



Secret Superpower | Doug Wekenman | 11.4.2023
Weekly Study

SHARE

As you kick off your time together, we encourage you to begin with a prayer of thanksgiving! Set the tone by recognizing all that God has done and the ways that He's been faithful to your group family. Allow your praise to be the pathway to experiencing His Presence with you during your time together. To begin, go around the group and have each person share something they were grateful for this past week. While everyone's current circumstances may vary in the highs and lows of the week, challenge each person to find *the good*.

What went well this week?

Can you name what often hinders you from feeling gratitude?

Name three of the greatest blessings you've received from the Lord in your life.

GROW

Closing out this nine week series, Pastor Doug hones in on the key to living both *Alive and Free*, in the practice of gratitude. Highlighting the apostle Paul and the remarkable life he lived, while writing most of the New Testament and traveling over 7,000 miles to plant 14 churches over the course of 13 years, his secret behind it all was contentment. Paul was grateful for what he had in the good times and the bad.

Paul knew what science now has resounding research to back up! As Doug referenced, endless studies are discovering the physiological benefits of practicing gratitude - from balancing hormones and neurochemicals that boost our mood and make us feel safe, to the ability to rewire the neural pathways in our brains to heal from trauma and decrease anxiety. Gratitude truly is the superpower that we're all searching for. But what Paul understood was that in practicing gratitude, it was *God's power* that infused his life with the ability to live alive and free. Doug explained it like this:

1. Gratitude Unlocks the Door to God's Presence
2. Gratitude Takes What You Have and Makes It Enough
3. Gratitude Reframes How You See the World
4. Gratitude Will Get You Through Any Trouble This World Throws at You

First and foremost, God desires intimacy with you! It's in your closeness with Him that you're able to rely and depend on Him to overcome your troubles with His strength and grace. Beware of the entitlement and comparison we can often feel that pushes us into a scarcity mindset. God cares about the smallest of details in your life and wants to give you good gifts. He's not holding out on you and has good plans for your life! But as Paul highlights, all of those plans originate from a baseline disposition of our heart.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 & Philippians 4:12-13

All circumstances? Every situation? Really?? Gratitude is when you have what you need because you want what you have. Abundance flows into your life when gratitude flows out of your heart. And because the world didn't give it to you, the world can't take it away. There is no amount of money, possessions, or status that can buy contentment. The reality is that you can find contentment in the here and now, right where you are.

What areas of your life do you find yourself feeling the pull towards comparison?

Reflect on the last decade of your life. What blessings do you have now that you would have never imagined you'd have back then?

M O V E

Now all of our circumstances are different and the pain and hardship that fill our world are very real. We don't celebrate those troubles and we don't pretend to like pain. The great equalizer to our human experience is in the pain that we face. The danger we often find ourselves in is when we isolate, compare, or let that pain define us. But with God and together in community, we can find the purpose in our pain and praise Him in the midst of it for the fruit and character it's producing in our lives. It's not that we choose to ignore it or invalidate our experience - we reframe our focus and renew our minds.

Read Philippians 4:4-8

What are some of those things in your life that are often right in front of you that you can choose to focus on this week?

Is there pain you've found yourself isolating in? Would you be willing to bring it out into the light and ask for prayer?

What can you choose to praise God for in the midst of your troubles?

P R A Y

As you begin your time of prayer each day this week, start by thanking God for something in your life. Bring your mind to something lovely, wonderful, and true in your present moment and picture yourself receiving it as a gift from the Lord. Try your best to intentionally carve out time in your day to practice this, ideally at the beginning and end of your day. When you find yourself facing moments of hardship and feel

discouraged, remember the love and compassion of your Heavenly Father. In gratitude, bring all of your requests to Him and allow His peace to guard your heart and mind. He's got you, so you got this.

ACTIVITY

1. Begin your day practicing gratitude! Set aside 1-3 minutes each day and write down a couple of things you're grateful for. At the end of the day before heading to bed, spend a few minutes in prayer and reflect with God: "What went well today?"
2. The Good News of Jesus and His love and sacrifice for us is the greatest story mankind has ever known. Starting in John 14, read one chapter over the next seven days to finish out John's gospel and remember what Jesus has done for us all. Allow your heart to be filled with gratitude for the assurance of our faith.
3. Life only happens in the present, and when we constantly seek fulfillment at some distant future point, we never actually arrive. Do you find yourself living in the future rather than the present? Consider how this is robbing you of the gratitude and joy available to you now. To bring yourself into the present, try to take 1 minute to close your eyes and focus on your breath, breathing deeply through your nose. Practice this 3 times throughout the day to ground yourself in the moment.