

LifeGroups

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Study

Tick when
purpose covered

South Location - week of 27 November 2011 -

1. Fellowship - *We are committed to doing life together.*

Icebreaker idea: *What is a favourite phrase or saying? Follow-up question: What do people in the group think it is?*

How is everyone doing? *Use this time to see if people have needs you did not know about; to celebrate good things that have happened; to hear someone's news*

Notes / Ideas:

2. Worship - *We powerfully connect with God personally & corporately.*

Your plan for the time is important, but God being with you is more important.

Pray and invite the Holy Spirit, worship in song or just wait on God.

Worship idea: *Find the lyrics for two or three Christmas Carols which declare the glory of God. Sing these or use them to initiate spoken worship after reading the words out loud to the group.*

Notes / Ideas:

3. Discipleship - *What would Jesus do if He was in my shoes?*

Forgotten Virtues - Gratitude – Luke Brough

Questions to discuss:

- Invite several people to share what they recall from the message and the service this Sunday
- What did you get out of Sunday's message? What did God speak to you about?

1. Read the following:

The dictionary show that words which have a similar meaning to gratitude are: acknowledgment, appreciativeness, grace, gratefulness, honour, indebtedness, obligation, praise, recognition, requital, response, responsiveness, sense of obligation, thankfulness, thanks, thanksgiving. We heard how we can develop a sense of expectation in life which works against being thankful. God placed huge importance upon being thankful towards Him. He does this to teach us how to respond to Him so that we can this reflect this same attitude towards the people made in His image.

A church leader in America said this week during the US Thanksgiving week that if there was one gift or blessing he would most like to impart to believers it would be that they would be thankful, that they could have a thankful heart. He said he has the sense it is the most undervalued trait and yet there is something powerful about a thankful heart. Thankfulness is humble in nature because it has a sense of indebtedness, obligation and dependency. It is not just "thanks", it is a sense of moral obligation that "I have been impacted by you" or "I have been impacted by God." It is saying I didn't deserve this, these aren't wages or something I fought for because even on my best day what God is doing for me is fully by His grace to me.

Questions to discuss

- What are some typical situations during a week where you are truly thankful for something someone has done? Share about these – what do you do and how does it make you and the other person feel.
- How do you think you could be a more grateful person towards your friends, family, colleagues, neighbours, leaders, service staff and strangers?
- What hinders us from being people who display greater gratitude - is it cultural; is it generational; is it a particular life-style; is it reciprocal (others don't do it for me so why should I do it)?

2. Read the following

Jesus told his followers a story which seems to say that being unthankful is right in some circumstances. Read Luke 17:7-10 and discuss your thoughts on this passage. Note that the very next event recorded is the story of the nine ungrateful lepers we heard about on Sunday. To help with your discussion popular cross-references for verse 10 to look at are 1 Peter 5:5-6 & Philippians 3:8-9 & Matthew 25:37-40. One commentary gives this explanation: "If we have obeyed God, we have only done our duty, and we should regard it as a privilege. Remember, obedience is not something extra we do; it is our duty. Jesus is not suggesting that our service is meaningless or useless, nor is He advocating doing away with rewards. He is attacking unwarranted self-esteem and spiritual pride."

So how does the Bible demonstrate the power of thankfulness? I've heard this perspective. Look at John 6:1-11. The Greek word in verse 11 for thanks is eucharisteo where we get the word Eucharist to describe the Lord's supper. When Jesus gave thanks is when the food multiplied. This is more than saying grace for food which is front of us on the table because Jesus had very little food and a very large hungry crowd. It is more like a hungry family sitting down and giving thanks for food which isn't in the house. Look at verse 23 when the next day John describes this amazing miracle. We say the miracle of feeding the 5,000 and John says when the Lord gave thanks. True heartfelt thankfulness in such situations requires faith before the provision. Look at 1 Corinthians 11:23-24 and see how on the same night Jesus would be betrayed, beaten, abandoned and brutally killed He gave thanks for what would come after this – your and my salvation. *Hint: you might want to take communion in your group.*

Questions to discuss

- The commentary mentioned above asked this question: "Do you sometimes feel that you deserve extra credit for serving God?" *Hint: Everyone will probably answer no so use the question to spark further discussion on the passage from Luke 17.*
- How thankful are we towards God when we do not have what we desire - finances, relationship restored, a healing, a child, a spouse, a home etc?

3. Read the following

We heard how comparing what we have can develop an attitude of entitlement and ingratitude. This happens if we find someone who is better off than we are. They might be better off in terms of money, talent, looks, health, having a happy family, career or academic success or possessions. But, comparing can also be used in a helpful way. When was the last time we compared yourself to people who live in dangerous brutal communities, who face poverty, who lack access to education, health and social services? We are in the top 5% to 10% of the world using worldly measures. And we are in the top group in the world using spiritual measures because we can follow Jesus openly and we have amazing access to Godly Biblical teaching. There may be some discrimination towards us as a Christian in a few places in NZ society but it is nothing like many countries of the world. Read the book of Lamentations to see what the suffering experienced when a nation abandons God. New Zealand and the Church here is very far away from that type of spiritual poverty.

Questions to discuss

- As a group, pause and think about all that we have in New Zealand to be grateful for compared to most countries in the world today. After a minute invite each member to briefly share one aspect and keep doing this in rounds until it is time to pause again and reflect privately how good we have it now and how much potential we have to serve God and expand the Kingdom.

4. Mission - *We present the gospel to all the people we can, in all the ways we can, in all the places we can.*

Take time to share any opportunities members have had to share the love of Jesus with another person. Give thanks and praise for what the Lord is doing.

Notes / Ideas:

5. Ministry - *We serve, in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Answers to prayer? Would anyone like prayer? Any practical needs?

Idea: Take time to share about your hopes for Christmas and the holiday season. In pairs or threes agree on each person's hopes and take turns to pray about these.

Notes / Ideas:

Finish with prayer, and something positive and encouraging e.g. great to see you all / really enjoyed today / looking forward to next time / God is good, etc