

Discipleship Groups

Week 16

As your people gather, welcome them, and help them to greet one another.

When it's time to begin, welcome them as a group. Since you are the one who knows what the previous weeks' conversations have been, you are in the best position to judge what follow-up may be appropriate at the beginning of each week's session. You are the one in a position to make sure that there is a personal connection from week to week.

You may include the question that the early Methodists asked one another in their small groups: *How is it with your soul?* It is a personal sharing question. Assure your members that they are free to answer it in the way that they interpret it individually. The only wrong answer is an untrue one.

After the initial conversation and the "soul question," lead a brief follow-up discussion of this past week's prayer exercise. Our assignment was to practice confession in our praying. As you reflect on the past week, consider the following questions together:

- What was your experience of setting aside 15 minutes for confession?
- Was there an exercise this week that was especially difficult for you? Why?
- What exercise was especially helpful? Why?
- What did you learn? How did you grow?

Next, transition the group to watching this week's video together. The video can be downloaded or it can be played from the web site. Following the video, consider these questions:

- How much is thanksgiving currently a part of your prayer life?
- What did you learn from the video?
- What was new or different or helpful?

Distribute to your group members copies of the next page, which offer some guidelines for this week's focus on thanksgiving.

Close your time with a brief prayer on behalf of the whole group.

Before everyone is dismissed, remind the group members about your next meeting time and place, as well as encouraging them to pray for one another each day between now and then.

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This sheet represents a week-long exercise in thanksgiving. As you embark on it, please keep in mind these two guidelines.

1. Don't read ahead. Focus each day on what is written and assigned for that day.
2. Give yourself ample time each day. Set aside twenty minutes daily for these exercises. Set a timer for yourself, and find a space where you won't be distracted.

Day One

Chief among God's instruments of blessing are people. Devote today's thanksgiving time to thanking God for people who have been a blessing to you, people whom He has used in your life.

Day Two

Yesterday was devoted to people; now turn your attention to places. Spend today's thanksgiving time thanking God for places that have been a blessing to you and which He has used in your life.

Day Three

The theme of today's thanksgiving is occasions or events. Spend your time recalling and thanking God for occasions and events in your life that He has used to bless you.

Day Four

From time to time, we sense that God has spoken to us. He does this in different ways with different people, of course. How He speaks to you need not be the same as how He speaks to someone else. Spend today's designated time remembering and thanking the Lord for the times and ways He has spoken to you through the years.

Day Five

The hymn writers look back: "Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far..." "Here I raise mine Ebenezer; hither by Thy help I'm come..." "Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him, how I've proved Him o'er and o'er." Look back today over your years of walking with Him, and thank Him for how He has led you, what He has brought you through, and where you are at with Him today.

Day Six

Many Psalms of thanksgiving are organized the same way as Psalms of lament, and may even begin by covering the same material. Today, devote your thanksgiving time to thanking God for circumstances that once you complained about, but in which He intervened to make things better.

Day Seven

We see Jesus give thanks just before the feeding of the four-thousand (Matthew 15:36) and during the last Supper (Luke 22:19). Another way to look at that is that He gave thanks when there was insufficient food and when He was preparing to suffer and die. Meditate on these two episodes from Jesus' life and example, and let His Spirit prompt and guide your own thanksgiving.

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