

Choosing Gratitude

(Group Leader Guide)

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CHAPTER 1: The Power of Gratitude

- Nancy talks about how Christians tend to view gratitude as an inferior Christian virtue—one near the bottom of the long list. What do you think? Is it essential or non-essential for every Christian? Why? (pp. 22–23)
- Where has gratitude ranked on your list of required Christian qualities up until now? Has this chapter changed your mind at all? If so, how?
- We rarely think the source of our problems is tied to our lack of gratitude. How do you think gratitude is the solution that will help us experience God’s best in our situations?
- Can you relate to finding solace in the two intoxicating words, “Why me?” Has it helped protect your heart from further danger and damage?
- I’m sure you’ve noticed that many store displays, cards, and journals call us to gratitude. Nancy says that this kind of gratitude isn’t enough. Do you agree? Why or why not? (p. 29)
- Have you experienced the difference between the “Christian variety of gratitude” and just “gutting out” the right response? How has it looked in your life? (p. 24)
- Nancy says western civilization has fallen prey to an epidemic of ingratitude. Why do you think this is? (p. 24)

CHAPTER 2: Guilt, Grace, and Gratitude

- This chapter is titled “Guilt, Grace, and Gratitude.” Have you experienced this same progression in the story of your life? If so, will you briefly tell us about it?
- Is it possible to be a Christian and not have experienced this progression of guilt, grace, and gratitude?
- Nancy says that “unavoidable guilt, plus undeserved grace, should equal unbridled gratitude.” Yet, unbridled gratitude is often not what characterizes our lives. Why is that, and is there anything we can do about it? (p. 35)
- Do you agree that the gratefulness the atheist felt for a relaxing time at the ocean was incomplete and falls short of Christian gratitude? Why? (pp. 36–37)

- What truth transforms gratitude into genuine, authentic, Christian gratitude? (p. 38)
- This chapter talks about one of the holiest moments we experience—“Eucharist,” (or Communion or the Lord’s Supper), which means “the giving of thanks.” Is Communion special or ordinary to you? If it’s special, how do you personally keep from losing the wonder of it? (pp. 34–35)

CHAPTER 3: No Thanks

- It’s easy to feel gratitude yet never get around to expressing it . Do you believe that this is not a big deal, or is it dangerous? Why? (pp. 50–51)
- What did you learn about ingratitude from Romans 1?
- Does it surprise you that these people’s descent into foolish, futile thinking began with ingratitude? Do you agree that ingratitude is our first step away from God?
- D. James Kennedy wrote in response to Romans 1, “An ungrateful person is only one step away from getting his or her needs met in illegitimate ways.” How have you personally seen ingratitude connected to the sinfulness of those who’ve turned their backs on God? What application does this have to your own life?
- Nancy talks about five insidious instigators of ingratitude that we should watch for in our lives. What are they, and how have you seen evidence of these in your own life? (pp. 53–57)
- Is gratitude really our choice ? Can we actually decide that we will be grateful people?
- There is a battle to be waged if we are going to resist the natural descent into ingratitude. This descent usually begins as the wonder of all Christ did in redeeming our lost souls and making us His precious daughters fades from our memories. What practical steps can we take in this battle against ingratitude?

CHAPTER 4: Why Choose Gratitude?

- Sometimes it’s exhausting just thinking about trying to be grateful. Which of the eight positive benefits of gratitude appealed to you most, and why? (pp. 62–75)
- Why do you think God has commanded us to be thankful? (p. 63) Does this command bother you? Why or why not?
- According to Philippians 4:6–7, prayer is not all we can or should do in disquieting situations. What—plus prayer—equals peace, according to this passage? (p. 66) How have you experienced this?
- Nancy shares how much she respects Joni Eareckson Tada. Who do you know who oozes thankfulness? Tell us how this person’s life and testimony has impacted you. (pp. 67–68)
- Joni told Nancy that she’s just disciplined herself to “give thanks in all things,” so now it’s become a reflex reaction. Do you agree that expressing gratitude is a discipline? (p. 68)

- How are you doing with God’s command to “give thanks in all things”? What was the last difficult circumstance you thanked Him for?

CHAPTER 5: Of Whiners and Worshipers

- Nancy has come to believe that failure to give thanks is at the heart of much, if not most, of the sense of gloom, despair, and despondence that is so pervasive even among believers today. How have you struggled with these or similar feelings of hopelessness in recent days? What practical ways or disciplines could you begin in order to give thanks in the midst of your trials? (p. 79)
- How is gratitude a revealer of your heart rather than just being a reporter of details? As you hear yourself relating everyday events to others, what are you learning about your heart? (p. 80)
- Nancy compares grateful and ungrateful people in this chapter. Which most closely resembles your life? Do you have more marks of a worshiper or a whiner? (pp. 80–93)
- It’s easy to think that ingratitude is a private matter that just affects ourselves. Do you think that it’s a difference others can see and feel? Why or why not? (p. 92)
- Although ingratitude is toxic and contagious, gratitude is also contagious. How have you seen the contagiousness of gratitude at work in your home or workplace?

CHAPTER 6: How Can I Say Thanks?

- Nancy says that God’s desire is not just to see us doing grateful things but to see us doing grateful things out of the overflow of a truly grateful heart . How do you and I begin to cultivate a heart and lifestyle of gratitude? (pp. 96–97)
- Are you tired of being a whiner? Are you convinced that ingratitude is not only a bad habit but a grievous sin against a good God and a poor reflection on His gospel and grace? Why or why not? (p. 97)
- Nancy suggests four practical ways to cultivate a lifestyle of gratitude: speaking up, singing out, kneeling down, and expressing gratitude privately and publicly. Which of these suggestions did you find most helpful? Which do you plan to implement? Did you think of any other ideas? (pp. 67–72)
- “Silent gratitude,” Gladys Berthe Stern said, “isn’t much use to anyone.” The Scripture is full of commands to thank God with our lips . Can you think of any times Jesus thanked His Father for something? (p. 98)
- Nancy says there’s something about singing our thanks—not just talking it—that imbeds gratitude even more deeply into our souls. What role has music and singing played in your life as you seek to cultivate a heart of gratitude? (p. 101)
- Do your prayers include expressions of gratitude—even in those times when you feel a desperate need for God’s action and intervention? What is the overall makeup of your prayers? (p. 103)

- Nancy says that for gratitude to become a true joy-maker in our hearts it must be spoken everywhere, at every opportunity. Is there anything you'd like to express gratitude for right now? (p. 103)

CHAPTER 7: Thanks . . . for Everything

- Why is it so important for us to match up the gift and the Giver? (p. 112)
- Do you agree that those who draw a blank when asked what they're grateful for can never be those who draw nearest to God? Why or why not? (p. 113)
- Have you ever been deprived of a "common mercy"—of something others take for granted? How did that change the way you viewed this gift? (p. 113)
- What are some of the visible, material blessings you're grateful for?
- Is it easier for you to come up with a list of God's natural gifts or His spiritual gifts? Why do you think that is?
- How can we come to better understand what is ours in Christ? What are some of those "spiritual" gifts? (pp. 114–119)
- What spiritual gift means the most to you at this season of your life?

CHAPTER 8: But Not Without Sacrifice

- This chapter acknowledges that thanksgiving is costly. Do you really think it's possible to choose gratitude in the middle of overwhelming pain and unanswered questions? Why or why not? (p. 134)
- Nancy takes it a step further and says that we can not only give glory to God and thank Him for the sickening, painful parts of our life, but that we're smart to offer this sacrifice of thanksgiving! What could possibly make gratitude the smart choice? (p. 139)
- Where are you right now? Are you only giving glory to God for the part of your life that's going the way you want? Or are you worshiping, trusting, and giving Him thanks just because He is God—regardless of the dark, painful, incomprehensible places He has you? (p. 139)
- Charles Spurgeon suffered chronically with gout and rheumatism, suffered publicly from slander and ridicule, and suffered mightily with a dark level of depression. Yet he grew to be thankful for these obstacles rather than allowing them to dominate or distract him. What obstacles currently exist in your life? What's hindering you—emotionally, spiritually, relationally, or financially? Has that obstacle become a distraction? Is it dominating your life? Or are you embracing it and choosing to express gratitude for it? (p. 127)
- George Matheson realized He had never thanked God for his thorn. Have you experienced the heartache or pain of a "thorn"? How has that pain impacted your relationship with the Lord? Have you ever thanked the Lord for the thorn He's allowed in your life? (p. 128)

- Dr. Helen Roseveare suffered grievously at the hands evil men. How do you think she was able to offer a sacrifice of praise in the midst of such horrific suffering? (pp. 133–134)
- Are there difficult situations in your life that remain “unexplained”? Can you relate to the emotions and thoughts Helen experienced? How have you been able to offer a sacrifice of praise?

CHAPTER 9: Going Gritudinal

- How does Nancy say it is possible for you to stand strong in the midst of confusing, painful circumstances that make you want to stay in bed for a week? (p. 144)
- When you do this (stand strong in the midst of confusing, painful circumstances by the empowering Spirit of God within you), what is possible? (pp. 144–145)
- What does “surrendering our rights to God” have to do with gratitude? (pp. 146–147)
- Can expressing gratitude just happen, or does it have to be done on purpose? What makes you think so? (pp. 146, 148)
- Are there people in your past—or present—who you need to thank? Who deserves a note, a call, or a personal visit to say, “Thank you”? (p. 149)
- Do you agree that in this high-tech era nothing quite says it like a “real letter”? (p. 153)
- How do you think it would affect your family, small group, or church if you developed a corporate sense of gratitude? Can you think of any ways to encourage this? (p. 155)

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