



SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

April 24, 2022



OPENING PRAYER

O Gracious and Holy God, we thank you for sending your Son to die for our sake and to overcome death itself. Today, we are reminded to place our firm hope in the Resurrection of Jesus, and we remember how he breathed the Holy Spirit into his disciples. We ask that you would breathe a fresh hope into us today. Breathe into us your joy and courage. Fill us once again with Resurrection hope. Open our minds and hearts as we study the scriptures today, and fill us with a grateful heart, so that we can go out to offer peace and wholeness to those who need a word from you. We pray in the name of the Resurrected Jesus, Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)

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

Psalm 30:1-5, 11-12 (NIV)

*¹I will exalt you, Lord,
for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
²Lord my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.
³You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead;
you spared me from going down to the pit.
⁴Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people;
praise his holy name.
⁵For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.
¹¹You turned my wailing into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
¹²that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.
Lord my God, I will praise you forever.*

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“Gratitude: A Habit for Life”

INTRODUCTION

As we remembered on Easter, after Jesus died, everything the disciples believed was no longer true. Jesus was dead, his body was missing, and his followers were in hiding. What happened next was beyond their wildest dreams! He rose from the dead, walked among them, and breathed on them, saying “As the father sent me, so I am sending you” (John 20:21). We were given a mission. To be true Easter people and fulfill our mission, we need to continue to train our hearts to experience life as a gift. Living a life of gratitude liberates us from our tendency to self-absorption, opens us to wonder, and fills us with hope.

QUESTIONS

1. When was the last time you truly expressed gratitude to someone? What was their response?
2. How did Paul tell new Christians in Thessalonica how to handle pressure and stress? Do you find his words challenging? Do you think you handle stress differently because of your relationship with God? Why or why not?
3. In Psalm 30, the Psalmist may be reflecting on a time of severe trouble when his life was threatened (or he may be speaking metaphorically). Over the course of the Pandemic, have you had times you felt the threat would never end? Have you experienced this feeling of a threat to your life at another time? How did the Psalmist respond in this difficult time?
4. How might joy grow in our lives in a time of difficult circumstances?
5. The default mode of a sinful human race is a sense of entitlement, that what appears in our path is rightfully ours. Have you ever observed this? Have you ever behaved in an entitled way? How might an attitude of humility lead to a posture of gratitude?

FINAL APPLICATION

The words of blessing at the end of a worship service are often called a “Benediction,” words of goodness. We might speak of God’s “benefits” or “blessings.” Keep a notepad by your bed and write a phrase of benediction each day this week. After you write one for each day for one week, share them with someone you are close to. Here are a few examples:

Blessed are you, O Lord, for giving me my children.

Blessed are you, O Lord, who gave me life and good health today.

Blessed are you, O Lord, who forgives me when I sin.

Blessed are you, O Lord, for the great sunset you let me enjoy.