

Message Discussion Guide OPEN-HANDED COMMUNITY

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

May 10, 2009

Romans 12:1-21

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Read the following quote that David read from Watchman Nee:

"The church is suffering not so much from the prominence of the five-talent members as from the holding back of the one-talent members. The life of the whole body is hampered and impoverished by the burial of those single talents."

Encourage learners to share examples of how they have helped use their gifts or have seen other use gifts in the church. Then ask: How might the church look if everyone used their gifts? Briefly allow learners to share their thoughts.

Explain that today we will look at how the body is connected to each other through the mercy of God.

Option 2

Direct learners to think about their "ideal" local church. Encourage them to discuss how their "ideal" church would look. Allow learners several minutes to talk about these ideas. After several minutes, ask: Who is the focus of the things that we would change or want—others or ourselves?

Explain that today we will take a look at how our resources were designed for us to serve God and others.

Review the Message . . .

The Mercy of God in the Community of Faith...

- We are mercy-driven _____ worshipers _____.
 - We _____ experience _____ the mercy of God in worship.
 - We _____ express _____ the mercy of God in community.

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Discussion...

- Encourage learners to begin with Romans 1 and to read through the chapter and section headings through Romans 11. What are some of Paul's major teachings in these chapters?
- Invite a learner to read Romans 3:21-26. Explain that these verses give a quick summary of Romans 1-11. What is the significance of God's work to sinful humanity? What is a word that would describe God's revealed character through this work?
- Enlist a learner to read Romans 12:1-2. Point out the word "therefore" that begins the passage.
- How does understanding Paul's message in Romans 1-11 give insight into what he meant by "therefore?"
- Why does God's mercy, as expressed in Romans 1-11, drive His followers to worship Him?

Application...

- Do we see God's salvation in our lives as an act of mercy or as something that we deserve? Why?
- How does our view of God's work in our lives affect how we worship Him?
- Remind learners that Romans 12:1-2 refers to the Old Testament sacrificial system of using animals as sacrifices for sins and as pleasing acts of worship to God. In contrast to those animals that died, how do we become "living sacrifices"?
- When we have experienced the mercy of God, why are we expected to express the same mercy to others?

- We are a mercy-molded _____ family _____.
 - We _____ belong _____ to each other.
 - We are _____ gifted _____ for each other.
 - We _____ love _____ each other.
 - We _____ care _____ for each other.
 - We _____ honor _____ each other.
 - We _____ spur _____ on each other.
 - We _____ share _____ with each other.
 - We _____ rejoice _____ with each other.
 - We _____ weep _____ with each other.
 - We _____ accept _____ each other.

Discussion

- Enlist a volunteer to read Romans 12:3-16.
- Focusing on Verse 5, how do individual followers of Christ relate to one another? Are they actually complete in themselves or parts of a whole?
- Read Romans 12:6-8. Why does God gift His followers?

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- Enlist learners to read Romans 12:10-13, 15-16, one verse at a time. For each verse, consider how Paul is instructing his readers to interact with one another. Encourage learners to name commands that Paul gives his readers.
- How do these instructions reflect mercy in and enhance the community of believers?
- Read 1 Corinthians 12:26. How do the commands in Romans 12 help a community of believers live out the truth in 1 Corinthians 12:26.

Application...

- How do we often live as individuals instead of as parts of one body?
- How would our attitudes toward ourselves and toward others have to change in order for us to act as a body of believers?
- Looking at the ways Paul commands us to live, can we live that way on our own—by our own strength? How can we live that way?
- Why is the concept of true biblical community so foreign to many of us?

- We are on a mercy-giving _____ mission _____.
 - We trust in God's _____ justice _____.
 - We triumph with God's _____ love _____.
 - We follow the One who _____ died _____ for His enemies...

Discussion...

- Enlist a volunteer to read Romans 12:14, 17-21. Explain that the previous passage spoke to how the community of believers is to act toward one another. To whom does this passage address how believers are to act?
- Why does Paul indicate that believer should not seek his or her own revenge?
- Why can believers trust that God will provide justice?
- How do believers overcome evil?
- How do believers reflect Christ when they are willing to even lay down their own lives so that their enemies can be saved?

Application...

- Is the desire for justice bad?
- What is the difference between justice and revenge?
- How can a desire for revenge cause us to be overcome with evil?
- How can we love and bless people who have hurt us?
- What does our attitudes toward our enemies reveal about our trust in God and our view of ourselves?
- How can we love our enemies if we don't love our community of believers?

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Why Open-Handed Community Is So Important...

The gladness of the _____ family _____ reflects the glory of the _____ Father _____.

Application...

- When we live together as a family, how is God's character and glory reflected?
- How can our lives together cause others to see God?
- What does a lack of commitment toward each other reflect about our part in God's mission?