<u>Session 7 A Conversation about Gratitude</u> (Chapter 9 in *The Only Prayer You'll Ever Need*)

"But Deliver Us from Evil, for Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory Forever."

The first assignment is *forgiveness and generosity*, expressions of love, the great power we have to be a blessing in the world and to others. The second assignment*, self-awareness*, suggests humility and also the expectation of challenges in life. *Self-awareness* is a critical part of growth, opening our life to develop and use gifts and talents. The third assignment, *gratitude*, is the sustaining motivation for our best life and it brings joy to living.

When Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer, the prayer ended with a petition for deliverance: "deliver us from evil." The words suggest what is taught throughout the Scriptures, that we live in a bondage from which we cannot extricate ourselves, and that freedom is a gift only God can give.

But after the death and resurrection of Jesus, a shift happened. The early church identified Jesus' death on a cross with the deliverance for which he had taught his disciples to pray. God redeemed an evil, the crucifixion of Jesus, and used it for deliverance and healing. After Easter, the disciples understood that deliverance as a gift given by God in Jesus' death and resurrection.

As a result, the prayer frequently is not concluded with the words Jesus taught his disciples. Instead, words of praise and thanksgiving were added by people of faith to the prayer. They express gratitude to God for the faithfulness Jesus demonstrated and the love he showed. In this great story, the words of Joseph to his brothers who had betrayed him come to mind "You meant it for evil, but the Lord meant it for good, for the saving of many lives (Gen 50:20). With the additional words of thanksgiving, the prayer shifted its focus from a prospective deliverance to a deliverance that manifest the presence of God in our midst in the person of Jesus and the triumph of love. While we recognize that the Kingdom is not fully here and we live still in anticipation of the Kingdom, we have been given everything we need to do our part in this great love story.

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Open the time with prayer, inviting God to be present, and then praying the entire Lord's prayer.

<u>Opening questions</u>

Have you ever been rescued?

When have you felt especially grateful in your life?

Does gratitude bring out the best in us? What brings out the worst?

<u>Our experience</u>

When have you felt most helpless in your life?

What has gratitude prompted you to do?

What other motivators are there for life?

How does gratitude make you feel, about life, about yourself, about little inconveniences?

The prayer

What does it mean to say we have been delivered? In what way is it still in the future?

As a group, how would you describe the relationship between deliverance and gratitude?

If deliverance gives us freedom, what is our freedom for?

How does deliverance already given impact how we look forward?

Our aspirations

How can gratitude be the power for our best life?

How can we foster more gratitude in our life?

How can gratitude motivate more profound engagement in life and in the world?

Is there a person whom you can identify who models for you a life of gratitude? What are the characteristics of such a life? How might you be more like that person?

Close with prayer for a gratitude and for one another.

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"*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39)*