

Small Group Guide COMMISSIONING THE BEST

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

March 25, 2012

Matthew 15:1-39

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects 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 an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word through His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time. Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to revisit the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications in our lives:

Sermon Outline

COMMISSIONING THE BEST

Matthew 15:1-39

To The Church at Brook Hills and
Christ Fellowship Church...

- Exalt the authority of God's Word.
 - Minimize the thoughts of man.
 - They promote self-centeredness.
 - They fuel self-righteousness.
 - They serve self-interest.
 - Examples...
 - Cultic teachers.
 - Catholic teaching.
 - Cultural traditions.
 - Contemporary trends.
 - Magnify the truth of God.
 - Let the Word consume your teaching and preaching.
 - Let the Word drive your decisions and practices.
- Promote authenticity in God's worship.
 - Worship is more than physical action.

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- Concerned with form.
- Worship is all about spiritual affection.
 - Compelled by faith.
- Cultivate hearts of holiness.
 - The truth...
 - Our greatest need is not cleaner hands.
 - Our greatest need is changed hearts.
 - Jesus forgives us of all our sin.
 - Jesus fills us with His Holy Spirit.
 - The implication...
 - What the world doesn't need is the spread of superficial religion.
 - False teachers are destined for judgment.
 - False teachers are dangerous to others.
 - What the world does need is the spread of supernatural regeneration.
- Nurture passion for the nations.
 - The harvest field is ripe.
 - The divine plan is global.
 - Spend yourselves for the glory of God's name.
 - Give your lives to the accomplishment of God's mission.
 - Today we separate from one another as God's people for the expansion of the Kingdom.

One day soon we'll join with one another alongside all peoples in celebration of the King.

Message Summary

Matthew 15 contains some important exhortations to us as a church and to the churches planted through this body of believers. Jesus' response to the Pharisees and teachers of the law shows us the one thing we should exalt above any human-made tradition or rule: the authority of God's Word. He exposed the wrongness of the teachers' hearts as hypocritical and far from God. Today, we need to be on guard against false teachings, which include cultic teachers, Catholic teaching, cultural traditions, and contemporary trends. We avoid these falsehoods by knowing and submitting ourselves to the authority of God's Word above any other book or teaching.

Jesus demanded authenticity in the way we worship God, which, quoting from the Old Testament, He said comes only from our hearts instead of mere lip praise. True worship flows from hearts that are affectionate toward God, rooted in faith in Him. Christ challenged His disciples to cultivate hearts of holiness as He revealed that our greatest need is not outward reformation, but changed hearts through Christ's forgiveness and being filled with the Holy Spirit. Changed hearts lead to the spread of supernatural regeneration, not superficial religion. Jesus' encounter with a Canaanite woman showed His disciples His mission: His divine plan was not for Israel only; the divine plan is global. When Jesus fed the four thousand in a Gentiles world, He further affirmed His divine plan, for as He touched, taught, and healed those people, they "praised the God of Israel." His example compels us to nurture passion for the nations, for one day we will join with all peoples to celebrate the King.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review the Head (What does God want me to know?), Heart (What does God want me to value?), and Hands (What does God want me to do?) aspects of the message.

- What made the Pharisees and teachers of the law hypocrites? Why did they fail to exalt the authority of God's Word?

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- Consider the examples given of those who value the thoughts of man over the Word of God. What are your thoughts and attitudes toward each group? Does your attitude line up with God's Word? Why is it so dangerous to love the thoughts of man more than God's Word?
- What does it mean to "let the Word consume your teaching and preaching"? Is that challenge only for pastors and teachers? How do you need to respond to that challenge?
- Pastor David pointed out that when the thoughts of man are central, the worship of man is central, but when the Word of God is central, we will worship God. How have the things you read, watch, or do influenced your worship? How does the depth of our worship reveal what we have been valuing?
- How affectionate do you feel toward God? How is our affection for God connected to the way we exalt the authority of God's Word?
- Read Jesus' explanation of his parable in Matthew 15:17-20. How do His words strip away our prideful attempts to reform ourselves outwardly? How do they make us completely dependent on Him?
- The Pharisees attempted to spread superficial religion with their made-up rules, including the washing of hands referenced in Matthew 15:2. What are some specific ways that churches today are tempted to spread superficial religion?
- How deeply do you value holiness? How has the Holy Spirit led you toward greater holiness lately?
- Pastor David said, "May God show the effects of changed hearts that produce holy lives." Has your changed heart produced a noticeably holy life to those around you, such as coworkers, neighbors, or family members? As you have cultivated holiness in your walk with Christ, have any doors been opened for you to share the gospel? If so, share that experience.
- Through His interaction with the Canaanite woman and the 4,000 people He fed, Jesus showed that all nations were part of His mission. Why does a passion for the nations always flow from a heart that exalts God's Word, worships Him authentically, and is cultivating holiness? How has Christ enabled you to live out a passion for the nations recently?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from the message?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.

Weekly Prayer Focus . . . (from the worship guide)

- **Church:** *Pray that God would make us a people that worship truly, from the heart, and not simply by external acts. Pray that we would not be found to be like the*

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Pharisees, living in outward obedience but dead on the inside. Pray that God would use these words of Jesus to bring those who are dead inside to new life.

- **Local:** *This week we are praying for Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, Tim Cox, Pastor. We are also praying for the children in the Birmingham area court systems. In Jefferson County alone, approximately 4,000 children were abused and/or neglected in 2010.*
- **Global:** *This week we are praying for Brook Hills' Mid-Term Missionaries Rus and Melanie B who were sent out from Brook Hills and have been serving in East Asia for almost two years. Rus works for a large company in Information Technology and Melanie has had the opportunity to teach young children at a school in their city. Both of their careers allow a unique opportunity to engage unreached people groups for the glory of God.*