

Philemon 1:4-7, 20-21 NLT - 4 I always thank my God when I pray for you, Philemon, 5 because I keep hearing about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's people. 6 And I am praying that you will put into action the generosity that comes from your faith as you understand and experience all the good things we have in Christ. 7 Your love has given me much joy and comfort, my brother, for your kindness has often refreshed the hearts of God's people. ... 20 Yes, my brother, please do me this favor for the Lord's sake. Give me this encouragement in Christ. 21 I am confident as I write this letter that you will do what I ask and even more!

When we ourselves are filled with gratitude, we overflow in generosity to others. But if we feel unappreciated or rejected, it is hard to be generous towards others.

How do you think Philemon responded to Paul's request? Is there a relationship in your life that could benefit from your expression of gratitude?

Deciding to be grateful expresses the value you have for the relationship. It says, I didn't get here on my own, I wasn't entitled to this, I am grateful for you. A gratitude gap allows for the assumption of negative motives, but expressions of thankfulness build healthy relationships.

WRAP-UP

We may have an "attitude of gratitude" but if it remains unexpressed, we are communicating ungratefulness and rejection of others. It may not come naturally, but like the grateful leper, we need to express our thanks, even if it is inconvenient, in order to close the gratitude gap and maintain healthy relationships.

Memory Verse

Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. -1 Thessalonians 5:18

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- Take the time to thank someone today.

"It's A Decision" **Gratitude #1**

INTRODUCTION

We often associate gratitude with a feeling or an attitude. In fact, many people have espoused the idea of having an attitude of gratitude. However, having an attitude doesn't always translate into action or a life of gratitude. Let's join together as we are shaped by Jesus and unearth how gratitude is more than a feeling.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Who was the last person you thanked?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Unexpressed Gratitude

Luke 17:11-19 NLT - 11 As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. 12 As he entered a village there, ten lepers stood at a distance, 13 crying out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy. 15 One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, "Praise God!" 16 He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan. 17 Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" 19 And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you."

When we read the story of the ten lepers, we see that Jesus noted that only one returned to give thanks and glorify God.

At what point did the Samaritan realize he was healed? Why was it inconvenient for him to return at that time to give thanks?

The Samaritan was a foreigner and likely had less to be thankful for than the Jews. Although all ten had the circumstance to be grateful, nine did not choose to return and express their thanks.

We might call the other nine ungrateful.

Do you think they were healed of leprosy and not grateful, or do you think they were grateful but didn't express their gratitude?

The problem of ingratitude is that it's much easier to see in others than in ourselves. We know we feel grateful even when we do not choose to express it.

Can you recall an unexpected expression of gratitude you received and how it made you feel? Is there someone you are thankful to but haven't shown them or told them so?

October was "Pastor's Appreciation Month". It was an opportunity to recognize and thank those who work as leaders in the church.

What was Paul's advice on this to the Thessalonians?

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, 18 NLT - 12 Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. 13 Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other. ... 18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

If you didn't already do so, take time this week to express thanks to your church leaders, and any others who serve and encourage you.

1 Corinthians 16:18 NLT - 18 They have been a wonderful encouragement to me, as they have been to you. You must show your appreciation to all who serve so well.

2. What are you Communicating

Matthew 7:12 NLT - 12 "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

We are probably all familiar with the Golden Rule. It should definitely apply to expressions of thankfulness. You may recall a thoughtful gesture you made that went unacknowledged.

Although you probably didn't do it for the thanks you would receive, how did you feel when you were not thanked?

Unexpressed gratitude communicates ingratitude and rejection, even if that is not your intent.

What ways do you think unexpressed gratitude impacts a relationship over time? Do you have friends of family this has affected?

3. Maintaining Healthy Relationships

Consider what happens when gratitude is expressed. Such as when you do something for someone and they in turn express their gratitude, either by their words or their actions.

How do you think that will affect your choice to do a favor for them in the future? What if all of your efforts are ignored, would you continue doing nice things for them?

When you take the time and make the effort to thank someone you are closing the gratitude gap. Expressions of gratitude are vital for healthy relationships. We see an example of this in Paul's letter to Philemon. Paul lets Philemon know that he is thankful for his faith and love before he asks for a favor.

What response does Paul expect from Philemon? (verse 6)