

Week 3

November 22, 2020



Grateful // 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)

Like last 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 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).

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." One of the biggest challenges to gratitude are our circumstances. Let's be honest...what does it mean for us to be grateful when there's a pandemic that's taken

away your job? Or when you've recently lost a loved one? Or when racial injustice persists?

Not only do we have internal enemies of gratitude, but we also have external trials that try to bar us from becoming a people of thanksgiving. Though it may be difficult for us, though life may just be stinkin' hard...when we practice gratitude in spite of our circumstances, we actually begin to develop a kind of godly resolve in our hearts, minds, and bodies that makes waves in the lives of our spouses, children, and relationships in general.

As **James 1:2** says, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

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 **1 Thessalonians 5:18; Acts 16:22-25; James 1:2**.
- What was your impression of Sunday's teaching? What resonated or challenged you?
- What has been the greatest challenge you've faced this year? What did gratitude look like for you while you were in that season?
- What challenges are you facing right now? Which mile marker from the sermon do you think you need to press into? Why?

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 individual 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 (15-30 minutes)

One of the ways that we can begin to counter the external enemies of gratitude that we face is to remind ourselves of God's provision and faithfulness even in seasons of unrest. Even in times of my life where I've felt at my lowest, when I look back, I can often see things I missed that I am thankful for today.

For this practice, find a quiet place with pen and paper. You'll want to make four sections.

Label one section, "January – March," another section "April – June," another section "July – September," and another section "October – November." Your paper might look like this:

January-March	April-June	July-September	October-November

In each section, think through what life was like in those months. Recall who you were spending time with, what your rhythms were, and what reality felt like.

For each section answer these three questions:

1. What external challenges was I facing in these months? How did those make me feel?
2. How did those external challenges lead to internal enemies (i.e. pride, entitlement, greed)?
3. What are three things from that season I'm thankful to God for now as I look back?

After you finish, consider taking time later to prayerfully share with God what you are thankful to Him for. Once you have completed your notes, come back together as a large group to talk through the questions from the next section.

(Group leaders, you'll want to have pens and paper available before group time begins. You may also want to print out this portion of the practice for people ahead of time or have them access it via their phones at thecreek.org/devotionals under the "discussion guide" tab.)

Work through these discussion questions as a large group (10-15 minutes)

- What was this practice like for you? What did God reveal to you?
- Share with your life group one specific season from this year and the thing you were thankful for during that season.

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.