the four situations the Psalmist recounts feel hopeless. The people are utterly lost (vv. 4-5), imprisoned (vv. 10-11), deathly ill (vv. 17-18), and surrounded by a deadly storm (vv. 23-27). God allows us to face dire circumstances so that we might come to the end of ourselves and realize that He is our only hope. It is only when we realize that we cannot save ourselves that we turn to the only One Who has the power to truly save.

a. Why might God allow us to face similarly difficult circumstances?

6. How can we be thankful when everything in your life is going wrong and we don't feel thankful? Does God expect you to be thankful then? Is it even possible?

Having been imprisoned for one year, four months, and eighteen days in a Nazi cell measuring 6 ft. x 9 ft, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote what is certainly a reminder of the meaning of the Thanksgiving holiday:

You must never doubt that I'm traveling with gratitude and cheerfulness along the road where I'm being led. My past life is brim-full of God's goodness, and my sins are covered by the forgiving love of Christ crucified. I'm so thankful for the people I have met, and I only hope that they never have to grieve about me, but that they, too, will always be certain of and thankful for God's mercy and forgiveness.

"I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder."—G. K. Chesterton

"When we were children we were grateful to those who filled our stockings at Christmas time. Why are we not grateful to God for filling our stockings with legs?"—G. K. Chesterton

7. What keeps you from being thankful to God? What are some practical ways we might cultivate thankfulness in our hearts toward God?

Gratitude directed towards God (except Luke 17:9; Acts 24:3; Rom. 16:4), generally in response to God's concrete acts in history. Thanksgiving was central to OT worship. Sacrifice and offerings were to be made not grudgingly but with thanksgiving (Ps. 54:6; Jon. 2:9). The psalmist valued a song of thanksgiving more than sacrifice (Ps. 69:30–31). David employed Levites "to commemorate the LORD God of Israel, and to give Him thanks and praise." (1 Chron. 16:4 HCSB; 23:30; Neh. 12:46). Pilgrimage to the temple and temple worship were characterized by thanksgiving (Pss. 42:4; 95:2; 100:4; 122:4). Thankfulness was expressed: for personal (Ps. 35:18) and national deliverance (Ps. 44:7–8); for God's faithfulness to the covenant (Ps. 100:5); and for forgiveness (Ps. 30:4–5; Isa. 12:1). All creation joins in offering thanks to God (Ps. 145:10). See *Psalms, Book of*.

Thanksgiving is a natural element of Christian worship (1 Cor. 14:16–17) and is to characterize all of Christian life (Col. 2:7; 4:2). Early Christians expressed thanks: for Christ's healing ministry (Luke 17:16); for Christ's deliverance of the believer from sin (Rom. 6:17–18; 7:25); for God's indescribable gift of grace in Christ (2 Cor. 9:14–15; 1 Cor. 15:57; cp. Rom. 1:21); and for the faith of fellow Christians (Rom. 1:8).¹

"When it comes to life the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude."—G. K. Chesterton

8. As a group, how are we doing at helping one another remember Jesus is our source and substance of thanksgiving? How can we do better?

¹ Chad Brand et al., eds., "[Thanksgiving](#)," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1578–1579.

Thanksgiving was the focus of Old Testament worship (cf. 1 Chr. 16:4; Ps. 42:4 [MT 5]), especially of pilgrimages to Jerusalem for feasts (100:4; 138:2). In the New Testament also thanksgiving is an activity that takes place in the community and with the focus of attention on the community (2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:3). The thanksgivings of God's people are one means by which knowledge of God is spread (Ps. 57:9 [MT 10]), and increased thanksgiving is the result of that proclamation (2 Cor. 4:15). True thanksgiving does not consist primarily of deeds, but of the disposition of the heart, and it brings persons nearer to God and enables them to see God's salvation (Ps. 50:23). If a person gives thanks merely for that possessed within himself, then that person expresses self-exaltation and self-deception rather than responding to the grace of God (Luke 18:11–14; cf. 1 Cor. 4:7).

PRAYER

Thank God that He is the source and substance of our thanksgiving. Ask Him to help you keep your eyes fixed on the future weight of glory that waits for you as you endure the difficulties of this life. Invite Him to give you opportunities this week to tell others about the thankfulness you have as a child of God and heir of His promises.

Thank God for demonstrating His steadfast love for us through the cross of Jesus Christ. Pray that we would be mindful of our desperate sinful condition before Him and that we would cry out to Him for mercy as we become more aware of the sin in our lives.



FURTHER STUDY

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/thanksgiving>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/what-is-thanksgiving-day>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/ray-ortlund/happy-thanksgiving/>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/we-were-made-for-thanksgiving>