

BIG IDEA

The Spirit brings breakthrough when we courageously step forward in faith.

SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 1:3-7, Acts 21:10-13, Philippians 3:4b-6

ICEBREAKER AND OPENING THOUGHT

The goal here is not to make people feel guilty about buying Christmas presents. What we want the group to wrestle with is the reality of our culture that is consistently sending us the message that we need more than what we have. There is certainly something good in buying or making a gift for the people in your family, and we're not trying to discourage that behavior. What we want to do is help the group be more mindful of what they already have as they head into the Christmas season.

MORE ON THE THREE BENES

Gratitude is a product of a framework, a way of seeing things, and it always involves three factors. Author and pastor John Ortberg calls these three factors "The 3 Benes." Bene is a Latin word that means "good." Gratitude comes from recognizing three good things.

The first is a **Benefit**. To be grateful, you have to recognize that you've received something that you find positive. People with grateful hearts regularly recognize all the good things in their lives. It doesn't mean that they don't have unmet longings or desires; they choose to focus on the benefits they have received.

And, they recognize that these benefits come from a **Benefactor**. The word benefactor is related to the word factory. A benefactor is someone who produces good. To be grateful, a person must recognize that there is someone behind every benefit who is intentionally producing good. You didn't stumble upon something good randomly or receive it by accident. No, a truly grateful person recognizes that someone or something is behind every blessing. As Christ-followers, we learn to recognize that a loving God is the source of everything good in this world.

And not only do grateful people recognize the benefits and the benefactor, they also see themselves as a **Beneficiary** of that goodness. To be grateful, you have to acknowledge that the benefits that come your way aren't earned or merited. They aren't just the product of your hard work and ingenuity. If we believe we deserve the good things that come our way, then we are no longer grateful. You can't be grateful for something you believe you are entitled to. Gratitude is a product of a worldview, of a way of seeing things where we recognize that we are the Beneficiaries of a multitude of Benefits from a loving Benefactor.

PRAYER TIME

This series began with prayer, why not end it by giving God thanks for all he has done, is doing, and will do in the future. By giving the group some prompts and encouraging them to pray short prayers, you may get some members to pray in the group for the first time. Don't force it, but it would be a courageous step for some of the members of the group.