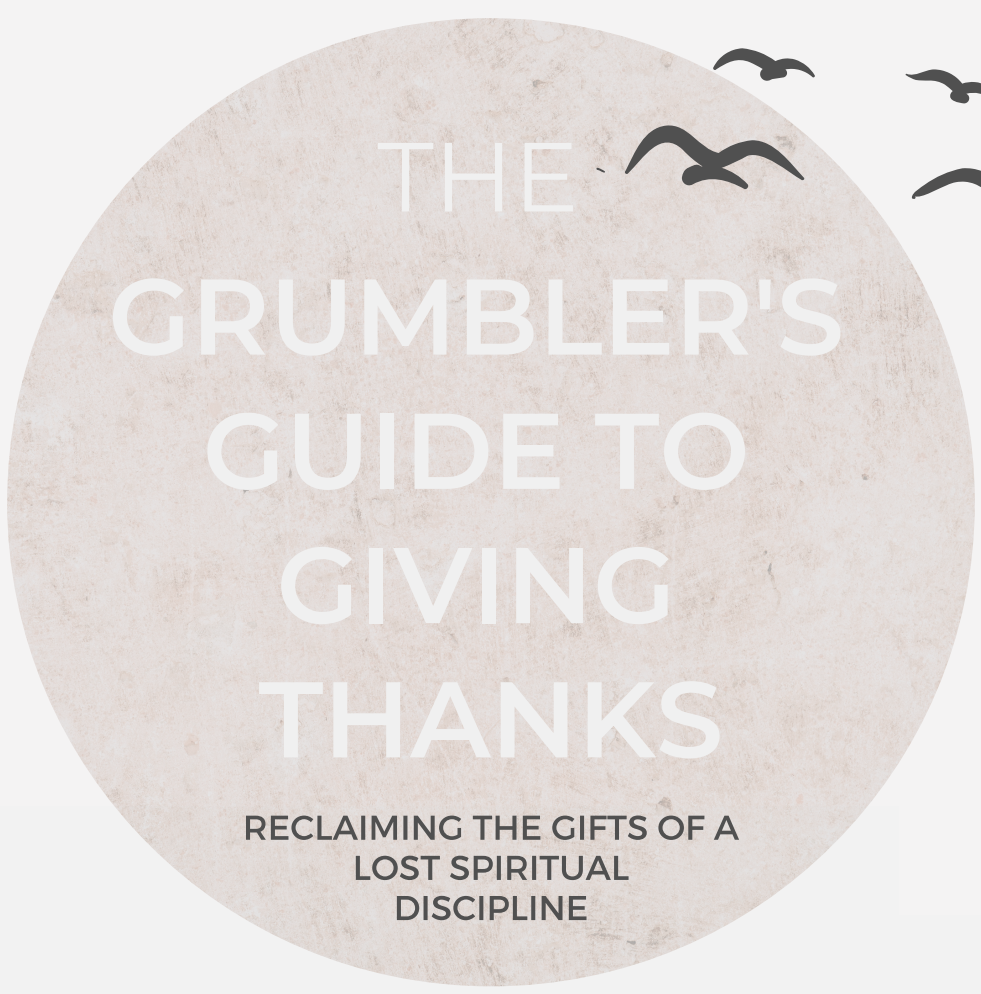


GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE



THE
GRUMBLER'S
GUIDE TO
GIVING
THANKS

RECLAIMING THE GIFTS OF A
LOST SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINE

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INTRODUCTION TO THE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Thank you for reading *The Grumbler's Guide to Giving Thanks* and desiring to discuss and respond to it with others. I pray that the book and this Discussion Guide encourages you to better know and enjoy God through the rhythm of thanksgiving.

This Discussion Guide aims to facilitate further reflection, conversation, and application of content in *The Grumbler's Guide to Giving Thanks*. Each section covers one chapter and includes a passage from the Bible to get you into the Word and questions about the chapter to dive deeper together.

Don't feel obligated to discuss every question or only these questions. Add questions you come up with or select the questions most fitting for your group.

Depending on how quickly you go through the Discussion Guide, you might want to combine some weeks. For instance, if your group wants to go through the book with this Discussion Guide in four weeks, here's a suggested breakdown for your time together:

- Introduction, Chapters 1–2, Appendix
- Chapters 3–5
- Chapters 6–7
- Chapters 8–9

While the Appendix with the Gratitude Challenge is at the end of the book, review it at the outset of your time together. Begin the Gratitude Challenge as you start meeting together so that you're reading about thanksgiving in Scripture and practicing it daily alongside of your discussion of material within the book.



All quotations and page numbers come from the paperback edition of *The Grumbler's Guide to Giving Thanks: Reclaiming the Gifts of a Lost Spiritual Discipline* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2020).

For more resources on gratitude and thanksgiving by Dustin Crowe, visit www.indycrowe.com.

INTRODUCTION

CONFESSIONS OF A RECOVERING PESSIMIST

“[Thanksgiving] is not an afterthought of the Christian life or the cherry on top of our spiritual disciplines. It’s not something we get to when we think of it or when all our spiritual ducks are in a row. Giving thanks is an essential, life-giving part of the Christian life.” (18)

1. What did you score on the Gratitude Quiz?
2. Would you describe yourself as more of a grumbler or grateful? Why?
3. What are a couple things you hope to learn from or get out of reading this book?
4. What does thanksgiving look like in your life? Would you say it’s a regular or rare practice? Do you intentionally give thanks to God weekly, every few weeks when you remember, or is it more seasonal (such as around Thanksgiving Day)?

“The church can show how the beauty and joy of gratitude offers something much greater than the ugly, life-sucking griping that’s so common. But to have this voice, individual Christians and churches must regain the spiritual discipline of gratitude.” (23)

5. How does today’s culture stoke murmuring, complaining, and negativity? How can gratitude help Christians display a more compelling vision of life with God?
6. Was there anything specific in the Introduction that stood out to you, raised a question, or encouraged or challenged you?



CHAPTER 1

GRATITUDE'S BLUEPRINT

Scripture Reading: Psalm 103

“Knowing and loving God is the ultimate goal. If you read this and can list off blessings all day long, but they don’t inch your heart closer to God, then it’s incomplete. If your perspective changes, and you can turn lemons into lemonade with the best of them, but you can’t turn gifts into gratitude, then something hasn’t clicked. Thanksgiving aims to get our eyes on God. To redirect our heart from grumbling to gratitude, we must know the Giver of every good gift.” (35)

1. What are some of the reasons that thanksgiving doesn't receive much attention today?
2. On page 26, four aspects of biblical thanksgiving are listed (each of these make up their own chapter from chapters four to seven).
 - Thankful
 - Thankful to God
 - Thankfulness to God expressed
 - Thankfulness to God leading to joy in God

Which of these are you most excited to dive deeper into? Why?

3. What's the difference between being grateful versus being grateful to someone? Why should thanksgiving include giving thanks to God and not just feeling thankful?

“The object of our gratitude needs to expand from something to someone.... The Bible never speaks of thankfulness in general. It always points to a person.... There’s a deep theology of God under every statement of thanksgiving to God.” (26, 28–29, 34))

4. Read Psalm 103:1–14. What are some of the actions and attributes of God that David gives thanks for? How do the gracious actions toward God's people in verses 1–5 help us better understand the attributes of God mentioned in verses 6–14?
5. Why is gratitude incomplete if it doesn't lead to knowing God?
6. Was there anything specific in Chapter 1 that stood out to you, raised a question, or encouraged or challenged you?
7. How can you apply at least one thing from the “Putting It into Practice” section? How can this group encourage and pray for you as you respond?

CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGY OF THANKSGIVING

Scripture Reading: : 2 Chronicles 29:25–36 and Colossians 3:15–17

“We give thanks, and over time as our gratitude muscles get stronger, we become thankful people. The practice becomes a posture.” (38)

1. Discussions of thanksgiving are often limited only to God’s blessings or gifts. How does this chapter help us understand the more broad and deep ways in which biblical writers used “thanks” and “thanksgiving” language? Why might this be important?

“Gratitude produces joy, and joy is wrapped up in gratitude. Anything we give thanks for offers a chance to rejoice in God. Anything we rejoice in provides an opportunity to give thanks. By setting out to give thanks we also embark on a journey toward joy.” (43)

2. How does gratitude help produce joy? Why does joy always have an element of gratitude present?
3. Read 2 Chronicles 29:31; Psalm 22:25; 27:6; 50:14, 23; 107:21–22. What do you notice about the thanksgiving offering or sacrifice? What might we take away from this and apply to our own responses of thanksgiving to God?

“The object of our gratitude needs to expand from something to someone.... The Bible never speaks of thankfulness in general. It always points to a person.... There’s a deep theology of God under every statement of thanksgiving to God.” (26, 28–29, 34))

4. What are differences between giving thanks like a gift vs tax? Why do these two perspectives (gift vs tax) behind our giving thanks greatly affect the nature of our thanksgiving, both from our posture and from God’s vantage?
5. Read Romans 1:21; 12:1–2; Colossians 3:15–17; Hebrews 13:15. What do these passages teach you about presenting your whole person to God as a grateful offering? How do we practically do that? What gets in the way of practicing this posture daily?
6. Was there anything specific in Chapter 2 that stood out to you, raised a question, or encouraged or challenged you?
7. How can you apply at least one thing from the “Putting It into Practice” section? How can this group encourage and pray for you as you respond?

CHAPTER 3

THANKSGIVING: AN ANCHOR THROUGH THE STORM

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

“Rather than listening to our heart tell us what God has withheld, we talk back. We remind our forgetful self of all God’s provision, care, blessings, promises, and mercies. We will always have reasons to grumble, but we have even more reasons to be grateful. When in doubt list them out.” (56)

1. Read Philippians 4:4–7. How could giving thanks to God in the midst of anxiety help you find some level of rest and peace in Him, even if difficult circumstances continue?
2. How might grumbling result from listening to your sinful heart too much? How can giving thanks speak truth to your heart?
3. What are additional benefits of thanksgiving not mentioned in this chapter? Or, what are other ways thanksgiving can help us mature in Christ, fight off sin, or resist discouragement?

“Thanksgiving offers God’s people a way to know, trust, and rest in Him. By looking up and giving thanks, grumblers become grateful, and the grouchy find joy.” (62)

4. Read Psalm 28. Why do you think David can give thanks (28:7) despite the discouragement (28:1), weariness (28:2), and trials he’s enduring (28:3–8)?
5. In Psalm 28:9, David’s praise to God is following by petition to God. How might thanksgiving strengthen our confidence in God so we ask Him for help in our needs?
6. This chapter mentioned how gratitude might help us in our anxiety, discontentment, disappointment, discouragement, weakness, distance from God, and joylessness. Which of those, if any, describe an area of struggle for you in this season?
7. Was there anything specific in Chapter 3 that stood out to you, raised a question, or encouraged or challenged you?
8. How can you apply at least one thing from the “Putting It into Practice” section? How can this group encourage and pray for you as you respond?

CHAPTER 4

RECOGNIZE. REFLECT. RECEIVE.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

“To grow in gratitude, replace busyness and distraction with attentiveness and presence.... Before we can say thanks to God, we must have something to thank Him for. We cannot give thanks if we’re not thankful for anything in particular.” (69)

1. What would be some symptoms of the following problems in a person’s life?
 - Busyness
 - Distraction
 - Pride
 - Entitlement
2. How do each of the above ailments prohibit or limit gratitude and thanksgiving?

“The journey to joy and gratitude begins by recognizing God in His world and Word. We must see the gifts we ignore presume, or take for granted that have become white noise.” (71)

3. What are some of the reasons we don’t live more aware of God’s provision, protection, mercy, and kindness? What keeps you personally from noticing or considering reasons for gratitude?

“Recognize what’s around you.

Reflect on its significance and source.

Receive it gratefully as a gift and rejoice.” (70)

4. Discuss what it might look to move from recognizing a blessing to reflecting on it to receiving it. Use examples to flesh it out and practice.
5. This chapter talks about starting small when it comes to being awake to God’s gifts or work. What are things in the world, God’s Word, your relationships, your life in general, or your church that you can thank God for?
6. Read Ephesians 1:3–14. What are some of the spiritual blessings in Christ belonging to us as Christians that we can give thanks for? Why are these gifts valuable?
7. Was there anything specific in Chapter 4 that stood out to you, raised a question, or encouraged or challenged you?
8. How can you apply at least one thing from the “Putting It into Practice” section? How can this group encourage and pray for you as you respond?

CHAPTER 5

LOOK AROUND AND LOOK UP

Scripture Reading: Psalm 95 and Luke 17:11–19

“Thankfulness for something leads us to thankfulness to someone.... Thanksgiving isn’t naming off blessings, though it might start there. It affirms blessings in our life to appreciate the person who gave them. What we’re thankful for points us to who we’re thankful to.” (83)

1. Why is thanksgiving incomplete if we only feel grateful for God’s blessings but don’t actually give Him thanks? What are some of the potential losses in that scenario?

“The gifts around us aren’t a matter of luck, fortune, how the cookie crumbles, or the way the cards land. They ‘re from God. Faith fuels gratitude because it pinpoints God as the fount from whom all blessings flow. And gratitude increases our faith as we see and taste His goodness firsthand.” (83)

2. Read James 1:17 and 1 Corinthians 4:7. How does living with the belief that all things come from God and He is at the center of our lives stir up gratitude and thanksgiving?
3. How might a life devoid of gratitude reveal either a small view of God or that we are ignoring and neglecting Him too often?
4. What are some reasons you can give thanks to God in the following categories? As you recognize reasons to give thanks, reflect on what they reveal to you about who God is.
 - God’s Common Grace
 - God’s Creation
 - God’s Providence and Provision
 - God’s Grace through Christ
 - God
5. How does this understanding of thanksgiving allow us to enjoy both the gift and the Giver? Do you think it minimizes enjoying gifts or maximizes the way we enjoy them? Why?
6. Read Luke 17:11–19. What stands out to you about this passage? How does the Samaritan’s recognition of Jesus’ work lead him to worship and trust Jesus?
7. Was there anything specific in Chapter 5 that stood out to you, raised a question, or encouraged or challenged you?
8. How can you apply at least one thing from the “Putting It into Practice” section? How can this group encourage and pray for you as you respond?

CHAPTER 6

THANKFULNESS EXPRESSED

Scripture Reading: Psalm 107

“When we take the time to express thanks, it’s like sprinkling Miracle-Gro on our gratitude. Our gratitude grows with new life and vitality. Its roots deepen. We might have many fleeting emotions of gratefulness throughout a week, but unless thanksgiving seals them in our hearts, we’ll forget them.” (100)

1. Prior to this chapter, would you have distinguished feeling grateful from giving thanks? Why or why not?
2. Read Psalm 105:1–2; 107:1–2, 21–22; Hebrews 13:15. Why is expressing thankfulness essential to thanksgiving? What happens in us or to us as we give thanks to God (in words spoken or written, prayers, or singing)?
3. What are some of the benefits of thanksgiving mentioned in this chapter? Which of these benefits have you experienced when you practiced giving thanks?

“We cannot fulfill God’s command to ‘do all things without grumbling’ (Phil. 2:14) unless we instead are ‘giving thanks always and for everything’ (Eph. 5:20).” (102)

4. How does giving thanks with our words help fight the grumbling, irritation, fear, and anxiety in our hearts?
5. Read Deuteronomy 4:9–14; 6:7; Psalm 40:9–10; 78:4–6; 89:1; 145:4; Luke 2:38. How does giving thanks in the company of others help us be a testimony to the world, encourage believers, and disciple those near to us?
6. Was there anything specific in Chapter 6 that stood out to you, raised a question, or encouraged or challenged you?
7. How can you apply at least one thing from the “Putting It into Practice” section? How can this group encourage and pray for you as you respond?
8. Have you been participating in the “Gratitude Challenge” from the Appendix? What has that looked like for you? How has it been helpful, challenging, or encouraging?

CHAPTER 7

ENJOY THE GIFT AND EMBRACE THE GIVER

Scripture Reading: Psalm 145

“Thanksgiving is a conduit of communion with God. God’s attributes and actions open windows to see who He is. Through giving thanks to God, we get more of God in return. These small investments of thanksgiving pay huge dividends.” (116)

1. How would you summarize the main point of this chapter?

“Gifts and gratitude prove most meaningful in the context of relationships. A thoughtful blessing from one person to another, and a heartfelt thanks for both the gift and the giver, bring friends closer.” (111)

2. Can you share any examples of where you’ve experienced how taking time to thank or affirm someone strengthened the friendship? Why do you think this happens?

“Thanksgiving is a response to more than God’s blessings. It’s a response to what we learn about Him through them. It’s more than naming or listing gifts. We also get to know the Giver.” (111)

3. How does reflecting on God’s gifts, including tangible blessings but also things like His comfort or grace, reveal to us in deeper ways what God is like and His heart toward us?
4. How does this allow us to enjoy God’s gifts even more rather than minimize these gifts or suggest we shouldn’t enjoy them?

“Thanksgiving, at its best, involves saying thanks to God for His works and worshipping God because of what those things tell us about Him. What He does helps us know who He is. Giving thanks starts with something but expands to Someone.” (121)

5. Take a minute to think of a few things you’re thankful to God for today. Then pick one or two of those to reflect on what it reveals to you about God. Share with one another as a group what you are thanking God for and how it reveals something to you about Him.
6. Was there anything specific in Chapter 7 that stood out to you, raised a question, or encouraged or challenged you?
7. Consider walking through the study of Psalm 145 from the “Putting It into Practice” section. Use this as a time to pray back to God prayers of thanksgiving for who He is.

CHAPTER 8

REMEMBERING: LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

Scripture Reading: 1 Chronicles 16:1-36

“Reflecting on God’s works invites us to give Him thanks. Thanks to God produces trust in God. Trust helps us see God’s glory. The bigger God becomes in our mind’s eyes the smaller our problems become. Not because they aren’t real or scary, but because they shrink in a side-by-side comparison to God.” (127)

1. Do you have any traditions or ways you try to look back or remember things you’ve done or experienced?

“Present fears and future anxieties are calmed by past faithfulness—not our faithfulness but God’s faithfulness. Remembering generates thanksgiving.” (127)

2. Why does recalling ways God has been faithful, powerful, gracious, and a helper in the past give us confidence for the things we face today and will face in the future? How can remembrance help us fight things like worry, fear, anxiety, and temptation?
3. Read 1 Chronicles 16:8–21. What are some of the things this passage recalls? Why does Asaph want Israel to remember God’s deeds in the past?

“Recalling God was good reassures us God is good now and God will be good tomorrow. A track record of trust leads to thankfulness, but it also boosts our faith, so we say, ‘Do it again’... Look back in grateful remembrance so you can look forward in confident hope” (137)

4. Can you recall trials you’ve walked through in the past that taught you more about who God is or where you experienced Him in a deeper way? Find ways to remember God’s love and faithfulness together by sharing some of these stories with one another.
5. Do you have any intentional ways you remember things God has or is teaching you, blessings, trials you’ve walked through, or truths about who God is? If you don’t have ways to remember, what are ways you, your family, church, or this group could practice grateful remembrance together?.
6. Was there anything specific in Chapter 7 that stood out to you, raised a question, or encouraged or challenged you?
7. How can you apply at least one thing from the “Putting It into Practice” section? How can this group encourage and pray for you as you respond?

CHAPTER 9

GRITTY GRATITUDE: GIVING THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

Scripture Reading: Psalm 28; Philippians 2:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

“We can give thanks, not because we always feel grateful or like what’s happening, but because we trust God.... We rest in His goodness, love, and sovereignty, and we say thanks for what He’s doing in all things. Thanksgiving is a trusting response that proclaims Gods’ good and so are all His ways. Even in hard things, God is faithful. He’s with us and at work for us.” (143–144)

1. Why is it hard to give thanks in trials or frustrating circumstances?
2. Why does this idea of giving thanks in all circumstances not mean we can’t grieve, lament, or feel sorrow for difficult things in life?
3. Read Ephesians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18; Colossians 3:17; Philippians 2:14; 4:4–7. Give some examples of how you might thank God in or through hardship without having to thank God for sin, pain, or tragedy itself.

“Since thanksgiving is God-centered rather than gift-centered, we can give thanks in all seasons and circumstances.... The basis of giving thanks isn’t gifts; it’s God. It’s not liking everything God gives us but trusting He knows best.” (148, 152).

4. How do we give thanks, or practice gritty gratitude, even when we don’t feel like it? Even if we struggle to see blessings around us as we’re enduring pain or trials, what are some things true of God or true of us in Christ that we can give thanks for in any season?

“A discouraged, wounded heart can find healing in lament and hope in thanksgiving. Both shift our eyes away from the circumstances and onto God.” (151)

5. Read Psalm 28 and Psalm 35:17–18. David can lament and give thanks together. How can you lament what’s hard while giving thanks to God for who He is in the midst of it?
6. Which of these ways to respond in trials do you most need to practice today? Why?
 - Rest in God’s Sovereign Plan
 - Look for God’s Evident Work
 - Cling to God’s Good Promises
 - Trust in God’s Steadfast Love and Faithfulness
7. Was there anything specific in Chapter 9 that stood out to you, raised a question, or encouraged or challenged you?
8. What were one or two things from this book that helped you or that you most want to take away from reading it? Are there any changes you need to make to build thanksgiving as a habit into your life?

GRATITUDE LIST:



