Session 1 Finding your Purpose through Thanksgiving
1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
Leader notes:

- Written by Paul about 51AD.
- Paul expresses his relief and joy at the good progress new converts are making despite their lack of teaching. He then goes on to instruct them about the life of holiness they ought to be leading.

Open:

- What causes you to "blow a gasket": traffic? Christmas shopping? Bickering children? Burned dinners? Or what?

Dig:

- Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
- From this passage, what kinds of people make up the Christian community?
- What attitudes underlie Paul's various commands here? What impressions of the Christian life do these commands give you?
- How would you summarize the goal and hope of the Christian life in your words?
- How do the many commands in vv12-22 relate to the multidimensional blessing of verse 23? To the promise of verse 24? Requests of vv25-27? To the benediction of verse 28?

Reflect:

- Of the various commands, which ones are most relevant to your church? Your small group? You? Which ones do you feel you are practicing pretty well? Which should you be working on?
- What encouragement do you receive from the God of peace, sanctification and grace to fulfill these commands? How has this small group been a help to you in this regard?

Session 2 The Power of Caring in a Thankless World
Colossians 3:1-25
Leader notes:

- Written by Paul about 60AD.
- Paul never visited Colossae. The church was established through his ministry in Ephesus. While in prison, Paul was visited by Epaphras, a native of Colossae, who revealed to him some issues about the church. So, Paul highlights Jesus as supreme Lord and reminds follows about love, thankfulness and forgiveness as the marks of true spirituality.

Open:

- When you need to feel like a "new person", what outfit do you like to wear?
- In buying clothes, are you a name-brand buyer? Bargain hunter? Spouse conscious?

Dig:

- Read Colossians 3:1-25
- What is the way to spiritual life? How does that contrast with the things that don't lead to growth? How is setting your mind & heart on Christ related to what he has already done for us? To what he will do for us?
- What contrasts do you see between the "clothes" of the "earthly nature" and those of "God's chosen people"?
- What does all this "putting off" and "putting on" actually involve?
- What practical difference does this "new clothing" make in the relationship between wives and husbands? Between parents and children? Between workers and bosses?
- What confirms that all these relationships are to be built around Christ?

Reflect:

- We get all too used to "earthly nature clothing". Which aspect of your old nature feels like a comfortable old T-shirt to you now? Why is it difficult to shed or remove?
- With what piece of Christ's wardrobe would you like to replace it? Which aspect of Christ's character do you need to clothe yourself with, in relation to your husband or wife? Your parents or children? Your employer or employees?
- How can your small group help you?

Session 3 Staying Alert in a Thankless World
Ephesians 6:10-24
Leader notes:

- Written by Paul from prison about 60AD.
- Paul takes us to the mountaintops of Christian truth and invites us to look at the view. Jesus Christ is who dominates that view. Paul reminds us of the new life created in Christ and towards the end focuses on ethics, new standards and new relationships expected of believers.

Open:

- For yourself (or kids), what were some of your favorite Halloween or dress up costumes? Why?

Dig:

- Read Ephesians 6:10-24
- From 1:19-21, where is Christ now? How powerful is he? How does this instill hope in Christians as we encounter the evil forces described here?
- From what have read in Ephesians, in what ways can these forces operate in our lives? In light of the reasons for Paul's imprisonment, how can these forces also infect social, political, and religious structures?
- With what attitudes should we face these forces? How does prayer fit into this battle?
- What does Paul mean by each of the six pieces of armor? What's their purpose?
- How do the words peace, love, faith, and grace sum up Paul's teaching?

Reflect:

- As you consider your armor, what parts are in good shape? Which parts need some attention?
- Paul was on the front lines of the battle. What evidence do you see of the battle in your life? Your church? Your community? Our nation? What would it mean for you "to stand" in these particular battlefields?
- What can you learn from Paul's prayers (1:16-18, 3:14-19, 6:19-20) about your prayers for others in your small group? For missionaries?
- Of the four key words in vv23-24 (peace, love, faith, grace), which means the most to you now? Why?

Session 4 A Devotional for Thanksgiving Week
Psalms 100
Leader notes:

- Today is beginning the week of Thanksgiving holiday. I'm offering a different format than our usual study. It's an invitation to enter the presence of God this week with open hearts and hands, thanking God for everything He's blessed us with.

Open:

- What's your fondest memory of Thanksgiving Day from your childhood?

Reflection:

- Read Psalms 100
- Gratitude starts with recognizing who God is rather than just what He has done. His character and steadfast love remain constant no matter your circumstances.

Action:

- Name and write down three things about God's character (such as His mercy, faithfulness, or patience) that you appreciate and are thankful for today.
- Once everyone has written down their three things, go around the circle and ask each person to read each item and explain why you appreciate it.
- Instruct that this week at family gatherings, tell your family members one godly characteristic you see in them. Thank them for how they represent Jesus to you.