

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM
WEEK THREE: GRATITUDE
MERCY



Mercy: Gratitude

OPENING PRAYER:

Dear Eternal and Triune God, we say, "THANK YOU!"
In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

How have you seen God at work in your life this week?
What good have you done this week?

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WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READING:

Read Luke 17:11-19

“On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ When he saw them, he said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, ‘Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’ Then he said to him, ‘Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.’”

REFLECTION:

*In November of 2003, Elizabeth Gibson discovered *Tres Personajes* by Rufino Tamayo, a million-dollar painting, in trash on a street corner in New York. She didn't know anything about modern art, but it seemed wrong for the painting to be left on the curb with the trash. She thought the frame looked cheap, but she took it home anyway. Later, she discovered that the painting had an estimated value between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000.*

In our scripture lesson, the people suffering from Leprosy were exiled from the rest of the community. They were put out in the trash heap of life. However, Jesus saw the humanity of the people suffering from Leprosy. The world had no use for them, but Jesus knew that God had a purpose and plan for their lives. God was not done with them.

Antique collectors and even junk collectors must be discriminating. They must decide what will be part of their collections and what will remain in the trash. Jews and Samaritans were in a Leper camp together; they were brought together by their pain. They cried out with one voice. They were supposed to keep at least 50 yards away from other people and they had to cry out, “unclean, unclean!” Instead, they cried out “Jesus, have mercy on us.” Jesus could have just healed the Jews who had leprosy.

After all, Jews did not have anything to do with Samaritans because Samaritans were considered unclean people. Additionally, Jews are God's chosen people. Even after cleansing the Samaritan of his physical infirmity, wouldn't he still be a Samaritan, which would make him unclean anyway? Jesus chose to show mercy, going against social norms and the conventional wisdom of the day. Likewise, Jesus picked us all up off the trash heap of life, on the curb of sinfulness when He died for us all on the cross. Jesus chose us that day on Calvary's hill. Jesus offers us an invitation to the kingdom. Jesus wants us to be included in the kingdom.

Antique collectors will often clean up or restore the items that they have collected. The process of cleaning and restoration takes time. The people suffering from Leprosy cried out. Jesus responded by giving them some instructions. They took those steps and while they were taking those steps, they were healed. They had to act on his command before there was any sign of healing. The Samaritan returned to praise God and give thanks to Jesus when he realized he was healed. Jesus asked about the other nine. Perhaps the other nine failed to see the hand of God in their healing. Perhaps, they were so preoccupied with celebrating their healing that they neglected to give thanks. Perhaps, they believed that their healing was owed to them. The Samaritan's response was the proper one; it was one of gratitude. He did a great thing by giving thanks in response to the great thing God did in his life. Jesus said his faith had made him well, cleansed or healed.

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Encounter the Head:

Define gratitude in your own words.

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Why didn't Jesus just heal God's chosen people, the Jews? Why is the healing of the Samaritan a radical act of mercy?

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Who are the Samaritans or the people on the margins of our community? In what ways can we show them mercy?

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Encounter the Heart:

Share a time when you were merciful towards someone, yet they seemed ungrateful. What did you learn about God? What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about the other person?

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Share a time when you were shown mercy. How did you demonstrate your gratefulness to that person? How did you demonstrate your gratefulness to God?

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GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Share the spiritual practices that help nurture an attitude of gratitude in your life.

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Encounter the Hands:

Write down what and who are you grateful for today. Now, share your written response with the group.

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If you have not already thanked the people that you have listed, please take some time to make a phone call, write a note, or send an email to that person, letting them know that you are grateful.

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PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Encounter The Hands:

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

We encourage everyone to do a daily reflection. This can be done alone, as a couple, or with your family. This spiritual practice will help answer the questions you have and it will improve your ability to see where God is at work in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Please answer the following questions during your personal devotional time at the end of the day.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, “what made you happy today?”

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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