

Jesus Calling®

B I B L E S T U D Y S E R I E S



GIVING THANKS TO GOD

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*Bible study and discussion questions
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SESSION 1

GIVING THANKS FOR God's ABUNDANCE

CONSIDER IT

Thankfulness is a skill we can develop with practice. It's just a matter of pausing and noticing the abundance with which God has filled our lives. We can choose to view life through the lens of deprivation (noticing everything we don't have and worrying that there is never enough for us) or through the lens of abundance (noticing everything we do have and trusting that a good God will provide for us). Which will we choose? In this session, we'll see what a difference it can make when we choose to view life through the lens of God's abundance.

1. What is one thing for which you're thankful to God?

2. How challenging would it be for you to come up with ten things for which you're thankful? Why do you think it's easy or hard for you?

EXPERIENCE IT

"Bring Me the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Take nothing for granted, not even the rising of the sun. Before Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, thankfulness was as natural as breathing. Satan's temptation

involved pointing Eve to the one thing that was forbidden her. The garden was filled with luscious, desirable fruits, but Eve focused on the one fruit she couldn't have rather than being thankful for the many good things freely available. This negative focus darkened her mind, and she succumbed to temptation.

"When you focus on what you don't have or on situations that displease you, your mind also becomes darkened. You take for granted life, salvation, sunshine, flowers, and countless other gifts from Me. You look for what is wrong and refuse to enjoy life until that is 'fixed.' When you approach Me with thanksgiving, the Light of My Presence pours into you, transforming you through and through. *Walk in the Light* with Me by practicing the discipline of thanksgiving."

—FROM JESUS CALLING, APRIL 6

3. What was Eve's mistake when it came to being thankful?

4. What's wrong with focusing on what you don't have?

"Let Me teach you thankfulness. Begin by acknowledging that everything—all your possessions and all that you are—belongs to Me. The dawning of each new day is a gift from Me, not to be taken for

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granted. The earth is vibrantly alive with My blessings, giving vivid testimony to My Presence. If you slow down your pace of life, you can find Me anywhere.

“Some of My most precious children have been laid aside in sick-beds or shut away in prisons. Others have voluntarily learned the discipline of spending time alone with Me. The secret of being thankful is learning to see everything from My perspective. My world is your classroom. *My Word is a lamp to your feet and a light for your path.*”

—FROM JESUS CALLING, APRIL 29

- 5. How does it foster thankfulness when you acknowledge that all you have and all you are belong to God?**

- 6. Name one of the things you currently rely on to nurture your body or your soul. What do you think is God’s perspective on this?**

S T U D Y I T

Read aloud the following passage from Genesis 2:8–9, 15–17, and 3:1–8. The woman in the story is Eve, the man is Adam, and the serpent is Satan.

^{2:8} Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. . . .

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” . . .

^{3:1} Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

⁴“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

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7. *What did Satan promise would happen if Eve ate the forbidden fruit? What actually happened when she and Adam ate it? Explain.*

8. *How would thankfulness have changed Eve’s thought process when she “saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye” (Genesis 3:6)?*

9. *What are the things in your life—the things you want but don’t have, or that you don’t want but do have—that threaten to deprive you of thankfulness? What would a “thankful thought process” look like in your current situation?*

10. Take two minutes of silence to reread the passage, looking for a sentence, phrase, or even one word that stands out as something Jesus may want you to focus on in your life. If you're meeting with a group, the leader will keep track of time. At the end of two minutes, you may share your word or phrase with the group if you wish.

11. Read the passage aloud again. Take another two minutes of silence, prayerfully considering what response God might want you to make to what you have read in His Word. If you're meeting with a group, the leader will again keep track of time. At the end of two minutes, you may share what came to you in the silence if you wish.

12. What was it like for you to sit in silence with the passage? Did soaking it in like this help you understand it better than before?

13. *If you're meeting with a group, how can the members pray for you? If you're using this study on your own, what would you like to say to God right now?*

LIVE IT

At the end of each session you'll find suggested Scripture readings for spending time alone with God during five days of the coming week. This week, the theme of each reading will focus on how you can be thankful for God's abundance in your life. Read each passage slowly, pausing to think about what is being said. Rather than approaching this as an assignment to complete, think of it as an opportunity to meet with the One who loves you most. Use any of the questions that are helpful.

Day 1

Read Ephesians 5:15–20. In this passage, Paul discusses the need to live wisely in the midst of evil days. What examples of wise living does he list?

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Why is giving thanks for everything an example of wise living?

How is giving thanks the opposite of living foolishly?

What's the importance of "always" giving thanks to God the Father "for everything" (verse 20)?

Each day this week, use a journal or separate sheet of paper to write down three things for which you are thankful. Doing this will help you focus more on what you *do* have rather than what you *do not* have, and it will make an impression on your heart. Ask God to help you grow wiser in the way you live by developing this consistent habit of thankfulness.

Day 2

Read Luke 9:16 and 22:17–19. Jesus had a habit of giving thanks over a meal before He distributed the food to others. Why do you think He did this?

Do you have a habit of giving thanks to God before you eat? Is this something you do whenever you eat . . . or only sometimes? Why?

How would it affect you if you gave thanks even over snacks, or when you brought groceries into your kitchen? Does that seem too extreme? Why or why not?

What are some other ways you could thank God, “whether in word or deed” (Colossians 3:17), more often as you go through your day?

Take a moment to thank God for the food you have eaten today and for the resources He has given to you. Remember in prayer those who are in need in your world.

Day 3

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6–11. In this passage, Paul discusses how your own generosity with what you have received from God can spark thankfulness in other people. Do you tend to think that you have received abundantly from Him and can afford to be generous with others? Or do you more often think that you have barely received enough and can't afford to be generous? Explain your thoughts.

What leads you to see your situation in either of these ways?

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How does an attitude of abundance or scarcity affect your giving?

Would you be likely to give more if you had a habit of greater thankfulness?

Why or why not?

Talk with God about your sense of abundance or scarcity and ask Him to help you see His provision from His perspective.

Day 4

Read 1 Timothy 4:1–5. In this passage, Paul warns against the idea (among other things) that Christians should abstain from certain foods because they are religiously impure. What does Paul have to say about such teachings (see verse 2)?

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In refuting this belief, what positive things does Paul say about the abundance God has made available?

Why does Paul emphasize thanksgiving twice (verses 3–4)?

What do you think Paul means when he says food is “consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (verse 5)? Why should that make us thankful?

Today, reflect on the idea that “everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving” (verse 4). Thank God for the abundance of good things that He has created and put into your life.

Day 5

Read Daniel 6:6–10. During Daniel’s time, a law was passed in Persia that no one could worship any god except the king for thirty days. However, even though Daniel was a high-ranking official in the king’s court, he chose to ignore the law. Why do you think giving thanks to God multiple times a day was so important to him?

What are some possible reasons that Daniel opened his windows “toward Jerusalem” when he did this (verse 10)? Why didn’t he try to conceal his actions if he knew they were against the law?

Why do you think Daniel couldn’t just put off thanking God for thirty days?

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How important is it for you to express thankfulness to God each day? Would you put it off for thirty days if the law required it? Why or why not?

Be intentional about setting aside at least three times during this day to thank God.

