

Before Amen

Session Four

To say “thanks” is to celebrate a gift

To think and talk about before the video...

- How might our outlook on life change if we saw the cup full and overflowing rather than half empty?

Or

How can a grateful heart and commitment to express thankfulness for the little and big gifts of God fill our cup to overflowing?

To say thanks to God causes us to recognize that regardless of our circumstances, we are truly blessed.

To think about during the video...

- We can find beauty and hope during the hard seasons
- The power and impact of a thankful spirit, even in the face of suffering.
- Thankfulness is a command not a suggestion or recommendation.
- How to make a perfect place imperfect... ingratitude.
- Lessons from God's people in the desert
- We should be thankful for what God gives and recognize his great gifts.
- The undeniable and unimpeachable authority of Jesus.
- Praying in the name of Jesus is not an empty motto or talisman.

God's solution to any challenge is to have a grateful spirit.

To think and talk about after the video...

1. Tell about someone you have watched and studied over the years who seemed to always have a spirit of thankfulness for the goodness of God, no matter what he or she was facing.
2. When is it most difficult for you to say thank you to the people in your life? When is it toughest to stop and say thank you to God?
3. In this session, Max shares his story about how he is dealing with pain in his writing hand. Although he has prayed about it, God has not yet removed the pain. Max says, “I want God to heal my hand. So far he has used my hand to heal my heart.” What do you think Max is getting at with this statement? How is this an answer to his prayers? How can Max's attitude encourage us in some of the struggles of our own lives?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18

4. We are called to give thanks in all circumstances. Why do you think God is so empathic and concerned that we learn to live thankfully? What is a circumstance you are facing right now that makes it difficult to be thankful? How can your group members support you in prayer and encourage you as you seek to walk through this circumstance with a thankful spirit?

Read Genesis 3:1-13

5. What did the serpent do that created discontent and ingratitude in the hearts of Adam and Eve?
What were some of the results and consequences of Adam and Eve's journey into ingratitude?
6. Satan enticed Adam and Eve to look away from all of the good things they had and fixate instead on what they did not have? He uses this same tactic today. What are some ways Satan uses our culture, the media, the people around us, or the hidden desires of our hearts to create discontent and drive us to spend our time and energy pursuing what we don't yet have?

What are some practical ways we can battle these enticements plug our ears, block our eyes, and resist being sucked into a life of always wanting what we don't have?

Read Exodus 16:3-7, 13-16, 3-32 and Numbers 11:4-6

7. As you read these passages, what do you learn about God and about his people? In what ways are our attitudes and actions often similar to those of the Israelites in this account?

Read Numbers 21:4-9

8. As severe as the picture painted in this passage might be, read it closely and let the lesson wash over you. How seriously does God take ingratitude?

By God's grace, we live on the other side of the cross. Even as people of Israel could look up and see the bronze snake and be healed, so we can look up and see Jesus crucified for our sins and be saved. Tell about when you became a follower of Jesus and how looking to him helps you live a grateful and thankful life.

Read Matthew 8:5-10

9. What did the centurion in this story understand about authority in general and Jesus' authority in particular?

How is confident prayer a declaration that we understand and believe in the power and authority of Jesus?

10. What are some practical ways we can express thankfulness and a grateful heart during any of these moments we face in a normal day?

We have access to the throne room of Jesus by virtue of the name of Jesus.

To think and talk about after the discussion...

- Thank God for people in your life who model a heart of gratitude.
- Thank God for people who stretch you, challenge you, and drive you to your knees in prayer.
- Thank God for his Word- the Bible- and how it instructs, encourages, and directs you each day.
- Thank Jesus for being the absolute authority in the universe and that you can trust him at all times.
- Ask for strength to be thankful, even when times are hard and pain is close at hand.

Prayer changes things because prayer appeals to the top power in the universe.