Circle Questions - 11.22.26

"All In" - Week 4 - Thanksgiving

(Acts 16)

GROUP ICEBREAKER: What's one simple thing in your everyday life that you sometimes take for granted but would really miss if it were suddenly gone?

Series Recap: In our All In series, we're discovering what God can do through us when we follow Jesus together. Week 1 reminded us that God blesses us to bless others and join His mission. Week 2 showed how prayer and the Holy Spirit give us courage to move beyond fear. Week 3 challenged us to follow Jesus in the right direction, grow in His character, and keep trusting Him when people hurt us. This week, we'll learn to notice God's blessings and express our thanks - even in hard times - trusting His presence and goodness.

1. What stood out to you from Sunday's message?

Context: Paul and Silas are on their missionary journey, sharing the good news about Jesus in Macedonia. After responding to God's direction to go there, they arrive in Philippi, where they meet Lydia, whose heart God opens to receive the message of Jesus. Later, Paul frees a young enslaved woman from a spirit that had enabled her owners to profit through fortune-telling. When her owners realize their source of income is gone, they stir up opposition against Paul and Silas. (Acts 16:6–21)

Notice God's Blessings

READ Acts 16:22–26: *22 A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. 23 They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. 24 So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks. 25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. 26 Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!*

The message reminds us: "Gratitude is not a mood we wait for, it's a muscle we train."

2. What stands out to you about Paul and Silas' response to such difficult circumstances? What do you think enabled them to worship God like this?

3. Why can gratitude be difficult to practice, even when we have so much to be thankful for? What do the 1 Thessalonians verses below teach us?

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: *16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

4. How did Jesus teach his disciples to remember Him and what He's done? (Luke 22:14-19). What are some other ways we can practice noticing and remembering the good things we have received from God?

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Recognize WHO We've Received Our Blessings From

5. Paul and Silas did not ignore their difficult circumstances, but what do we notice about the timing of their response and God's provision?

6. What does James 1:17 remind us about God? How can this reality change how we view our circumstances?

James 1:17 *Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.*

Gratitude doesn't mean pretending everything is okay or ignoring our struggles. It means choosing to trust God's character and faithfulness in the middle of them.

7. How can a sense of entitlement, or feeling that we deserve what we have or that we are owed something better, affect our hearts and minds? How does recognizing God's grace change that perspective?

8. What are some good things in your life that you might normally attribute to your own efforts, accomplishments, or good fortune? How can you become more intentional about recognizing and thanking God for His provision?

Expressing Thanksgiving Has An Outward Impact

READ Acts 16:27–34

27 The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. 28 But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!" 29 The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." 32 And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. 33 Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. 34 He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

9. What do you notice about the impact of Paul and Silas expressing their faith in praise and not escaping when they could, and what opportunities did God create through it?
   Can you think of a time that someone else expressing thanksgiving to God had an impact on you?

Practice Giving Thanks Even When Circumstances Are Tough

10. How might remembering God's direction and faithfulness in the past help us trust Him when our present circumstances don't make sense? What do we learn from Philippians 4:6 that can help us to grow in thanksgiving?

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Philippians 4:4-6: *4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. 6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all He has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

Optional Group Prayer: Take a few minutes to thank God for any blessings that come to mind. You might want to start with a song like Paul and Silas.

11. What difference might it make to approach an uncertain situation with thanksgiving rather than anxiety or frustration? Can you share an example from your own life?

Review:

- Notice blessings – Training our minds to recognize and remember God's provision.
- Acknowledge God's generosity – Identify God as the source of every good gift.
- Express Thanksgiving – Move from feeling grateful to expressing thanksgiving.
- Practice – Trusting God & giving thanks even when circumstances are difficult.
- Growing – Our thanksgiving forms us and has an outward impact.

Challenge: The message gives us three practical ways to exercise our gratitude this week:

- Express gratitude: Tell God and others what you're thankful for. Make your appreciation known! (Verbally, thank you notes, etc.)
- Count your blessings: Intentionally identify three things each day that you are thankful to God for. Don't overlook ordinary or familiar things. Acknowledge God as the source of every good gift.
- Pray prayers of thanksgiving: Bring a current concern or difficult circumstance to God. Be honest about what you're facing, while intentionally thanking Him for His faithfulness, what He has done, and what you trust Him to do.

Next Step:

12. Which of these three practices do you most need to be intentional about this week?

As you practice gratitude this week, notice the impact: What difference does it make in your own heart and perspective? What impact does expressing thanksgiving have on the people around you? (Notice, and share with your circle group next time you meet)

Let's Give Thanks even when nothing about our circumstances gives us the motivation.

Happy Thanksgiving!