



GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 1

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you could receive a letter from any person, living or passed, who would you hope to hear from, and what would you hope they would write to you about?

SAINTS: THE UNCOMMON ONES

“To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ at Colossae.” —Colossians 1:2

When we think about the word “saint,” we often picture prestigious religious figures who managed to do what we consider to be impossible or don’t feel capable of. Saints are women and men who rose to a certain level of moral perfection that we couldn’t hope to achieve.

And yet, Paul uses this word to address the *entire* church community of Colossae.

In Greek, the word for “saint” is *hagios*; it’s used all over the New Testament simply to describe the kinds of people who follow Jesus—people like us! The word means “holy” or “set apart” for special service to God. Another way you could translate it is “uncommon ones”—as in, people who are living an uncommon way, different from the rest of the world, as modeled by Jesus.

This may surprise you, but all of us who call ourselves followers of Jesus are *saints*. We are people who seek to live uncommonly, as those who are set apart in service to God. Which means that to settle for anything less than *sainthood* would be doing ourselves a disservice. Léon Bloy, a French Catholic novelist, makes the claim that “the only real sadness, the only real failure, the only great tragedy in life, **is not to become a saint.**”

This is a vision we ought to latch on to. You are a *saint*. Not because your life is morally perfect or anything like that. You are a saint because, as you follow Jesus, you’re committing to live differently, to model radical love and mercy, reflecting God’s grace and peace to a world that is desperately in need of it.

As NT Wright explains, “What matters is that the behaviour which marks out so much of the world—lust, anger, lies and so on, which split up families and communities—is being replaced

by kindness, gentleness, forgiveness, and an acceptance of one another as members of the same family, even where there were major differences of race, background and culture.”

This is what it looks like to be saints, uncommon ones who live in a way that makes the world scratch its head, attempting to understand, even while being drawn in by the gravity of its goodness.

Spend some time talking about this idea with your group. When you think about the way you live now, how would you describe it? Is it characterized by joy, peace, love, and mercy? How might God be nudging you to step into a life that would be viewed by those who don't follow Jesus as *uncommon* or set apart?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. Who has been a *saintlike* influence in your life? Someone who has lived in an uncommon way that called you toward greater faithfulness and love in Jesus?
3. Can you think of a time when following Jesus required doing things differently than perhaps others would've done in the same circumstances? How did you navigate that decision or situation?
4. Where have you seen the Spirit at work shaping you recently? Where are you still longing for growth or change?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

During Lent, we explored **gratitude** as a spiritual practice. We believe thanksgiving has the power to reshape the way we think and perceive the world. In this week's reading, Paul shares how his prayers are regularly marked by this practice of gratitude. And so, this week, we're challenging you to be intentional with your thankfulness.

Take time each morning to journal and pray about at least five things you're thankful for. Try not to repeat items day to day. Get as specific as possible, and do yourself a favor by digging deeper than the obvious. If you want to **take it a step further**, reach out to someone you're thankful for and share why you're grateful for them. This could be through a text message, email, or face-to-face conversation. Consider how you might make gratitude a regular part of your rhythm and routine.

At the end of the week, reflect on your experience: *How did beginning your day with gratitude change your outlook each day?*