

WHO AM I? AND WHAT DO I WANT?

Bible study Colossians 3:12-17, 22-25

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Version for group leaders



PREFACE FOR GROUP LEADERS

PREPERATIONS

It is very important that you prepare properly.

- **Reading.** Read through the entire bible study carefully: the intro, the questions, the annotations to the text, the appendix.
- **Exercises.** Prepare the exercises. Visualize how they are going to go, practice them at home. Make sure you know what your role is as group leader. If you do the exercises in the group, they shouldn't be new for you.
- **Materials.** Make sure you have the necessary materials with you (see below)
- **Prayer.** Take enough time to pray for the group and for yourself.
 - o Think about the members of the group, and pray for everyone personally. What do you know about them? What do you think this theme means to them? What message do you wish to communicate with them? Pray that God will bless them through the bible study and conversations.
 - o Pray for yourself. Where does the theme connect with your life? What do you wish to receive yourself? Also pray that God will help you lead the group.

MATERIALS

If you are going to go over all parts you are going to need the following materials:

- Bible and bible study
- Media player to listen to Psalm 1 (during the prayer at the end) and perhaps extra speakers
- For everyone in the group a white sheet and a marker, pencil or pen

OPEN GROUP

This bible study is suitable for groups with non-Christians. If they are there give them a special welcome. Invite them to join in the conversation and give their own opinion. Avoid discussion about the reliability of the bible. Park that question if it comes up and invite them to treat the text like it is written down – even if it is 'just a letter from ancient times'. Focus the conversation on the meaning of the story: then and now. In short: try to follow the conversational questions and exercises.

TIME MANAGMENT

This bible study is quite long. If you want to do all parts, you will need a little less than two hours. The table below gives an indication of how much time you need for every part.

Part	Duration
Introduction, bible passage	10 min
1. Theses	5 min
2. Blooming and bearing fruit	15 min
3. Roots	10 min
4. Stem	20 min
5. Branches	25 min
6. Fruits	15 min
7. Closing Prayer	10 min
Total	110 min

Keep the following things in mind:

- If you have less time than needed, make choices. Which parts will you do, and which ones will you skip? Try to figure out what is most meaningful for your group.
- Keep an eye on the time, but don't be strict. If you are having a good conversation some parts might last longer. Keep the conversation going and skip another part if necessary.

GOOD LUCK!

Finally, we wish you good luck with the preparation and the group itself. The 'success' of the bible study is not up to you and not your responsibility. You do what you are capable of. You give your 'bread and fish' to Jesus (Mark. 8). He will break, multiply and share it. And he does that through you. Isn't that beautiful? With this in the back of your mind we wish you a lot of relaxation and fun!

'Up there you will be what God made of you down here.' – Henk Binnendijk
(*Hier en daar*, 7)

*'Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. (C.S. Lewis, *Weight of glory*, 1)*

'If you want to get the best out of yourself, you will need too look for the best outside of yourself' – Stefan Paas (*'Werkkleding'*, speech *Via Nova*, 30 august 2015)

INTRODUCTION

What are my talents? What am I capable of? What do I want? You don't automatically walk in the footprints of your parents, but you look for a path that suits you. You want to develop yourself and let your different talents bloom. But how do you find a place that totally fits you?

There is enough to choose from, that is not the problem. Everything is possible. A study, another study? Foreign experience? Gap year? But this great freedom also has a darker side. We have the feeling that we can do everything, so it is up to us to take everything out of ourselves. You have all the opportunities. So if you fail it is your own fault. Succeeding has become a choice.

No wonder we experience so much stress when making choices. You have to choose correctly. Take a step forward, not backward. But how do you know what way you should be going?

In the beginning of our era a hardworking apostle writes a letter to a group of hardworking Christians. About making choices, deciding your direction and flourishing. Paul points them in an interesting direction, you don't flourish by looking inside of yourself to find out who you are and what you want, but by looking for the best *outside* of yourself.

BIBLE: COLOSSIANS 3:12-17, 22-25

New international Version (NIV)

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (..) ²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵ Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

NOTES WITH THE TEXT

VERSE 12

- The Colossians are called 'chosen', 'holy' and 'loved'. These are the same names used for Israel in the old Testament, and for Christ in the new Testament. Christ is the one who was 'chosen' (1 Pet. 2:4,6) by God, the holy (Joh.6:69) and the one who is above all loved by his Father (Math. 3:17). Christians get the same titles as Jesus because as the people of God they find their identity in God.
- **[Important]** 'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved'; These days, the word 'holy' is only used as an indication of moral superiority (usually used in a condescending way) or in a religious context; people think of certain places, object or people that have a special religious meaning. Holy in the bible means: 'set apart' to be with God. It is the opposite of 'profane'. Profane isn't something negative, just 'normal'. Eating, drinking, soccer, work, your bike and your car. Almost everything is profane and that is okay. But opposite of that is holy, which is 'different': it is 'not normal' because it has been set apart to belong to God. When the Colossians are called 'holy' this means they are different people, because they belong to God in a special way. 'Chosen' and 'loved' express something similar. When Paul calls the Christians in Colossae 'chosen' and 'loved' he doesn't mean all other people are lost, nor that all other people aren't loved by God, but that Christians are 'set apart'. Christians are 'chosen' to be the subject of God's love in a special way. They have a special task, namely to do everything 'in the name of Jesus Christ' to represent Jesus in this world. They are 'sanctified', 'chosen' and 'loved', not instead of, or at the expense of others, but to benefit others. Christians are sanctified, chosen and loved to show God's love to others.
- What Paul prayed for before (v11) – that the character of Christ is expressed in Colossae – he now phrases as a calling (v13 and onward). For Paul there is apparently no contradiction between prayer and action to fulfill that prayer.
- **[Important]** 'Put on'; Paul uses the metaphor of clothes you put on. The metaphor goes like this: he calls for the Christian in Colossae to 'wear' the

life of Jesus like a 'uniform' that fits their task. Like a doctor puts on a white coat or like a lawyer puts on a gown. The first time (when you are still in your study) it feels strange and uncomfortable. But once you put on those clothes something happens. You have to act according to the patterns that belong to your clothes, and step by step you learn to do that. You 'grow' into your clothes. The same goes for Christians: they 'put on' the life of Jesus, like a coat. Because that is how they are seen: like representatives of Jesus. Then, they will learn to act like it.

- Paul calls the Colossians to develop the five 'virtues' (positive character traits). You could show their mutual relationship in a scheme like this:

<p>Attitude towards others:</p> <p>1. Sincere compassion (a kind of engagement with others where you share the pain of the other)</p> <p>2. Kindness/ friendliness</p>	<p>Attitude towards yourself:</p> <p>3. Humility / Humbleness (the willingness to put your own sakes aside like Christ did in his suffering, Fp2:5-11)</p>
<p>Result as to how you <i>approach</i> others:</p> <p>4. Meekness (as opposed to arrogance or rudeness)</p>	
<p>Result as to how you <i>react</i> to others:</p> <p>5. Patience (as opposed to anger or bitterness)</p>	

VERSE 13

- The virtues from verse 12 are immediately implemented:
 - o 'Bear with each other', hold back your natural reaction to difficult or strange people, let them be themselves.
 - o 'Forgive', if you hurt each other forgive each other.
- 'Forgive as the Lord forgave you.' This sentence can be explained in two ways: (1) because you, yourself, have been forgiven by Christ, it would be

inappropriate not to forgive others and (2) because Christ forgave the others it would be inappropriate for you not to forgive them.

VERSE 14

- Love is said to bind all these virtues in perfect unity. This makes it like the belt, which binds the entire outfit together into one unity. In those days there were other lists of virtues with other virtues to bind it all together, but it was never love. In the new Testament it does get that place.

VERSE 15

- 'Peace of Christ' (NIV). Other translations use 'peace of God'
- The 'peace of Christ' is not a singular, internal 'peace of mind', but a peace in mutual interaction. This becomes clear by the connection between the first and second part of the sentence. *'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.'* At the same time the mutual peace shouldn't be an exterior/ distant way of coexistence, but 'rule in your heart'. Which means: the peace of Christ must be the decisive factor in your decision-making.

VERSE 16

- What is the 'message of Christ'? Paul probably thought about the words and stories about Jesus which were being spread around orally. He gives a summary of that in 1:15-20. We have these stories in their written form in the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John). This message of Christ must 'dwell among you richly'. It is important to get to know this message by heart by studying it together, and teaching each other.
- 'Teach and admonish'. Those are the two sides of the same medal. 'Teaching' is positively stimulating right thoughts and thought patterns. 'admonishing' is correcting wrong thoughts and thought patterns.

VERSE 17

- [Important] Acting 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' means: (1) representing Him and (2) being entitled to do that. To sum all these verses up; Christians are 'sanctified', 'chosen' and 'loved' which gives them the very specific task in life to represent Jesus, and to do everything in His name

- [Important] 'And whatever you do, whether in word or deed' means literally ... everything. It is about *all* parts of life: work, study, relationships, sport, hobby's. Through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, we receive much more than forgiveness. The work of Christ brings reconciliation and change in *all aspects* of our life. In the beginning of the letter you can see Paul using the greatest language known to man to describe what Jesus had done. His death and resurrection change everything, everything, everything, everything: 'For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (...) For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.' (1:16, 19-20).

VERSE 22

- In this passage, slaves are mentioned. This is not an approval of slavery. Avoid any discussion about this. Important is that God in the history continuously comes to people and helps them go forward. The ten commandments were for example a very big step for 'humanity'. In the bible you see that God also helps people go forward step by step. In the new Testament we also (still) don't see any protest against slavery. But in the end, the revolutionary view of all humans being equal plays an important role in abolishing slavery in many places in the 19th century.

VERSE 24

- The bible is filled with promises of rewards. We might emotionally have some problems with that. Isn't the most important virtue unselfishness, that you *don't* do it all for yourself? Not according to the bible. Go for that reward is what the bible continuously says. But do it in the right way. Seek for your reward with God, by going the way He wants you to go in. Do you long for honor? Good, seek for your honor with God, by serving others – God will honor you for it (mark. 10:35-45). Do you long for treasures? Good, collect heavenly treasures with God, then you will possess a treasure (Mat. 6). Etc.

VERSE 25

- The belief that God will reward everyone according to their deeds (good or bad) is a returning theme in the Bible, in the old as well as in the new Testament. Even though Christians don't have to be scared by the 'judgement' in the sense of total rejection by God - because they have been 'justified' in Christ (Rom. 5:1) – they will still be rewarded according to their deeds (Rom. 2:11; 2 Cor. 5:10). The idea that God will judge us should keep us sharp.
- We will be held accountable for what we do! – but that doesn't have to scare us. For who 'does right awaits glory, honor and peace' (Rom. 2:11). The judgement of God is the moment Jesus will stick up for the oppressed once and for all and will provide justice for them. This is a great event for which we don't have to be afraid, but to which we should look forward to (Ps.96)

CONVERSATION

1. EXPLORING

To start off, discuss a couple of theses.

Let one person read the theses. Let people raise their hand if they agree with the thesis. Ask someone for an explanation every now and then. 'Could you elaborate on that?' 'Can you give me an example?' Don't go too deep, but make it concrete.

- I am not 100% sure I chose the right study
- I am regularly stressed about big decisions I have to make
- I know myself very well and I know exactly what I want
- I find it very important to keep developing myself
- Every now and then I am afraid to make a wrong decision and end up on the wrong path

2. BLOOMING AND BEARING FRUIT

A deep desire of humans is to 'bloom'. In many choices we make we are searching for that. In our questions 'who am I?' and 'what do I want?' we are looking for our place in this world. A place where we can be ourselves (blooming) and know that we matter (bearing fruit). This is also God's desire for us humans. The poet of Psalm 1 writes for example: 'Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither whatever they do prospers.' This is the origin of the metaphor of blooming and bearing fruit.



- Everyone take a white sheet of paper, a marker, pencil or a pen. Sketch a tree with roots, a stem, branches and fruits. This tree is a symbol for your life, like in Psalm 1. (It is less vague than you think... keep up.)

3. STEM

We are going to elaborate on the metaphor of the tree by zooming in on different parts. We match these with part of the text from the letter from Paul to the Colossians. The metaphor of the tree isn't literally in the letter, but what Paul says in the letter can be applied to the image of the tree. We start of at the stem. From there we first go up to the branches and the fruits. After that we go down to the roots.

De stem is the core of the tree. Here we use it as a symbol for the core of who we are, our identity or individuality.

What makes me who I am? That is a very difficult question. If we introduce ourselves we usually something along the lines of: "Hi, my name is Nathan and I study econometrics". We state our name, and what we do; our study or our job. This says something about who we are.

But you realize: that is not our identity. I am much more than what I do. Many people are therefore looking for who they 'really' are.

- What things say something about who you really are? Take 2 minutes to write down a couple of things next to the stem of your tree. After those two minutes, share it with the group.

The things that are going to be named will probably fall into these categories: values (what I find important), norms (what you should or shouldn't do according to me), talents (what I'm good at), desires (what I want). These are all individual things.

Aside from that you can also think about more collective things: what kind of a family you are from, where I was born and raised, in what country I live, what kind of association I am part of, etc. Those are the kinds of things that Paul thinks about, see below.

When thinking about our identity in the west we usually think about what makes us unique from others. Identity is very individual for us. When someone is 'looking for themselves' they usually don't (like back in the days) study their family tree, but they go to Asia to go backpacking and meditating. The idea is: who I really am, is something only I can know and is hidden deep inside of me. The way others see it is usually a distortion - an imposed identity.

- Do you know people who are 'looking for themselves'? How do they do that?
- And are you looking for yourself? How do you do that?

Paul describes the identity of Christians in Colossae in very different terms. Their identity is deeply collective. The most important part of who they are is that they *belong to something* and with that share the identity of the group.

- We kind of lost the idea of a collective identity. But we still all know what it is. Think about it: what do you belong to? To what groups, family, association?
- To what extent are those groups a part of your identity?

Paul writes to a group of Christians. They belong to Christ (Col. 1:2). Because of that they share in the identity of the group. As members of that group they are 'sanctified', 'called' and 'loved' (Col. 3:12). These same titles are used to describe Jesus in the new Testament. He is chosen by God (1 Pet. 2:4,6), he is holy (Joh. 6:69) and above all loved by the Father (Mat. 3:17; Eph. 1:6).

Just like you could answer to the question who you are: 'I am a real Miller' or 'I am a real Dutchman', the same way Paul teaches the Christians in Colossae to answer with: 'I belong to Jesus, so I am sanctified, called and loved'.

- What do the words 'sanctified', called' and 'loved' mean?

Look at the notes with the text (verse 12). It is very important to explain these 'titles'! There is some good news in it.

- Take a moment of silence to think about what these 'titles' mean to you. One way to do that is by thinking about the following sentences:

"I am not what I achieve. I am loved by God."

"My life goals isn't something I need to discover myself. God chose me for a very special task."

"I don't become someone when I excel. I am special to God."

If you want, write those words next to your stem too, maybe even in capital letters: 'LOVED', 'CHOSEN', 'SANCTIFIED'.

Ask people to share how they are affected by knowing this. Do they think it is beautiful? Or difficult? Does it help, or not? Why does, or doesn't it?

4. BRANCHES

From the stem, we get to the **branches**. Those stand for the different activities you do.

- Think of what activities in your life have a lot of your attention right now. Write a couple of things at the branches.

Ideally, we want our activities to be an expression of our identity. After all, the branches grow from the stem. We want to do what suits us, where we can bloom, where we can be ourselves. If we do all kinds of things that don't suit us we become alienated from ourselves.

Regardless, we often find it very difficult to choose. Because how do I know what really suits me? There is so much to choose. So many studies, jobs, hobby's. What really suits me? We experience more and more stress when choosing.

- What choices are you facing at this moment? Do you find it hard to choose?

Back to the letter. Paul writes his letter to housewives, businessmen and also slaves. Slaves were very disadvantaged back then. They had an unexciting job, a very low income and very little freedom. But Paul still believes there is a way they can show their identity through their activities. He doesn't tell them to pick a career that suits them better, and leave their disadvantaged lives, but he says: *'And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.'* (v.17)

- Try to understand Paul's train of thought. How can he say that slaves have the possibility to live a meaningful life? How can he say that slaves don't have to be alienated by who they are?
- Would you be able to settle for a life like that? Why, or why not?

Wow! Do you feel how radical this is? To us, living a meaningful life means unfolding ourselves through chances, to have success in the world, or to really contribute something. We want to be true to our identity, which in our minds exists of our unique talents, dreams, hopes, etc. We would probably advise slaves to try everything to become free and go a better way. If that doesn't work, you are basically lost. Then your life is worthless. But Paul sees this very differently.

According to Paul a Christian's primary identity lies 'in Christ'. A Christian is 'loved', 'chosen' and 'sanctified' by Christ. And that identity can be had in every situation – even in the disadvantaged life of a slave. For that identity goes: no matter how bad the situation is, you can 'fully be yourself'. Just like Christ himself suffered, saw all his work being broken down, was cast away by everyone but in all of that was 'himself' because he felt his calling in that. (How we can be true to our identity will be addressed in a little bit)

To be a Christian means: believing that deep down you are who you are because you belong to the community of Jesus. In that you are loved, chosen and sanctified.

When you think out of your group identity in Christ, you will still have to make choices for your study, job, hobby's etc. But there is a lot less pressure on those choices. Because the most important thing isn't *what* you do, but how you do it. Whether you are studying medicine or economics, or even a study you can't finish – in all of those situations you remain 'who you are' in Christ.

- Suppose you fail your dreams. Would that hurt your identity?

An identity like that will only become concrete once you experience it in a Christian community, like a church or a student association.

- How could you help each other to *experience* that identity 'in Christ' ?

5. FRUITS

The fruits of the tree symbolize the results of your work. It is what you add to the world by making people happy or helping them e.g.

- Take 1 minute. Think for yourself: what 'fruits' do I wish to bear? What do I want to achieve in my life?

This doesn't have to be discussed. After the minute just continue reading.

You are young, and hopefully have a long life ahead of you. But suppose you do look at your life through the perspective of death for a little bit...

- Take 10 minutes to write your own funeral speech. Choose someone who you hold very dearly, and write a speech from their perspective which you hope he or she would hold when you die in future. Assume that you still have a long time ahead of you before you die. The speech will be looking back on your entire life which is (hopefully) for the most part still ahead of you.

This is a very intense exercise. It can be very confronting to have to think about your own mortality. If someone has recently lost someone they loved this exercise can be very emotional. Make sure you keep an eye out to see if every can 'handle' the exercise.

This exercise can be very helpful because it is very sharp. It lifts you up above your daily worries and establishes what is really important to you (or should be). Make sure people don't describe what they think people will say, but what they hope people will say.

10 minutes is not enough time to write the entire speech, but that doesn't matter: it is long enough to trigger their thoughts.

If you think there is enough trust in the group, propose to read what you wrote down aloud.

What kinds of things do you hope people will say on your funeral? You probably hope they will say something about you *as a person*. That you were a good person, kind to the people who were kind to you, etc. Whether you had a lot of accomplishments is maybe less important.

Paul is also not really interested in accomplishments. It looks like to him it is not important what you *achieved*, but who you *became*. Not *what* you did, but *how* you did it. Not who you knew, but how they knew you. He doesn't encourage people to achieve something in this life. Instead he encourages people to develop a number of character traits: compassion, kindness, humbleness, meekness and patience.

- Who are you thinking about? Do you know someone who excels – not with their achievements – but in these character traits? Is he/ she an example for you? Why?

This is what Paul calls '*doing it all in the name of the Lord Jesus*' (v.17). That is like implementing His way of acting, his character, in the way you live your life. That way you are His representative or ambassador in this world.

See notes with the text

These characteristics don't really match well with our culture. (Also not in Paul's culture. Greek or Roman philosophers would never recommend these characteristics. Such a humble attitude would be seen as 'slave mentality'.) We prefer encouraging assertiveness, self-confidence, accomplishing and competing. Those are traits which make you successful.

- Look at the 'branches' in your life. What would it mean to 'do those things in the name of Jesus'? Would you want that?

6. ROOTS

Finally, we get to the **roots**. The tree gets its energy from the roots. Where do you get your motivation and energy from to do what you do? That is where your roots lie.

- What motivates you in your activities? Write down a couple of keywords at the roots. (It is not about activities that give you energy, like working out or reading a book. That is what you do to regain energy. But that is something else than *your motivation* to do for example your study.)

Quite often we are motivated by what lies *ahead* of us. A reward. In this part Paul compares two 'rewards': appreciation from humans and appreciation from God (v. 22-24).

- Do you get the appreciation of God in a different way than the appreciation from humans?

God loves us unconditionally. But He commands us to go the way of Christ, and only on that way will we find his fatherly approval. That means: via the way of compassion, kindness, humbleness, meekness and patience. It can be that we get the approval of people along the way, but quite often that is not the case. We are more likely to get the approval of people when we are assertive, full of self-confidence, accomplish a lot and smother our competition.

- Are there situations in your activities where you have to choose between the two?

Paul foresees all kinds of dangers if his readers are more focused on the appreciation of humans than the appreciation of God:

- They can become insincere (Col. 3:22)
- They can become unjust (Col. 3:25)
- Their actions can be at the expense of the weak. People who are weaker, and from who they don't need appreciation, can become the victims. Husbands become bitter towards their wife (Col. 3:19), fathers embitter their children (Col. 3:20), masters stop giving their slaves what is right and fair (Col. 4:1).

Jesus also encourages people to focus on God's approval. To live in a way which will make God say: 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' (Mat. 25:21)

Jesus himself has a lot of freedom in the (dis)approval of people. Some people say: 'Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.' (Mar. 12:14) Paul also seems to be very careless in what people think about him. He writes: 'I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. (...) It is the Lord who judges me. (1 Cor. 4:3,4).

- What difference would it make in your life if you became more free of what other people think of you, by awareness of God's approval?
- How could you give the fatherly approval of God a bigger place in your life?

Aside from things in the future, we can also be motivated by things in the present, or past. For example if we are being motivated by happiness or love. Three times in this part of the bible you see the terms gratitude, thankful and thanks, like a sort of refrain. That orientation of gratitude gives a lot of energy.

- Can you relate to that, getting energy from gratitude? How does that work?

Think about the following: gratitude points your attention to what is good. It gives you peace because you are not focused on what has to be done differently or better, but focused on what is already good. It gives a feeling of being 'filled' or 'fulfilled'. It sets you in motion to contribute to do what is good, or to do something back for what you received.

- What are you grateful for? Think broadly: things in your own life and around you. From health to talents. From sunshine to science. Take two minutes and writes those things at the roots. Then share it with the group.
- What could you do to give gratitude a solid place in your life? Can you come up with something that gives every day a 'refrain' of gratitude?

Challenge each other to practice this in the coming weeks. Tell each other what you are going to do and when you are going to remind each other of that.

CLOSING WITH PRAYER

Close the group by praying and giving thanks together. A suitable format for prayer is the following:

- Everyone prays for the person sitting to their left. You pray in turns, and go clockwise.
- Ask every member of the group to give one point of prayer, and one point of gratitude before the prayer. First explain the format of the prayer, so everyone knows whose prayer points they need to remember.
- Begin the prayer by **listening to Psalm 1** for example by [Sons of Korah](#)
- After this song you as group leader start the prayer.

A group prayer like this can be scary. It is not a bad thing if people find it scary. Praying together is something you need to learn. Try to gauge whether the group is ready for it or not. Of course, there should be the freedom for people to skip their turn.

If one or two people don't want to join the prayer (because they are scared, or guests), ask them if they want you to pray for them.