



Sermon-Based Small Group Leader Notes

For the week of November 20, 2011 (week 10 of 10)

Introduction

Topic

Sermon Title: "Don't Be a Turkey"

Scripture: Luke 17:11-19

Sermon by: Rev. Bill Gaethke

Goals for This Gathering

- Discuss the homework
- Pray together
- Discuss any changes in day or time that might need to be made with the upcoming holidays
- Provide an opportunity for group members to share what they are thankful for
- Request that everyone take a few minutes, outside of meeting time, to fill out a LIFE Group Evaluation form. Forms can be obtained in the Foyer or online at www.northwestbaptist.com (by clicking on the "SBSG Additional Resources" link in the right column). Completed forms should be returned to Bonnie Lee's mailbox.

Prayer

- Take prayer requests and praises
- Pray for all Small Groups meeting at Northwest and in homes

Getting Started

There are about 140 references in Scripture to giving thanks to God. In the Psalms alone there are 30 references, and virtually every one of them is a call for us not only to be thankful to God but to verbalize it in an open way, in song, in private, or in public. When you express your thanksgiving, you enhance your ability to experience of the good things of God. Conversely, when you withhold your thanksgiving, you detract from your experience of the good things that God has given you.

Every year since 1862, the President of the United States has written a Thanksgiving Proclamation. Read the following excerpts from the 2004 proclamation by President George W. Bush and underline* the phrases that are most outstanding to you:

*(If you find this helpful you may want to also read this aloud to your group. If your group is sharing a meal, it might be nice to read this before the meal.)

All across America, we gather this week with the people we love, to give thanks to God for the blessings in our lives. We are grateful for our freedom, and grateful for our families and friends. On Thanksgiving Day, we

acknowledge that all of these things, and life itself, come from the Almighty God.

President George Washington proclaimed the first National Day of Thanksgiving in 1789, and President Lincoln revived the tradition during the Civil War. Since then, in times of war and in times of peace, Americans have gathered with family and friends and given thanks to God for our blessings.

On this Thanksgiving Day... I encourage all Americans to gather together in their homes and places of worship to reinforce the ties of family and community and to express gratitude for the many blessings we enjoy.

Into the Bible

In this section, participants have the opportunity to look at two other passages from the Bible that guide our thoughts about gratitude.

Question 4 — Lepers were shunned by society. They were kept in isolation and everywhere they went people stayed away from them. Once diagnosed with this disease they could not hug their wife or children. They could not shake hands with someone. They could not go to the temple to worship. This is why there were 10 lepers (all they had was each other) and why there were Samaritans and Jews in the group. It is also why we read that "they stood at a distance." Their future seemed hopeless.

Question 5 — Lead the discussion beyond just physical disease (e.g., HIV, cancer, obesity) to mental, emotional, spiritual, etc. This is an opportunity to connect the lesson to the learners.

Question 6 — Point out the ways these groups and individuals are isolated, ostracized, and walled off by mainstream culture. Or maybe you'll decide that some are actually embraced by the mainstream thus making the need for healing and salvation more difficult for them to acknowledge.

Question 8 — A great discussion question. Don't let the group settle into simple "black and white" or "right and wrong" positions. This scenario is more about "good" and "greater good."

Luke 17:11-19 outlines the story of 10 lepers desperate for healing and response after being healed. At the time of Jesus, the lepers had to live isolated from other people, because they were afflicted with this dreaded skin disease. If someone thought he was healed, he had to show himself to the priests (Leviticus 13-14). The whole Old Testament only mentions about two or three such miracles. As for the

Samaritans, the Jews despised them for being foreigners and half-pagans.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 encourages us to maintain an attitude of gratitude, at all times, in all circumstances. In these verses, we find what some call the “standing orders of the church.” If you want to know what God’s will is for your life, here’s where you can start. Whereas in verses 12-15 Paul instructed us on our interpersonal relationships, in these verses he talks to us about our attitudes. Take the time to let members share both struggles and victories with being thankful even in tough times. You may want to record prayer requests for the end.

Question 11 — This is how we experience thankfulness. We cannot focus on the circumstances of life, or life will make us sick. We will be thankful sometimes, but often we will find gratitude lacking. We must instead put our focus on something that is constant. That constant is the nature, character, and promise of God. John MacArthur, in his commentary on 1 Thessalonians, gives a number of “qualities” we should focus on to take away the seasickness of life’s circumstances:

- God’s righteous character (Nehemiah 8:10; Psalm 71:23)
- Christ’s redemptive work (Luke 10:20; Romans 5:1–2; 1 Peter 1:8–9)
- The Holy Spirit’s ministry on our behalf (Romans 8:14–27)
- The spiritual blessings we possess (Philippians 4:13, 19; 2 Peter 1:3)
- God’s providence as he orchestrates everything for our benefit (Rom. 8:28–30; James 1:2–4)
- The promise of future glory (Jude 24)
- Answered prayer (John 16:24)
- The gift of God’s Word (Psalm 19:7–11)
- Deep and sincere relationships in the body of Christ (1 Thessalonians 3:9)

Digging Deeper

Ephesians 5:18-20 encourages us to always be thankful and confess our struggles. This passage of Scripture holds the key to living a life of gratitude in all circumstances. That key essential element is being daily filled with the Holy Spirit. Apart from Christ’s indwelling spirit, it is impossible to live a life of gratitude in the way our Lord intended. This passage also indicates that thankfulness is a choice—it is something we intend to express.

Questions 12–14 are meant to give us a chance to reflect on how we apply thankfulness in a practical way.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

Close your time together in prayer. Ask God to soften the hearts of group members and create a willingness to let Him in to the parts of their lives where they fight for control. Pray that thankfulness would define our life in every circumstance.

“Heavenly Father, I know that I have neglected to thank you for so many blessings. You’ve blessed me and waited for me to run back to you with thanks, and I’ve gone my way. I’ve taken you for granted. Please forgive me. Put thankfulness into my heart and soul. Let me speak it, sing it, and live it, so that I might be a visible, not silent, example of one whom you have healed. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.”