

# Week 11: Choose Gratitude

## Colossians 3:15-17

### GOAL:

To remind us that when we choose a life of gratitude, it leads to peace in our lives, draws us closer to God, and points us to worship.

### CHECKLIST

- Prepare for your group meeting by praying for yourself and your group (feel free to use the prayer below) and reading through this Leader's Guide.
- Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests/new members.
- Remind your group about the schedule for the next few weeks.
  - 11/25-12/1: Thanksgiving Break (no GG)
  - 12/8-11: Christmas Store Serve Week
  - 12/15-18: Final week of Grow Groups

### PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER:

*Father, we come before you today with hearts full of gratitude. Thank you for the countless blessings you have poured into our lives—blessings seen and unseen, big and small. Thank you for the gift of life, the love of family and friends, and the beauty of creation that surrounds us. Lord, we acknowledge that every good and perfect gift comes from you. In moments of abundance, may we never forget to praise you. In times of challenge, help us to see your hand at work and to trust in your plan. Teach us to be grateful in all circumstances, knowing that you are always with us, working for our good. Forgive us, Father, for the times we've taken your blessings for granted or allowed worry and doubt to overshadow our thankfulness. Renew our hearts today and fill us with a spirit of gratitude that overflows into every area of our lives. May our gratitude be a reflection of our love for you and a testimony of your goodness to those around us. Amen.*

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*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25*

## CONNECT, COORDINATE, & PRAY

Since this is the week before or after Thanksgiving, take time to catch up on how your group members will/did spend the holiday. Ask about ways you can be praying for them. and then spend time praying for your group members and for your time together today.

Remind them of the Grow Group Schedule for the remaining weeks of the semester:

- 11/25-12/1: Thanksgiving Break (no GG)
- 12/8-11: Christmas Store Week (PM groups sign up at <https://www.vrbc.net/christmasstore>)
- 12/15-18: Final week of Grow Groups

## DISCUSS

**Leaders:** *Due to the holiday schedule, we're taking a break from our normal sermon-based content this week to cover a passage in Colossians 3. This passage brings into perspective our need to choose gratitude in our lives. Gratitude is a powerful expression of our faith and trust in God. It is more than just saying "thank you." It is a posture of the heart, a recognition of God's goodness, and a way to deepen our relationship with him. In a world where it's easy to focus on what we lack or what's going wrong, practicing gratitude reminds us of God's abundant blessings and his constant presence in our lives.*

- Take some time this morning to go around the room and talk about what you are grateful for.

**Read Colossians 3:15-17.** – *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

- Paul says in verse 15, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...”. What does it mean to let something rule your hearts? What are some things that can rule our hearts?

**Leaders:** *What rules our hearts is what captures our focus, directs our actions and behavior, manages our relationships, and orders our priorities. Earlier in Colossians 3:5-8 Paul describes a person who is living within their earthly nature. Material possession, desires of the flesh, selfishness, personal ambition all can rule our lives if we allow them to take capture of our heart.*

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- Why is it important that the thing that rules our hearts be ‘the peace of Christ’ instead of these earthly desires?

**Leaders:** *Paul frequently expresses peace in his letters. It echoes the Jewish greeting shalom. It means well-being and contentment in all circumstances. It’s not that our desires are always evil or wicked; but when they take the place of Christ in our hearts, they become idols and draw our attention away from the peace of Christ. Instead of seeking to be filled by the things of this world, we should have contentment in what God has provided. Christ himself, who is the Lord of peace, is to be present and ruling every area of our lives.*

- Paul ends verse 15 with, “And be thankful.” What does thankfulness, or gratitude, have to do with the peace of Christ?

**Leaders:** *It almost feels like Paul is just tagging this on at the end of the verse as if to say, “Oh yeah, and remember to be thankful”. But Paul is being very intentional here. You cannot be at peace unless you are constantly reminding yourself of all that God has given you already. If you are constantly wanting something you don’t have, it’s hard to be thankful for what you do have.*

- But life is not always easy, and we are never promised it will be. Read Psalm 42:5-6. How do we give gratitude to God when life gets tough?

**Leaders:** *Everyone in your grow group could probably share something that has stolen their peace at some point in their life without having to think very hard. Maybe the grief of a loss that never settles far from their thoughts. They may have struggled deeply over a situation with a son or daughter or a failing marriage that is beyond their ability to control. Maybe they’ve faced some health issues of their own, or their income hasn’t been meeting their monthly expenses.*

*We know that we can and should pray about these matters. Praying is not all that we can and should do. “Do not be anxious about anything,” the apostle Paul wrote, “but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).*

*To put it even more simply: In every situation ... prayer plus gratitude equals peace. When prayer teams up with gratitude, when we can see God’s mercies even in the midst of our pain, and when we trust him with faith and offer thanks even when those mercies aren’t yet visible, he meets us with his unfathomable peace. This is his promise to us.*

*(Side note: It important to understand that depression affects many people, requiring some to seek extensive counseling and medical help. These are wonderful resources, and should be highly encouraged when appropriate. These interventions paired with prayer and gratitude can do miraculous things in someone’s life. God has given us counselors, doctors, and medicines to aid in healing.)*

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*God has also given us experiences with him and his Word. Meditating on God's goodness to his people and recalling how God has worked in our lives might help take our minds off the present situation and can give us hope. It will focus our thoughts on God's ability to help us rather than on our inability to help ourselves. When you feel down or discouraged, take advantage of this psalm's advice. Remember who God is, read the Bible's accounts of God's goodness, and meditate on them.*

- What happens when we try to approach life without focusing on gratitude?

**Leaders:** *We can try it the other way...without gratitude. Interestingly, an author rephrases Philippians 4:6-7 with its polar opposites:*

*Do not be calm about anything, but in everything, by dwelling on it constantly and feeling picked on by God, with thoughts like, "And this is the thanks I get," present your aggravations to everyone you know but Him. And the acid in your stomach, which transcends all milk products, will cause you an ulcer, and the doctor bills will cause you a heart attack, and you will lose your mind.*

*How many of us can relate to this? In the midst of a busy schedule, stressful days, difficult circumstances, we forget all the things the Lord has done in our lives, and we allow these stressful and difficult things to rob us of the peace we can experience when we look at life through the lens of gratitude. Prayer is vital—so is gratitude. Let's cultivate the kind of gratitude that trusts that God is working for our good even in unpleasant circumstances ... the kind that guards our troubled hearts and minds with his unexplainable peace.*

*Are you dealing with chaotic or unsettled situations? Is your soul burdened by striving, stress, and exhaustion? God's peace—true and lasting—is waiting for you just beyond the doorway of intentional gratitude. But the only way to find it is to go there and see for yourself. God's peace is one of the many blessings that live on the other side of gratitude.*

- Based on verse 16, how can we express the gratitude we feel for God and his provision? What are some ways we can show our gratitude through worship?

**Leaders:** *Gratitude is worship. When we are focused on God's goodness, we express our gratitude through, "psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit". Our thanks and praise to God pleases him. We tell him thank you. We praise God for who he is and what he has done in our lives. Have you ever thought about it this way? When we are intentional about praising God, we are also consistently reminding ourselves of his goodness and, in turn, becoming more grateful for him. It is a cycle that builds on itself and draws us closer to him the more and more we participate in it. When we humble ourselves before the Almighty, we are brought to our place and see him for who he is. That can produce a grateful heart that seeps into every part of who we are.*

- What does vs. 17 tell us about what our lives should look like because of our gratitude toward God?

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**Leaders:** *When we live in alignment with the name of Jesus, everything we do—our words, actions, and attitudes—becomes an offering to God. This includes how we perceive and respond to the circumstances of life.*

*Gratitude serves as a guardrail for our hearts and minds. It protects against a victim mentality. When we focus on God's goodness, we move away from a mindset that sees life as happening to us and instead embrace the truth that life unfolds for us under God's care. Even in hardship, gratitude reminds us that we are not abandoned, but rather held and guided by a loving Father.*

*Gratitude also protects against pride. Gratitude shifts our focus from self-reliance to God-dependence. Instead of claiming credit for our successes or blessings, we acknowledge that everything we have comes from Him. This humility keeps us grounded and keeps God at the center of our lives.*

*Living with gratitude means training our hearts and minds to look for God's goodness in every situation. This requires intentionality, reflecting on his blessings daily, speaking words of thankfulness in prayer and conversation, and encouraging others to see God's work in their lives.*

*When our gratitude flows from a place of awareness and faith, it transforms us. It becomes a testimony to others and a reflection of Jesus' light in the world. In all that we say and do, as representatives of Jesus, let us practice gratitude with open eyes and open hearts, anchoring ourselves in his love and purpose.*

## PRAY

Break up into groups of 3 or 4. Think about this last year. How has God been good to you? Share those things with your group.

1. Together in prayer, give God thanks for the things you have named, which you are grateful for.
2. Next, spend some time voicing praises for who God is. (In #1 you focused on what God has done. Here in #2, the focus is more on God's attributes and character.)
3. Now spend some time praying over each other and ask God to help you see things from a grateful perspective.

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