

Week 2

November 15, 2020



(~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 ahead of time.*

Begin with 5 minutes of silence + prayer (7-10 minutes)

As you begin your gathering, spend 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 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 general prayer of thanksgiving from the Book of Common Prayer (we'll return to it each week in this series).

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." There are so many enemies we experience on a daily basis that keep us from being the kind of people who are grateful. Not only are there external enemies (which we'll talk about next week), but we have internal ones as well.

In fact, we are actually hardwired to focus on what we lack, to do what is easy, and to opt for a mentality of entitlement. As pastor Josh Porter writes, "Gratitude is *unnatural*...what we don't have is ever before us or tucked temporarily in the shadow of our subconsciousness. The hunger for more cripples gratitude and drains restfulness – the hamster who can never stop the

wheel. With every rotation, he wants another, doomed to pursue a destination that cannot be reached, for it does not exist.”

Gratitude has to be a deliberate choice. Though it may be unnatural for us, we have the opportunity to practice it and welcome it into our lives as a life-giving rhythm that will grow us into the kinds of people that God desires us to be.

Scripture + Debrief in small groups (15-20 minutes)

Split your group into triads to read the following Scriptures and debrief the sermon together.

- Re-read **1 Thessalonians 5:18** and **James 1:17**.
- What was your impression of Sunday’s teaching? What resonated with or challenged you?
- What is something you are grateful for today?
- What do you feel is the #1 internal enemy of gratitude in your life (greed, entitlement, comparison, or foolishness)?

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 you 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 to counter the internal enemies of gratitude is to think about others. “Thank you” notes may seem like a small thing, trivial even, but when we write down the importance of someone or something in our lives, make the thought tangible, and then even give it to them...that changes us and others.

In the time allotted today, take some time to write four thank you notes.

1. A note expressing gratitude to God for what he has done for you
2. A note expressing gratitude to someone in your past
3. A note expressing gratitude to someone in your present
4. A note expressing gratitude to your life group

After you finish, consider taking time later to prayerfully share with God the ways you’re thankful to Him. Consider sending your notes to the people you wrote them about. Consider sharing with your life group the specific ways you’re grateful for the group.

Once you’ve 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, thank you cards, paper, etc. available before group times 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? How often do you write out things you're thankful for? How did it feel to express gratitude in this way?
- Share with your life group one thing you're thankful to them for.

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.