



Praying Thankfully

March 4, 2007

Note To Leaders

On your own time read Ephesians 1:18-20. Hopefully this lesson will open the eyes of our group members to a bigger reality and what they have to be thankful for. Please pray either before or during the meeting these same things for your group members (that they will more clearly see all that God is doing in their lives to understand their hope better, their inheritance in Christ, and that God is willing and able to use His power to work on their behalf).

Icebreaker

What is the nicest thing anyone has ever done for you?/Did you say “thank you?”

When we do something kind for someone else it is always good to know they appreciate it. *Why is it important to let God know we appreciate Him?*

- Thankfulness does no good if it is not expressed.
- Even though God already knows, we still need to tell him.

What types of things do we normally thank God for most often?

- Probably all sorts of physical blessings will come to mind.

How well do we do at thanking God for spiritual blessings rather than just for physical blessings?

- This may be a challenge for some of us.

This lesson will teach us about three valuable things we can thank God for that go far beyond physical blessings.

Text

Ephesians 1:18-20

Paul prays that the “eyes of their hearts may be enlightened” - *What do you think that means?*

- He is praying that they will have a deeper understanding of some things.
- Paul is calling on them to perceive some things from the heart—from the very center of who they are.

What three things does Paul pray that they will understand better?

- The hope God has called us to
- The riches of His inheritance
- God’s incomparably great power

Thankful for Hope

The call of Christ involves a profound hope that cannot be matched by any-

thing else in all of creation. *How is the hope God offers better than the hope offered by money, fame, or power?*

- God's hope lasts forever
- God's hope cannot be taken away (unless we give it up).
- God's hope leads to life—the others lead to death

Have you ever thought about what life would be like if you didn't have God or weren't a Christian? Ephesians 2:12-13 says that all of us were separate, excluded, and foreigners to God at some point in our life. When we were living that way, Paul says we were "dead" and "without hope." *What would life be like living without hope?*

How can our prayers better express thankfulness for providing us hope, when God didn't have to?

- We need to realize that often we take our Christian hope for granted. We have lived with it for so long that we don't remember what life was like without it.
- Thank God for providing us hope of eternal life when we really deserved death.
- Praying that we can reach out to others so that they also can know the hope that only God can provide.

How would you feel if you provided someone with hope and they were never thankful for it?

Have a prayer thanking God for the hope that we have in Christ

Thankful for Inheritance

Our inheritance from God is different from what we normally think of about an inheritance—He is alive and we get to enjoy our spiritual inheritance with Him forever.

What does our spiritual inheritance include?

- Salvation & forgiveness of sins
- Being in the church with Christ as the head today
- Being in heaven one day
- Being a child of God.

How much more thankful should we be of these kinds of riches than of any kind of earthly riches?

So many people live an entire life chasing riches. They work themselves to death and sacrifice their values chasing the dollar. In Christ, we have far more than anyone can ever earn. We have a lot to be thankful for.

Have a prayer of thanksgiving for the riches God has so freely given to us as Christians. Be sure to thank Him for our spiritual blessings today and

God's Power

those we look forward to in heaven.

Being thankful for God's power may seem like a strange thing. We normally say thank you for what we receive and not just for someone's characteristics. It is important that we thank God for **who He is** and not just **what He has done** for us.

As a parent, which would be more valuable to hear—"Daddy, thank you for the bike" or "Daddy, thank you for just being you?"

What has God done that shows us how powerful He is?

- He created the world.
- He defeated sin and death
- He is even able to raise the dead.

How does it make you feel to know that the same power God used to raise Christ from the dead is also being used on our behalf?

- Helps us know we can overcome anything through God's power.
- That gives us hope.
- It reminds us that it is not up to our ability or power but God's.

How can our prayer lives better thank God for His power and how He has used it to help make the world a better place?

Have a prayer thanking God for who He is—for his power, his love, for anything else the group wants to add.

Application

How often do you request things from God but then don't remember to thank Him when he answers our prayers?

What are some reminders you could use to remember what you have asked God to do so that you can remember to thank Him when He answers?

- If we don't make a concrete plan for how to do it, we probably won't. Get specific things—journals, notes, etc and encourage your members to try this. You will be amazed how many prayers God answers when you look back at your list some time later.

How can our prayers better thank God just for being who He is?

How can thankfulness help us focus on God more and ourselves less?

Put it Into Practice

When you pray this week, try spending some time thanking God before making any requests. You could include thanksgiving for the three things mentioned in this lesson: hope, spiritual inheritance, God's power.