

Following Jesus Together

**Discontentment:
Fighting for Gratitude
3-week plan**

Throughout these three weeks, we'll spend some time fighting for our gratitude in Jesus through practicing "examen prayer," biblical encouragement, and generosity.

As we walk through this plan, we are intentionally pushing back against the enemy of discontentment. Too often we can allow our circumstances to run our lives and breed an attitude of hopelessness, envy, and unrest. The biblical call, however, is to focus our eyes on God who provides for us, showers us with good gifts, and promises an eternity overflowing with joy.

So as you work through this guide, view this as your 3-week guide to repent of your discontentment. Let's not settle for disobedience, but instead, press into the abundant life made available to us now in and through Jesus - to be with Him, to become like Him, and do the things He did.

Research shows it takes about 3 weeks to develop a habit, so it's our hope at the end of these three weeks that we create sustainable practices to more closely follow Jesus as we do this together with others in our LifeGroup.

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Coming up is STC Weekend. Serving reminds us that our lives are best spent when spent on others. Take some time in prayer now, thanking God for the opportunities you have during STC Weekend to serve others who have less than you.

If you haven't yet - sign up at STCWeekend.com

Week 1

Day 1 - An Introduction to Examen Prayer

Through this practice, we look back and discern God's activity with an aim to grow in deeper awareness for the next day. By practicing this regularly we're able to more quickly see God in the ordinary, live in a posture of godward gratitude, and regularly experience His presence.

READ

Colossians 3:12-17

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

DO

Read through the article "[What is Examen Prayer?](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing you learned about examen prayer?

Week 1
Day 2 - Examen Prayer

Through this practice, we look back and discern God's activity with an aim to grow in deeper awareness for the next day. By practicing this regularly we're able to more quickly see God in the ordinary, live in a posture of godward gratitude, and regularly experience His presence.

READ

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

DO

Practice examen prayer now.

Recognize God's Presence - Slow your mind down, relax, and ask God to give you clarity and understanding as you review your day.

Recall God's Goodness - What are you thankful for today?

Review the Day - When were you most aware of God's presence today? When were least aware of God's presence today?

Repent - Where do you need to be reminded of Jesus' grace and righteousness in your life? What sin(s) do you need to confess to God?

Resolve - Ask God to give you Spirit-filled guidance and power to be more aware of His presence tomorrow.

If need be, read through the article "[What is Examen Prayer?](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- How was practicing examen prayer today?

Week 1

Day 3 - Examen Prayer

Through this practice, we look back and discern God's activity with an aim to grow in deeper awareness for the next day. By practicing this regularly we're able to more quickly see God in the ordinary, live in a posture of godward gratitude, and regularly experience His presence.

READ

2 Corinthians 4:15-18

For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

DO

Practice examen prayer now.

Recognize God's Presence - Slow your mind down, relax, and ask God to give you clarity and understanding as you review your day.

Recall God's Goodness - What are you thankful for today?

Review the Day - When were you most aware of God's presence today? When were least aware of God's presence today?

Repent - Where do you need to be reminded of Jesus' grace and righteousness in your life? What sin(s) do you need to confess to God?

Resolve - Ask God to give you Spirit-filled guidance and power to be more aware of His presence tomorrow.

If need be, read through the article "[What is Examen Prayer?](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- How was practicing examen prayer today?

Week 1

Day 4 - Examen Prayer

Through this practice, we look back and discern God's activity with an aim to grow in deeper awareness for the next day. By practicing this regularly we're able to more quickly see God in the ordinary, live in a posture of godward gratitude, and regularly experience His presence.

READ

Ephesians 5:15-21

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

DO

Practice examen prayer now.

Recognize God's Presence - Slow your mind down, relax, and ask God to give you clarity and understanding as you review your day.

Recall God's Goodness - What are you thankful for today?

Review the Day - When were you most aware of God's presence today? When were least aware of God's presence today?

Repent - Where do you need to be reminded of Jesus' grace and righteousness in your life? What sin(s) do you need to confess to God?

Resolve - Ask God to give you Spirit-filled guidance and power to be more aware of His presence tomorrow.

If need be, read through the article "[What is Examen Prayer?](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- How was practicing examen prayer today?

Week 1
Day 5 - Examen Prayer

Through this practice, we look back and discern God's activity with an aim to grow in deeper awareness for the next day. By practicing this regularly we're able to more quickly see God in the ordinary, live in a posture of godward gratitude, and regularly experience His presence.

READ

Galatians 5:22-26

...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

DO

Practice examen prayer now.

Recognize God's Presence - Slow your mind down, relax, and ask God to give you clarity and understanding as you review your day.

Recall God's Goodness - What are you thankful for today?

Review the Day - When were you most aware of God's presence today? When were least aware of God's presence today?

Repent - Where do you need to be reminded of Jesus' grace and righteousness in your life? What sin(s) do you need to confess to God?

Resolve - Ask God to give you Spirit-filled guidance and power to be more aware of His presence tomorrow.

If need be, read through the article "[What is Examen Prayer?](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- How was practicing examen prayer today?

Week 1

Day 6 - Examen Prayer

Through this practice, we look back and discern God's activity with an aim to grow in deeper awareness for the next day. By practicing this regularly we're able to more quickly see God in the ordinary, live in a posture of godward gratitude, and regularly experience His presence.

READ

Psalm 16:7-11

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
I have set the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.
For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.
You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

DO

Practice examen prayer now.

Recognize God's Presence - Slow your mind down, relax, and ask God to give you clarity and understanding as you review your day.

Recall God's Goodness - What are you thankful for today?

Review the Day - When were you most aware of God's presence today? When were least aware of God's presence today?

Repent - Where do you need to be reminded of Jesus' grace and righteousness in your life? What sin(s) do you need to confess to God?

Resolve - Ask God to give you Spirit-filled guidance and power to be more aware of His presence tomorrow.

If need be, read through the article "[What is Examen Prayer?](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- How was practicing examen prayer today?

Week 1
Day 7 - Examen Prayer

Through this practice, we look back and discern God's activity with an aim to grow in deeper awareness for the next day. By practicing this regularly we're able to more quickly see God in the ordinary, live in a posture of godward gratitude, and regularly experience His presence.

READ

Psalm 46:8-11

Come, behold the works of the Lord,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the chariots with fire.
“Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

DO

Practice examen prayer now.

Recognize God's Presence - Slow your mind down, relax, and ask God to give you clarity and understanding as you review your day.

Recall God's Goodness - What are you thankful for today?

Review the Day - When were you most aware of God's presence today? When were least aware of God's presence today?

Repent - Where do you need to be reminded of Jesus' grace and righteousness in your life? What sin(s) do you need to confess to God?

Resolve - Ask God to give you Spirit-filled guidance and power to be more aware of His presence tomorrow.

If need be, read through the article [“What is Examen Prayer?”](#) in the back.

Reflect on questions in the Week 1 Review on the next page.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested ideas:

- How was practicing examen prayer today?
- After completing the Week 1 Review, what was one thing the Lord taught you this week?

Week 1 Review

What's the Lord been showing you this week through these practices?

Were any daily prompts especially difficult? Why is that?

How might you press into these practices more to fight for your gratitude in Jesus?

Week 2

Day 1 - Practicing Gratitude

The command to practice gratitude in everything helps take our eyes off of ourselves and fixes them on our good and sovereign God. Positive feelings aren't a pre-requisite for gratitude, but instead, through this practice, we bring ourselves back to the reality that God is at work in all things.

READ

Lamentations 3:19, 21-23

Remember my affliction and my wanderings...
But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

DO

After reflecting on today's passage, list out 10-15 things you are thankful for today.

or

Download the app "[1 Second Everyday](#)", and take a video of something you are thankful for. As you walk through this plan, keep up with recording and compiling what you are thankful for.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing that stood out to you as you were practicing thankfulness today?

Week 2

Day 2 - Practicing Gratitude

The command to practice gratitude in everything helps take our eyes off of ourselves and fixes them on our good and sovereign God. Positive feelings aren't a pre-requisite for gratitude, but instead, through this practice, we bring ourselves back to the reality that God is at work in all things.

READ

James 1:16-17

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Psalm 42:11

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation and my God.

DO

After reflecting on today's passage, list out 10-15 things you are thankful for today.

or

Download the app "[1 Second Everyday](#)", and take a video of something you are thankful for. As you walk through this plan, keep up with recording and compiling what you are thankful for.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing that stood out to you as you were practicing thankfulness today?

Week 2

Day 3 - Practicing Gratitude

The command to practice gratitude in everything helps take our eyes off of ourselves and fixes them on our good and sovereign God. Positive feelings aren't a pre-requisite for gratitude, but instead, through this practice, we bring ourselves back to the reality that God is at work in all things.

READ

Psalm 34:1-3

I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad.
Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together!

DO

After reflecting on today's passage, list out 10-15 things you are thankful for today.

or

Download the app "[1 Second Everyday](#)", and take a video of something you are thankful for. As you walk through this plan, keep up with recording and compiling what you are thankful for.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing that stood out to you as you were practicing thankfulness today?

Week 2

Day 4 - Practicing Gratitude

The command to practice gratitude in everything helps take our eyes off of ourselves and fixes them on our good and sovereign God. Positive feelings aren't a pre-requisite for gratitude, but instead, through this practice, we bring ourselves back to the reality that God is at work in all things.

READ

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

DO

After reflecting on today's passage, list out 10-15 things you are thankful for today.

or

Download the app "[1 Second Everyday](#)", and take a video of something you are thankful for. As you walk through this plan, keep up with recording and compiling what you are thankful for.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing that stood out to you as you were practicing thankfulness today?

Week 2

Day 5 - Fixing Your Hope on Eternity

For followers of Jesus, Heaven is beautiful because Jesus is there. One day we will be with Him, free from sin and death forever. The call for us is to fix our minds on this to help foster gratitude and joy no matter what we're going through.

READ

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

DO

After reflecting on today's passage, list out what you're looking forward to about Heaven.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing that stood out to you as you were fixing your hope on eternity today?

Week 2

Day 6 - Fixing Your Hope on Eternity

For followers of Jesus, Heaven is beautiful because Jesus is there. One day we will be with Him, free from sin and death forever. The call for us is to fix our minds on this to help foster gratitude and joy no matter what we're going through.

READ

Isaiah 65:17-19

“For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever
in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,
and her people to be a gladness.

I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and be glad in my people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping
and the cry of distress.

DO

After reflecting on today's passage, list out what you're looking forward to about Heaven.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- What's one thing that stood out to you as you were fixing your hope on eternity today?

Week 2

Day 7 - Fixing Your Hope on Eternity

For followers of Jesus, Heaven is beautiful because Jesus is there. One day we will be with Him, free from sin and death forever. The call for us is to fix our minds on this to help foster gratitude and joy no matter what we're going through.

READ

Revelation 22:1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

DO

After reflecting on today's passage, list out what you're looking forward to about Heaven.

Reflect on questions in the Week 2 Review on the next page.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested ideas:

- What's one thing that stood out to you as you were fixing your hope on eternity today?
- After completing the Week 2 Review, what was one thing the Lord taught you this week?

Week 2 Review

What's the Lord been showing you this week through these practices?

Were any daily prompts especially difficult? Why is that?

How might you press into these practices more to fight for your gratitude in Jesus?

Week 3

Day 1 - An Introduction to Biblical Encouragement and Generosity

Biblical encouragement acknowledges our gratitude for others. We take the focus off ourselves to see that God is at work in those around us.

Biblical generosity acknowledges that we have everything we need in Jesus. Out of an overflow of what we have in Him, we give towards God's kingdom in gratitude and joy.

READ

Hebrews 3:12-14

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

DO

Read through the articles "[How to Encourage Someone](#)" and "[How to Cultivate Generosity](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested ideas:

- What's one thing that stood out to you as you read today's articles?

Week 3

Day 2 - Biblical Encouragement and Generosity

Biblical encouragement acknowledges our gratitude for others. We take the focus off ourselves to see that God is at work in those around us.

Biblical generosity acknowledges that we have everything we need in Jesus. Out of an overflow of what we have in Him, we give towards God's kingdom in gratitude and joy.

READ

1 Thessalonians 5:8-11

...since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

DO

Who can you biblically encourage today?

or

What steps can you take this week to press into generosity?

If need be, read through the articles "[How to Encourage Someone](#)" and "[How to Cultivate Generosity](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest articles, what's one way you will grow in encouragement or generosity?

Week 3

Day 3 - Biblical Encouragement and Generosity

Biblical encouragement acknowledges our gratitude for others. We take the focus off ourselves to see that God is at work in those around us.

Biblical generosity acknowledges that we have everything we need in Jesus. Out of an overflow of what we have in Him, we give towards God's kingdom in gratitude and joy.

READ

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

DO

Who can you biblically encourage today?

or

What steps can you take this week to press into generosity?

If need be, read through the articles "[How to Encourage Someone](#)" and "[How to Cultivate Generosity](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest articles, what's one way you can implement growing in encouragement or generosity?

Week 3

Day 4 - Biblical Encouragement and Generosity

Biblical encouragement acknowledges our gratitude for others. We take the focus off ourselves to see that God is at work in those around us.

Biblical generosity acknowledges that we have everything we need in Jesus. Out of an overflow of what we have in Him, we give towards God's kingdom in gratitude and joy.

READ

Hebrews 10:23-25

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

DO

Who can you biblically encourage today?

or

What steps can you take this week to press into generosity?

If need be, read through the articles "[How to Encourage Someone](#)" and "[How to Cultivate Generosity](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest articles, what is the Lord teaching you about encouragement or generosity?

Week 3

Day 5 - Biblical Encouragement and Generosity

Biblical encouragement acknowledges our gratitude for others. We take the focus off ourselves to see that God is at work in those around us.

Biblical generosity acknowledges that we have everything we need in Jesus. Out of an overflow of what we have in Him, we give towards God's kingdom in gratitude and joy.

READ

Matthew 6:19-21, 25-26

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”

DO

Who can you biblically encourage today?

or

What steps can you take this week to press into generosity?

If need be, read through the articles “[How to Encourage Someone](#)” and “[How to Cultivate Generosity](#)” in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest articles, what is the Lord teaching you about encouragement or generosity?

Week 3

Day 6 - Biblical Encouragement and Generosity

Biblical encouragement acknowledges our gratitude for others. We take the focus off ourselves to see that God is at work in those around us.

Biblical generosity acknowledges that we have everything we need in Jesus. Out of an overflow of what we have in Him, we give towards God's kingdom in gratitude and joy.

READ

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

DO

Who can you biblically encourage today?

or

What steps can you take this week to press into generosity?

If need be, read through the articles "[How to Encourage Someone](#)" and "[How to Cultivate Generosity](#)" in the back.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest articles, what is the Lord teaching you about encouragement or generosity?

Week 3

Day 7 - Biblical Encouragement and Generosity

Biblical encouragement acknowledges our gratitude for others. We take the focus off ourselves to see that God is at work in those around us.

Biblical generosity acknowledges that we have everything we need in Jesus. Out of an overflow of what we have in Him, we give towards God's kingdom in gratitude and joy.

READ

Psalm 107:6-9

they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.

He led them by a straight way
till they reached a city to dwell in.

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!

For he satisfies the longing soul,
and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

DO

Who can you biblically encourage today?

or

What steps can you take this week to press into generosity?

If need be, read through the articles "[How to Encourage Someone](#)" and "[How to Cultivate Generosity](#)" in the back.

Reflect on questions in the Week 3 Review on the next page.

TOGETHER

Reach out to others in your LifeGroup working through this track to share what you learned.

Suggested idea:

- Based on the latest articles, what is the Lord teaching you about encouragement or generosity?
- After completing the Week 3 Review, what was one thing the Lord taught you this week?

Week 3 Review

What's the Lord been showing you this week through these practices?

Now that the 3 weeks are over, what does it look like for you to practically fight for your gratitude in Jesus daily? What practices can you implement daily/weekly? Share this with others in your LifeGroup to hold each other accountable.

If this plan was especially challenging, feel free to start back from the beginning or modify the plan to focus more time on one practice.

When you're finished, we'd love to hear how the Lord grew you in these three weeks. Share with us your story at teaching@midtowncolumbia.com

APPENDIX

What is Examen Prayer?

The examen prayer (Latin for “examination”) is meant to be practiced at the end of each day, looking back and discerning God’s activity with an aim to grow in deeper awareness for the next day. By practicing this regularly we’re able to more quickly see God in the ordinary, live in a posture of godward gratitude, and regularly experience His presence.

This prayer can be broken down in five steps:

1. Recognize God’s presence

Hebrews 10:19-21 reminds us that, through Jesus, we have confidence to draw near to Him. In prayer, we actively step into the presence of God not in intimidation or guilt but in relational communication. He delights in spending time with you. Take some time to slow your mind down, let your body relax, and as you step into His presence, ask God to give you clarity and understanding as you review your day.

2. Recall God’s goodness

Walk through your day from morning to evening and, as 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “give thanks in all circumstances.” What did you do today? Who did you talk to? Even in the small things, give thanks - what brought delight to you today? Even if you find it difficult to give thanks, Lamentations 3:22-23 reminds us the Lord’s “mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning.” In light of that, ask the Lord to give you insight on how you can express gratitude in all your circumstances.

3. Review the day

When were you most aware of Jesus’ presence? What did you do today out of reliance on the Spirit? What was that like? How did that happen? Express thankfulness for those moments and ask God to give you more opportunities to experience His presence.

When were you least aware of Jesus’ presence? What did you do today out of your own power and strength? What was that like? How did that happen? Scripture reminds us that He is with you always (Matt 2:23, 28:20). Ask God into those moments.

4. Repent

What sin(s) do you need to confess to God?

Where do you need to be reminded of Jesus’ grace and righteousness in your life?

What are you struggling to trust God with? How can you give God control of it?

Has the Holy Spirit been prompting you to do anything that you’ve been resisting? What step(s) do you need to take to walk in obedience?

5. Resolve

Ask God to give you Spirit-filled guidance and power to be more aware of His presence tomorrow. You may even consider writing down specific next steps as a reminder.

Like other practices, this will be challenging at first. Stick with it. Eventually, this will get easier as you commit to this practice regularly.

How to Encourage Someone

..exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 3:13

Biblical encouragement is a command that we see throughout the bible. Because of sin, life is hard and we can lose sight of our hope and our calling. We can be quick to forget the promises of God and Satan is committed to seeing that we do. We are called to encourage others so that we do not grow ‘hardened by the deceitfulness of sin’.

What does encouragement look like?

It’s Different From a Compliment

It’s is not telling someone they throw a great party or that you love their shirt. Compliments are nice, and you should still do that. But biblical encouragement is meant to push people into a deeper relationship with Jesus. It is meant to remind us of the gospel and the promises of God. In the midst of trials, It is meant to bring hope where it has been lost. It reminds us of our worth and identity, and it gives us courage to do the things we are called to do. It lets us know where our giftedness lies and the ways the Lord specifically wants to use us.

It’s Specific

Telling a pastor ‘I loved your sermon today’ is great, but to take something specific that was said and to tell them how it was impactful to you is likely more meaningful. Here are some specific ways that you might encourage a person.

“Here is how God has used you...”

“Here is how I see God at work in you...”

“Here is what God has promised you...”

It’s Meant to be Done Daily

We don’t save encouragement for a big moment or wait until something truly remarkable has happened in a person’s life. Hebrews 10:24-25 tells us we are to encourage daily! When we are in community with others, we get the privilege of seeing growth in one another. We see a person’s strengths and gifts that the Lord is using to build up the body. We know what it’s like for life’s circumstances to get us down and we know the need to be reminded of the good news. And in all this, we have the opportunity to lift up a person in the day to day when we can easily lose sight of what we are called to.

Pray that God can grow us in the discipline of encouragement and that we would desire to build up those around us. Pray for specific people to encourage in intentional and specific ways. And then just do it! Trust that since we are commanded to encourage, God can and will grow you in this. It may feel awkward initially but it will become more natural with practice, and then those around you will be more prepared to go live life for the kingdom because of your encouragement.

Since encouragement is a discipline, this requires intentionality - rarely will this happen spontaneously unless we cultivate ourselves ahead of time to be thankful.

Who can you encourage?	How do you want to encourage them?	When will you do it?

How to Cultivate Generosity

Jesus tells us where our treasures go, our hearts will follow.

Whereas discontentment is counting what you don't have, generosity reverse-engineers our hearts to count what we do have. When we see everything as a gift from God, we begin to become people marked by gratitude and generosity, freeing us from the lie that the good life is found in more.

As a church family, we want to press into generosity as an overflow of our gratitude but like anything in the Christian life, it requires discipline.

Look at the list below and consider how you might grow in thankful generosity to God's kingdom and God's people.*

1 - Create a "spontaneous generosity" line item in your monthly budget

Set aside some money once a month with the sole purpose of giving it away - whether that means using it to pay for someone's meal, throw a party to build with others, give someone a gift, help meet a need, etc. If you don't spend all of the money that month, roll it over into the next month to allow more opportunities to be spontaneously generous. (If you need help budgeting your finances, check out our resources at FollowingJesusTogether.com/generosity)

2 - Support a Serve The City partnership organization in our city

As a Jesus-centered family on mission, we want to make efforts to love and care for our city. One way we do this is through our Serve the City partnerships where we come alongside a number of organizations already helping the most vulnerable and marginalized people groups in our city and ask how we can help. For a list of our partnerships, go to midtowncolumbia.com/servethecity

3 - Support a church planter or missionary

Jesus' plan to fully bring his kingdom here on earth is through disciples being made and churches getting planted. As a church, we want to corporately and individually support church planting efforts to make Jesus' vision a reality. To give to a church planter, go to PlantGrassroots.com

4 - Increase your % to your local church

For our church, we want 10% to be the starting point of our generosity. And because Jesus is after our hearts when we give, we want to constantly assess our finances to see if we can free up more money so we can be more invested in Jesus' kingdom. To increase your giving to a Midtown church, click which church you are a part of - [Downtown](#), [Two Notch](#), [Lexington](#).

*First, if you're not giving 10% regularly to your local church, let this be the starting point of your generosity. If you need help budgeting to make giving 10% a reality or want to know why we start at 10% go to FollowingJesusTogether.com/generosity