



**PLEASE**

**SORRY**

**THANKS**

Discussion Guide

**PLEASE SORRY THANKS**  
**Discussion Guide**

Based on the book *Please, Sorry, Thanks* by Mark Batterson

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# INTRODUCTION

Nothing opens doors like *please*. Nothing mends fences like *sorry*. Nothing builds bridges like *thanks*. These three words have the power to change your life. They have the power to change the lives of those who love you, those who hate you, and everyone in between.

Those three words are the foundation of all healthy relationships. Those three words are the only ceiling on your spiritual, mental, and emotional health. Those three words will determine how happy you are and, I might add, how holy you are.

How do you cultivate intimate relationships?

How do you make amends for the mistakes you've made?

How do you overcome trauma?

How do you find true happiness?

How do you shift the atmosphere at home?

How do you change the culture at work?

How do you win friends and influence people?

You get really good at *please*, *sorry*, and *thanks*!

Of course, you can't just parrot those words. You have to walk the talk. Those three words have to become a way of life, a rule of life.

And that's where this discussion guide comes in.

The guide you have before you is your tool for learning how to personalize and apply the message of *Please Sorry Thanks*.

The questions it provides will encourage you to wrestle with the ideas involved in the deceptively simple concepts of asking, apologizing, and thanking. It will force you to think about how you can use these words of politeness to become more like Jesus . . . and more of a person that others want to be around.

Obviously, you *could* just think through this stuff on your own, if you wanted. But there's something powerful about discussing such topics with a group of others who are interested in them as well. My advice? Be vulnerable in letting others help you in your own godly transformation, and be alert to how you can help others as well. Meanwhile, your discussion group will be the ideal lab for practicing civility and politeness.

In my book I say repeatedly that you can change the world with your words. May your discussion group be the place where this miracle starts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Batterson'.

Mark Batterson

## TIPS ON HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS DISCUSSION

- If you don't already have a group leader, then, as a group, choose someone to be in charge of keeping the discussion going. (It doesn't have to be the same person every week.)
- Do your best to read the related chapters beforehand. There's an overview at the start of each session to remind you of the theme.
- Bring your copy of *Please, Sorry, Thanks* with you to the group time. Also have a Bible with you, or a Bible app on your phone, to read scriptures.
- If possible, read the questions ahead of time and start thinking about your responses. Maybe jot down a question or two of your own.
- Both begin and end the discussion with prayer. Pray about applying the messages in your life, but also make sure group members can share whatever burdens are weighing heavily on their hearts. Hold each other up in prayer.

# PLEASE SORRY THANKS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Week 1

#### Please

Before the discussion, read part 1 of *Please, Sorry, Thanks* by Mark Batterson.

#### Overview

The first of the “magic words” we’ll be looking at is *please*. This word adds respect and urgency to a request. It’s asking instead of demanding. The word *please* demonstrates a posture of humility.

Furthermore, when you put a *please* in front of a request, it has a ripple effect. It’s called the law of reciprocity. When someone is nice to you, you have an innate urge to be nice in return.

The psychology of please isn’t rocket science. It’s as simple as the Golden Rule: “Treat people the same way you want them to treat you.”

But *please* is only as effective as it is authentic. If we try to use the word to manipulate, it will have the opposite effect of what we intend.

Our motives must match our words. We have to say what we mean and mean what we say. In this conversation, you and your discussion partners will learn how and why to use *please*, and to mean it.

#### Scripture Question

The word *please* is mere manipulation or mindless etiquette unless it comes from a place of humility. And no one did humility better than Jesus.

Have one group member read Philippians 2:5–8 aloud. It’s a poetic description of just how much Jesus gave up to bring us mercy we hadn’t earned.



After the reading, discuss this question:

- Thinking back over what you can remember of Jesus's life from the Gospels, what are some ways that Jesus *taught* about humility or *demonstrated* it in His behavior? (You can use your phones to look up examples of Christ's humility but first see how many you can pull out of your memory.)

### Discussion Questions

1. What is it about the book *Please, Sorry, Thanks* that made you want to read it? What are you hoping to get out of this discussion group?
2. On a scale of from 1 to 10 (10 being super polite), how polite would you say you generally are in your speech and manner?
3. Thinking of your usual conversational style, do you tend to talk more than listen, or the other way around? Speculate a little about the psychology beneath that—*why* are you more of a talker or a listener?
4. How do you tend to react when someone demands something of you, as opposed to asking politely?
5. When was a time when you found that being polite and saying please got you further than trying to force your way to an objective?
6. Who do you know who is really good at showing interest in you and building you up as you are talking together? What can you learn from this person?
7. Name up to three people you want to start saying please to more often. Write their names down—and don't forget your intention. But in addition to saying please, what are some practical ways you can build up their self-esteem, encourage them in a hard time, or show them more respect?
8. In the past week, when was a time you said something harsh or demeaning to another person? When was a time you used your body language or tone of voice to make someone else feel small? What do you wish you had said and done differently?
9. What are some words of authentic praise you can give to some of the people closest to you?
10. Is there a request you know you need to make, but you're nervous about it for some reason? Describe it to the group and ask for prayer.

### This Week's Assignment

At least once each day, say please to someone when you'd like something from them. But don't just do it automatically. Think it through first. How can you make it specific? What's the best time for making the request? What could you do to make it personal?

Of course, it's not just about the *ask*. It's also about your *attitude* in the situation.



Before making your “please” request, make sure the feeling in your heart is humility, not entitlement, and that your tone reflects this. As you make your request, look the other person in the eye and smile at them. Be thinking, not just about the immediate request, but about the ongoing relationship you have with this person, and think about how you can be a blessing to them.

# PLEASE SORRY THANKS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Week 2

#### Sorry

Before the discussion, read part 2 of *Please, Sorry, Thanks* by Mark Batterson.

#### Overview

When we meet someone, it's like seeing a single snapshot. If we aren't careful, we'll judge the book by its cover. Truth is, we often draw conclusions too quickly, especially negative conclusions. If someone ticks us off, we may write them off.

*Sorry* is more akin to a composite photograph. It captures the nuance of little details, but it also captures context via the big picture.

Everyone we meet is a complex combination of defense mechanisms and adaptive strategies. The most common strategy? It's a toss-up between fight and flight. We either attack or retreat.

There is a better way, the Jesus way, and it starts with *sorry*. It's admitting where we were wrong, whether that was with someone else or with God. It's expressing our regret and our desire for a fresh start.

Of course, without empathy, our apologies are empty. Saying sorry without feeling sorry sends mixed signals.

Are you or aren't you sorry? You have to own the apology! With this session, you and your fellow group members will wrestle with the tough issues of forgiving and being forgiven, right in the places of life where we need it the most.

#### Scripture Question

*Sorry* is a *we* word. It mends broken fences. It builds bridges.

Have a group member read Matthew 5:21–24, a piece of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus tells us to prioritize making things right when we have done something to offend another person.

- Why do you think Jesus presented reconciliation as being so urgent?

### Discussion Questions

1. If you can look back on a relationship in your life where you had unresolved conflict with another person that went on for a long time, what kinds of harm did you see it do?
2. What things can make it hard for us say sorry?
3. If someone wanted to be less focused on themselves and more sensitive to the feelings of others, what kinds of changes might they need to make in their lives?
4. When we say sorry, what does it accomplish for us? What does it accomplish for the other person?
5. What should our reaction be if the other person rejects our apology?

### Scripture Question

After apologizing to others for our own offenses, the other side of the sorry phenomenon is how we react when others are feeling sorry for what they have done to us (or when they *should be* feeling sorry). The Bible has a lot to say about forgiveness.

Read Matthew 18:21–35, Jesus’s challenging command to forgive seventy-seven times. This is just one place where the Bible connects our forgiveness of others with God’s forgiveness of us.

- How can we keep from taking God’s mercy toward us for granted?

### Discussion Questions

1. What *is* forgiveness? Give your definition.
2. How can we give forgiveness to people who don’t think they need our forgiveness?
3. Describe a time when forgiving someone removed a painful burden from your heart.
4. What are some ways in which you could become more of a grace-giving person?

### This Week’s Assignment

Identify at least one way in which you need to apologize to or to forgive another person, and carry it out this week. Here are some questions to help you get started on your plan:

- Who does this involve?
- What is the issue? Why is it important?
- What do you need to do about it?
- When might be the right time to apologize or to extend forgiveness, and where might be the right place?
- How are you going to go about it?



# PLEASE SORRY THANKS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Week 3

#### Thanks

Before the discussion, read part 3 of *Please, Sorry, Thanks* by Mark Batterson.

#### Overview

Gratitude is giving credit where credit is due. We should be people who are quick to thank others for the kindnesses they do us. At the same time, we should always be alert to the blessings of God surrounding us.

God's Word reminds us that every good and perfect gift comes from God. So the theology of thanks starts with the things we take for granted. It's cultivating profound gratitude for the things we overlook and underappreciate.

When was the last time you made snow angels in freshly fallen snow? Or savored a sunset as an act of worship? Or marveled over a sleeping baby for a few minutes? Or stared into the night sky? Or enjoyed the laugh of a loved one?

We don't see the world as it is. We see the world as we are. If you're looking for something to complain about, you'll always find it. If you're looking for something to give thanks for, you'll always find it. And your words—be they words of complaint or gratitude—will create your interior world.

Is there anything you're taking for granted?

Is there something you need to applaud God for?

#### Scripture Question

Could it be that true gratitude is a little like true faith? What I mean is, could it be a fairly rare phenomenon? Could it be absent in some people where we would expect to see it, and show up in others where we wouldn't expect it?

Read Luke 17:11–19, a story of ten people who were miraculously healed from a life-altering illness and only one person who bothered to say thanks.

- True, this is speculation, but what do you think might be reason that the Samaritan thanked Jesus, when the other healed persons did not?

### Discussion Questions

1. Would you say that gratitude is something that comes naturally for you most of the time, or not so much? Where do you think that tendency comes from, like maybe it arises from your upbringing, your innate personality, or...?
2. What was the last thing you said thanks to God for?
3. What was the last thing you said thanks to another person for (not just routine politeness, but really meaning it)?
4. For you, what are some things in nature that inspire awe and praise for the Creator?
5. How would you have to change your prayer habits if you were to give thankfulness the place it deserves in your prayers?
6. How does it make you feel when others express genuine gratitude for you?
7. Fill in this blank.

“Lately I have been taking \_\_\_\_\_ for granted. I am going to start noticing it/them again and being grateful for it/them.”

8. Keeping a gratitude journal is a discipline that has been proved to lead to greater positivity. Jump-start your gratitude journal by getting a piece of paper right now and writing at least five things you are grateful for from just today. (That amazing cup of coffee? The beautiful scenery on your morning drive? A friend’s thoughtfulness?) Share your list with another member of your group. It’s up to you whether you keep up this journaling practice. But I recommend it!
9. Who do you owe a “gratitude debt” to—that is, they did something valuable for you, and you never adequately expressed your thanks? What would you say to them if you had them before you right now?

**This Week's Assignment**

Go about your week consciously trying to be alert to beauty, kindness, and every sort of goodness you encounter. Each day, express your detailed, authentic thanks to at least one person whom you might otherwise have taken for granted. At the end of the day, express your thanks to God for the good gifts he sent your way throughout the day.

As the week goes by, do some internal observation to see how having a focus on gratitude has affected you.





### About the Author

Mark Batterson serves as lead pastor of National Community Church in Washington, D.C., one church with multiple locations. NCC also owns and operates Ebenezers Coffeehouse, The Miracle Theatre, the DC Dream Center, and Capital Turnaround as gathering places for the community and funding for Kingdom causes. Mark serves as lead visionary for The Dream Collective, which equips and supports dreamers who long for revival in the church, reformation in the kingdom, and renaissance in culture.

Mark holds a doctor of ministry degree from Regent University and is the author of twenty-three books, including the *New York Times* bestselling *The Circle Maker* as well as *In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day*, *Wild Goose Chase*, *Double Blessing*, *Whisper*, and, most recently, *Win the Day* and *Do It for a Day*. Mark is married to Lora and they live on Capitol Hill. They have three children: Parker, Summer (married to Austin), and Josiah.