Gratitude Bible study

Luke 17:11-19. 3 sessions of about 45 minutes, or one longer session. For small groups and personal study.

Biblical gratitude responds to God's goodness rather than trying to earn it. In Luke 17, one healed man returns to thank Jesus and give glory to God. Colossians 3 places thanksgiving within shared worship and everyday words and actions. First Thessalonians 5 calls believers to give thanks in every circumstance while also helping the weak and testing what is good. These passages do not require calling evil good or pretending that sorrow has ended.

READ TOGETHER: LUKE 17:11-19

11 While Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As He
entered one of the villages, He was met by ten lepers. They stood at a distance 13 and raised their
voices, shouting, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” 14 When Jesus saw them, He said, “Go, show
yourselves to the priests.” And as they were on their way, they were cleansed. 15 When one of them
saw that he was healed, he came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He fell facedown at Jesus’ feet
in thanksgiving to Him—and he was a Samaritan. 17 “Were not all ten cleansed?” Jesus asked.
“Where then are the other nine? 18 Was no one found except this foreigner to return and give glory to
God?” 19 Then Jesus said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well! ”

Scripture from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain.

BACKGROUND

Start with a story, not a gratitude score

Luke locates the encounter as Jesus travels toward Jerusalem, between Samaria and Galilee. Ten men call for mercy from a distance. They are cleansed as they follow Jesus' instruction, before the one man returns to give thanks.

The returning man is identified as a Samaritan and called a foreigner. Notice the surprise within the story. Do not invent reasons why the other nine did not return, or use the account to promise that gratitude will bring physical healing.

Read the commands beside care and lament

Colossians 3 addresses a community called to compassion, patience, forgiveness, and love. Thanksgiving appears alongside peace, teaching, singing, and everyday conduct. It reaches beyond a private list of things that went well.

First Thessalonians 5 puts giving thanks near instructions to encourage the fainthearted and help the weak. Psalm 13 gives words to someone who still asks how long sorrow will last, yet trusts God's loving devotion. Gratitude need not silence that prayer.

> *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with one another and forgive any complaint you may have against someone else. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which is the bond of perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, for to this you were called as members of one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of*

the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:12-17)

But we ask you, brothers, to acknowledge those who work diligently among you, who preside over you in the Lord and give you instruction. In love, hold them in highest regard because of their work. Live in peace with one another. And we urge you, brothers, to admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, and be patient with everyone. Make sure that no one repays evil for evil. Always pursue what is good for one another and for all people. Rejoice at all times. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in every circumstance, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not extinguish the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt, but test all things. Hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-22)

How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long must I wrestle in my soul, with sorrow in my heart each day? How long will my enemy dominate me? Consider me and respond, O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep in death, lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him," and my foes rejoice when I fall. But I have trusted in Your loving devotion; my heart will rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for He has been good to me. (Psalm 13:1-6)

THREE SETTINGS FOR GIVING THANKS

Keep each response attached to its passage. The readings are connected, but they do not say exactly the same thing.

Return to the giver (Luke 17:11-19)

All ten are cleansed; one returns, praises God, and thanks Jesus. The timing matters. His gratitude responds to mercy already received. The story does not present thanks as a payment that caused his cleansing.

Give thanks with one another (Colossians 3:12-17)

Thankfulness belongs with the peace of Christ, the word of Christ, and the community's singing. Verse 17 then widens the view to words and deeds. Ask how gratitude changes the way we speak and act together.

Give thanks without hiding pain (1 Thessalonians 5:12-22)

The command is to give thanks in every circumstance. In the same paragraph, the community is told to help the weak, be patient, test things, and avoid evil. Giving thanks does not cancel those responsibilities.

Leave room for lament (Psalm 13:1-6)

The psalm moves from repeated questions about God's apparent absence to a plea, trust, and singing. It does not describe the external problem being resolved before the prayer ends. Read the sorrow and the trust together.

SESSION 1 OF 3

Return to give thanks

Read Luke 17:11-19. Notice the order of mercy, cleansing, return, and thanksgiving.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. Where is Jesus going, what do the ten men ask, and what does he tell them to do?

2. When are they cleansed? List what the returning man does and how Luke identifies him.

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. Why does the order of events matter when we ask whether thanks earns God's mercy?

4. What do Jesus' questions draw attention to? Which motives for the absent nine does the story leave unstated?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

5. What good gift have you received but rarely paused to acknowledge? How could you thank God for it?

6. Is there someone whose care you can acknowledge this week without flattering them or expecting something back?

SESSION 2 OF 3

Practice gratitude in shared life

Read Colossians 3:12-17. Connect thanksgiving with compassion, worship, and ordinary words and actions.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. How does verse 12 describe the people being addressed before listing what they should put on?

2. Find the references to thankfulness, gratitude, and giving thanks in verses 15 to 17. What surrounds each one?

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. What would be missing if we read these verses only as advice for a private gratitude journal?

4. How does verse 17 connect worship with words and deeds outside the meeting?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

5. What unnoticed contribution to your group or household could you acknowledge specifically?

6. Choose one ordinary task. What would doing it in Jesus' name with thanks change about your conduct?

SESSION 3 OF 3

Give thanks while making room for sorrow

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22. Read the command to give thanks alongside care, discernment, and honest lament.

Also read: Psalm 13:1-6.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. What does this paragraph ask the community to do for fainthearted and weak people?

2. Read verses 16 to 22, then Psalm 13. What commands appear in the letter, and what questions appear in the psalm?

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. Why does giving thanks in every circumstance not mean calling every circumstance good? Read verses 21 and 22 too.

4. What would a group lose if it allowed only the final two verses of Psalm 13 to be spoken?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

5. If you wish, name something you can thank God for and something that still needs prayer. Passing is welcome.

6. What practical support could accompany your prayer for someone under pressure? Ask what they need before deciding for them.

ONE-SESSION PATH

Study gratitude in one meeting

Read Luke 17:11-19, Colossians 3:12-17, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22, and Psalm 13:1-6. About 60 to 75.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. Read Luke 17:11-19. What does the returning man do after he sees he has been healed?

2. Read Colossians 3:12-17. Where does thanksgiving enter the community's life?

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. What do these two passages show about gratitude as a response rather than a transaction?

4. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 and Psalm 13. How can thanks, discernment, practical help, and lament belong together?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

5. Name one specific gift to thank God for, without comparing your circumstances with anyone else's.

6. Choose one act of acknowledgment or care this week. What need still requires honest prayer or practical help?

FOR THE LEADER

- Do not make participants produce a positive story. Offer a pass on personal sharing and keep private matters private. Gratitude is not a test of whether someone is grieving correctly.
- Luke says all ten were cleansed before the one returned. Do not promise that sufficient gratitude will heal an illness, increase income, or cause a desired outcome.
- Do not invent motives for the other nine or turn one man's ethnic identity into a stereotype. Luke and Jesus explicitly draw attention to this particular returning foreigner.
- In Colossians, start with the addressed community's identity in verse 12 and forgiveness received in verse 13. Thanksgiving accompanies life in Christ; it is not a technique for securing it.
- Read the care instructions before asking about thanksgiving in difficulty. Gratitude does not require staying in danger, accepting abuse, stopping treatment, or declining practical help. Use appropriate professional and safeguarding support when needed.

WHERE CHRISTIANS READ IT DIFFERENTLY

What does the final statement to the returning man mean?

In Luke 17:19 the BSB renders Jesus' words as faith having made the man well. Readers discuss whether the wording emphasizes healing, salvation, or the fuller restoration shown by his response to Jesus. All ten have already been cleansed in verse 14. Keep that sequence clear without claiming to know the final spiritual state of each absent man.

Can thanksgiving and lament belong in the same prayer?

Psalm 13 includes direct questions, a plea, trust, and praise. Readers differ about whether its ending reflects an answer already experienced or confidence before circumstances change. The psalm itself does not narrate a resolution of the external danger. Either way, its opening questions remain part of Scripture's prayer, not words the group should censor.

SOURCES

Luke 17, Berean Standard Bible. Berean Bible. Public domain. Primary narrative for the returning man; checked October 31, 2026.

Colossians 3, Berean Standard Bible. Berean Bible. Public domain. Primary text for thanksgiving in community and conduct; checked October 31, 2026.

1 Thessalonians 5, Berean Standard Bible. Berean Bible. Public domain. Primary text for care, thanks, and discernment; checked October 31, 2026.

Psalm 13, Berean Standard Bible. Berean Bible. Public domain. Primary prayer of lament and trust; checked October 31, 2026.

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