



HOW TO BE GRATEFUL IN AN UNGRATEFUL WORLD

Group Discussion Guide

Gratitude is the best weapon to fight against entitlement in our lives. Join us for our new series, *How to Be Grateful in an Ungrateful World*, as we grow in gratitude for everything God has given us and rediscover the joy that comes from grateful living!

SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Remember that you aren't in this alone! God will help you prepare and lead your group discussion. Make it your goal to keep in step with the Holy Spirit!

Pray and read the passage a few times on your own. Take a few minutes to identify what makes an impression for you and how the passage might impact your group.

Once you've taken some time to read the passage on your own, read through the entire Discussion Guide. Make sure you understand the Main Point. Identify which questions you want to use in your group time and rewrite them in your own words.

Once your group time is over, take a few minutes to evaluate the discussion. What went well? What could have been different? If you had a "bad night," DON'T GIVE UP! Everyone has tough nights. There were times that even the disciples didn't get what Jesus was talking about!

FREE RESOURCES

The following list is updated for each series to help you and members of your group understand and respond to the biblical truths we're studying as a church. Don't forget about the Mariners Annual Read and the [Gospel Every Day](#) podcast discussing each devotional.

The CSB Study Bible is an excellent resource if you'd prefer a physical copy of the translation used by Mariners Church. It is available for purchase online and in the [bookstore](#) at Irvine.

All Scripture references in this guide are CSB unless otherwise noted.

HOW TO USE THE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

MAIN POINT

Discussions often take on a life of their own, but they typically lack power when they lack focus. The Discussion Leader ought to use the Main Point to keep everyone on the same page. To do this, you might say something like, "That is very interesting and a good topic for another discussion, but today's study is about..." and ask a question that brings people back to the topic of discussion. There will be times when it makes sense to ignore the Main Point—for example, when someone in your group experiences a significant crisis. If you decide to move away from the lesson's Main Point, you want to do so on purpose and not by accident.

RHYTHM REMINDERS

A prompt will be provided when one of the 7 Rhythms of Rooted has a natural point of emphasis. We want to help everyone continue to grow holistically in their spiritual journeys. Obviously, some rhythms always exist, like prayer, but occasionally it will be helpful to draw fresh attention to or spend additional time in one of the rhythms.

LEADER NOTES

Where needed, each lesson may have several Leader Notes. This material will provide insight on how to steer the conversation and care for your people. Additionally, these notes will provide greater context to help you understand a difficult word, phrase, or verse.

LEAN IN BREAK THE ICE

These questions will help kick-start your discussion time. The main goal for this time is to get everyone talking and prepare them for the more focused conversation to follow.

LOOK DOWN LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

The goal for this section is to let the passage speak for itself and stand on its own. This isn't easy! During this time, you will read the passage out loud (twice) and answer questions focused on the details of the biblical text.

LOOK IN APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

Transformation comes from renewing your mind (Romans 12:2). The goal for this section is to look inward to allow God's Word to change you from the inside out. Use this time to discuss how your thoughts and feelings are affirmed and/or challenged.

LOOK OUT IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD'S WORD IN THE WORLD

Jesus calls us to love others, just as He loved us. Based on your understanding of the text and how God is transforming your heart, how will you treat others? How will you apply this teaching to all of your relationships and to everyone you will see this week and beyond?

Be sure to close your time together in prayer. You can take requests from the group, invite others to lead, and bring God the needs that stood out to you in your group time.

WEEK 1: GRATITUDE IS GOOD FOR YOU

Group Discussion Guide

PREPARE

Listen and subscribe to the [Mariners Life Group Leader Podcast](#). Each episode includes a quick conversation to help you prepare for your study, discussion, and application. The first week of each series, Eric will share key thoughts and hopes for your group.

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MAIN POINT

We can foster gratitude by remembering God's provision in the past and trusting in His promises for the future.

RHYTHM REMINDER



WORSHIP

Share about a time in which you were the recipient of an unexpected act of kindness. How did you respond? If you were grateful, how did you express your gratitude?

LEAN IN BREAK THE ICE

Leader Note: More than anyone else, the people of God have a reason to be thankful for God's kindness to us. Yet this is not an easy attitude to maintain. Whether it be trying circumstances or our own internal tendency toward discontentment, we can quickly become entitled or bitter. But gratitude is worth fighting for and developing. We can foster gratitude by remembering God's provision in the past and trusting in His promises for the future. In 1 Chronicles 16, we see a powerful psalm for helping us celebrate His good works.

Read 1 Chronicles 16:7-11.

7 On that day David decreed for the first time that thanks be given to the LORD by Asaph and his relatives:

8 Give thanks to the LORD; call on his name;
proclaim his deeds among the peoples.

9 Sing to him; sing praise to him;
tell about all his wondrous works!

LOOK DOWN LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

10 Boast in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.
11 Seek the LORD and his strength;
seek his face always.

What does David command that all God's people do?

What does he especially emphasize (through repetition) in these verses? Why is this important?

Leader Note: Three different times in verses 10-11, David urges the people to **God**. We can see this theme again and again all throughout 1 and 2 Chronicles, for it is an especially important thing the Lord wants us to grasp. Whether it's a friend in a time of need, a parent in a time of crisis, or a trusted advisor when we don't know what to do, we seek after who we trust and who we depend on. No matter what we're going through, God can be trusted and depended upon. We can and must seek Him.

Read 1 Chronicles 16:12-18.

12 Remember the wondrous works he has done,
his wonders, and the judgments he has pronounced,
13 you offspring of Israel his servant,
Jacob's descendants—his chosen ones.
14 He is the LORD our God;
his judgments govern the whole earth.
15 Remember his covenant forever—
the promise he ordained for a thousand generations,
16 the covenant he made with Abraham,
swore to Isaac,
17 and confirmed to Jacob as a decree,
and to Israel as a permanent covenant:
18 "I will give the land of Canaan to you
as your inherited portion."

Leader Note: While gratitude presumes dependence, remembrance of what God has done for us cultivates our gratitude.

As a group, make a list of things that God did for the Israelites, beginning with the Exodus from Egypt. Why do you think David urged the people to remember? What would such remembering accomplish?

Leader Note: Followers of Jesus “are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.” God’s present and future gift to His people is a perfect, eternal home under His kingship. The promise of this perfect gift is so certain that it is effectively a present reality. It’s a bit like ordering a physical copy of a book and getting to read a few chapters of the e-book before the physical copy arrives. In light of this amazing present and future reality, we can be thankful and grateful people. Such gratitude fuels a life of worship and service to God that pleases Him.

What is the difference between remembrance and nostalgia? Can nostalgia lead to gratitude in the same way that remembrance can? Why or why not?

How does being a grateful person give us an opportunity to share the hope of Christ with others?

Where in your life is it easier to be thankful and where is it harder?

Leader Note: The author of Hebrews characterizes thankfulness-fueled service to God as reverential and awe-filled. These words are not-so-subtle reminders that God is holy. Gratitude for God’s past, present, and future kindness does not diminish His holiness (a fact reinforced by verse 29). Therefore, we can know that we are people grateful to God if our worship and service to Him keeps God’s holiness forefront in our minds and hearts.

In light of today’s study, what are some ways you can begin to cultivate gratitude?

Leader Note: Next week’s study will be on spiritual disciplines and how they cultivate gratitude. Worship, Bible reading, and giving will be discussed, so feel free to bring those up here as a means of sparking the conversation.

Spend time as a group sharing some of the stories behind your gratitude for God—stories of His kindness, grace, and mercy. Enjoy the impact this has on your group.

Leader Note: As beneficial as remembering God’s past goodness is for cultivating gratitude, we can also look at our present and future realities to help us become more grateful.

LOOK IN
APPLY GOD’S
WORD TO
YOUR LIFE

WEEK 2: FIGHT THE ONE THING THAT IS STEALING YOUR JOY

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MAIN POINT

We can foster gratitude by enjoying God in worship, studying God's Word, and giving.

RHYTHM REMINDER



Daily Devotion

LEAN IN

BREAK THE ICE

What is one “life hack” that is now an unconscious, standard practice in your life?

Leader Note: Everyone loves great life hacks. They add a lot of value to our everyday lives without requiring much thought or training. Instantly we are skilled and gratified. Additionally, we can use the hack over and over again without giving it any thought. They truly do become “unconscious, standard practices” in our lives.

Becoming and staying a grateful person, however, cannot be achieved with a few, simple life hacks. While there are certain tips and tricks one might follow to get started (more about those later), we can become truly grateful people through the sustained efforts of practicing spiritual disciplines (what we call “Rooted Rhythms”). The more we practice the Rooted Rhythms of our faith, the more grateful to God we will inevitably become. In our group today, we’re going to look at three of those rhythms: worship, Bible study, and giving.

LOOK DOWN

LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Worship - Read Psalm 100:1-5.

1 Let the whole earth shout triumphantly to the LORD!
2 Serve the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.
3 Acknowledge that the LORD is God.
He made us, and we are his—
his people, the sheep of his pasture.
4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him and bless his name.
5 For the LORD is good, and his faithful love endures forever;
his faithfulness, through all generations.

What are the main verbs and adjectives in this passage that illustrate how we are to approach God in worship?

Based on your reading of this psalm, what is the relationship between worship and gratitude?

Leader Note: When the psalmist focuses his thoughts on God, (particularly His goodness), he grows in his understanding and appreciation for Him, and feels compelled to respond to God (and encourage others to do the same). This response is worship. As Don Whitney defines it, “Worship is the God-centered focus and response of the inner man; it is being preoccupied with God.” As we can see from the passage, gratitude makes up much of our worship. In fact, “worship” and “giving thanks” are effectively synonyms.

Bible Reading - Read Psalm 1:1-3.

1 How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked
or stand in the pathway with sinners
or sit in the company of mockers!
2 Instead, his delight is in the LORD’s instruction,
and he meditates on it day and night.
3 He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams
that bears its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.

What do you learn about the person who delights in God’s word? How might this person cultivate gratitude?

Leader Note: The idea of “meditation” in verse 2 might spark an interesting discussion. Some might associate it with clearing one’s mind in order to reduce stress or anxiety, but the psalmist speaks of someone who is filling his or her mind with the truth of God’s Word as their delight that leads to fruitfulness (which includes less anxiety!).

Leader Note: The Bible is where God has explicitly revealed details about who He is and what He is doing in this universe He created, specially through His Son, Jesus Christ. Whether we are reading casually or studying deeply, Bible intake inevitably leads to gratitude because we become all the more enthralled with the God of the Universe as He has revealed Himself to us.

Giving - Read 2 Corinthians 8:7-9.

Leader Note: The backstory of this passage is particularly helpful for understanding how giving relates to gratitude. Paul (the author of the letter) was collecting an offering from many congregations in order to support others that needed help. Though Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church had been strained, this letter indicates that things were on the mend, and Paul felt that the opportunity to give to this offering might serve as the perfect demonstration of their unity and love. They could show their gratefulness to God for the repentance and reconciliation they experienced by giving to the mission that was bigger than all of them. As the mission succeeded, they would be all the more grateful to God!

7 Now as you excel in everything—in faith, speech, knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us—excel also in this act of grace. 8 I am not saying this as a command. Rather, by means of the diligence of others, I am testing the genuineness of your love. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

Is it surprising to you that believers who excel in faith, speech, knowledge, diligence, and love (v. 8) might not also be generous in their giving? Why or why not?

According to v. 8-9, what should be the primary motivation for giving? How is this related to gratitude?

Leader Note: Our primary motivation for giving should be our love for God and for one another. The more we love God and the gospel, the more grateful we become and the more generous we become. Generosity is an indicator of spiritual growth. In giving, we see that God has given us much more than we could ever imagine, and we give back to Him and His mission as a result.

What quick fixes do people turn to in an effort to cultivate gratitude? Does it work?

What are the lies culture believes and tells about gratitude?

LOOK OUT
IDENTIFY THE
RELEVANCE OF
GOD'S WORD IN
THE WORLD

As we reflect on the three spiritual disciplines from this weekend's message (Worship, Sacrificial Generosity, and Daily Devotion), which of these is easiest to implement in your life, and which have been more challenging?

What attitudes, distractions, or questions stand in the way of you engaging in consistent worship, Bible reading, and giving?

What worship, Bible reading, or giving "hacks" can you share with the group that have been particularly impactful in your spiritual growth?

When we are or have been consistent in these disciplines, how has our gratitude been affected? Share with each other some of the goodness you experience when you are committed to Worship, Daily Devotion, and Sacrificial Generosity.

WEEK 3: WHY I KNOW GOD IS GOOD

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PREPARE

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MAIN POINT

In good times and hard times, we can foster gratitude by reflecting on God's goodness and His good gifts.

RHYTHM REMINDER



REPENTANCE

Spend a few minutes as a group talking about different GOAT's ... that is, those who are arguably "The Greatest of All Time" in their respective fields. Encourage groups members to truly build a case for their GOAT nominee.

LEAN IN BREAK THE ICE

Leader Note: Typically, this conversation would be dominated with talk of famous sports figures, but you might also include people like military leaders, orators, and more. You might pick a category from the beginning and work to keep the conversation focused on it.

Transition to the truth that God is the GOAT of goodness. That is, He is the final standard of goodness—the plumbline for what goodness is. God doesn't do anything that isn't good. Everything He does is good and worthy of our admiration. Reflecting on His goodness fosters gratitude in good times and hard times.

LOOK DOWN LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Read James 1:12-13,16-17

12 Blessed is the one who endures trials, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. 13 No one undergoing a trial should say, "I am being tempted by God," since God is not tempted by evil, and he himself doesn't tempt anyone.

16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

What do you learn about how we are called to navigate trials from the passage?

What is the truth we should tell ourselves in response to the lie that God causes us to sin during trials?

Leader Note: James' response to a lie that comes from inside us is to speak biblical truth that comes from outside us. Even the heart of one who follows Jesus is not immune from believing lies, for "the heart is more deceitful than anything else..." (Jeremiah 17:9). James calls upon followers of Jesus to speak the truth about God to ourselves; namely, that God is good and gives only good things. The Giver is good, so the gifts are good. This is always true, regardless of whether or not we feel it at any given time. While we may not understand everything God is doing, we mustn't equate God's goodness with our prosperity. We must equate it with His character. By equating God's goodness with our circumstances, we cultivate bitterness and entitlement (to name a few). By equating it with God's character, we cultivate gratitude.

What "explanations" does the world typically give to the question of "why we experience trials"? How are those explanations different from the Christian worldview?

What does it say about the state of the human heart that-when times are hard, we are quick to blame God and believe false things about Him, if not outright abandon Him?

Leader Note: We all face a number of difficulties that can tempt us to believe some untrue things about God. If we are facing financial troubles, we can doubt God's ability to provide what we need. If we see godly people suffer and evil people thrive, we can doubt God's justice. The simple fact of the matter is that when we go through trials, temptation to believe that God is not good comes right along with them. God may very well bring trials into our lives, but James makes clear that God does not do so to destroy our faith, but to strengthen it. Even in hard times, God is still good. The hard times are an instrument designed to sharpen our understanding of God's goodness, not doubt it.

LOOK OUT IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD'S WORD IN THE WORLD

What are some of the more difficult trials you've experienced in your life? What temptations came along with those trials? How did those trials shape your opinion or feelings about God?

Leader Note: Take time to practice the rhythm of Repentance. Allow time for everyone to share those temptations and pray as a group.

How can our trials and the goodness of God that we experience in our trials turn into ministries that bless others?

As you contemplate God's goodness more and more, what impact might this have on your heart as it relates to gratitude?



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