

Message Discussion Guide THE GOSPEL AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

February 1, 2009

Ephesians 4:1-16

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

Direct learners to think about the clubs/groups/organizations that they are members of. (Example: gym membership, country club, business organizations, school organizations, sports, etc.) Answer the following questions about his/her membership:

- Why did you become a member?
- Did you gain anything by becoming a member? If so, what?
- Did it cost you anything to become a member? If so, what?
- When you think of memberships in your life, do you lump church membership in with the rest? What does this reveal about our approach to church membership?

Explain that often our memberships to gyms, clubs, etc. are self-gratifying, but membership in the church is about self-sacrifice!

Option 2

Read the following statement that David mentioned in the message: *"I love Christ; I just can't stand the church."*

Encourage learners to share what comes to mind as they hear this statement. Have they ever heard this statement, or even made it themselves? Then invite them to share their thoughts on it from the new perspective that David brought before the church...comparing it to the marriage relationship, "I really like you, but I can't stand your wife."

Explain that today we are going to look at the church as the Bride of Christ.

Review the Message . . .

Why We Date The Church...

- We are _____ independent _____.
- We are _____ indifferent _____.
- We are _____ immature _____.
- We are _____ indecisive _____.
- We are _____ ignorant _____.

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Discussion...

- Enlist a volunteer to read Ephesians 4:1-16.
- Paul is urging believers to live a life worthy of the calling they have received. What does this life look like? Can this life be lived alone?
- Why is the church necessary for living this life?

Application . . .

- Have we ever been guilty of “dating the church”? If so, how?
- Is the local church really that big of a deal? Why?
- Is it possible for one to grow in Christ and accomplish more for Christ apart from the church? If so, how? How does this thought process line up with the Word of God?

Why We Need To Stop Dating The Church...

- Because God’s Word says membership in the local church is _____ important _____.
 - Membership in a local church is not biblically commanded_____.
 - Membership in a local church is biblically _____ implied _____.
 - Membership is implied by church gatherings_____.
 - The church is _____ both _____ universal and local.
 - The local church is a visible _____ expression _____ of the universal body of Christ.
 - Membership is implied by church discipline_____.
 - Membership is implied by church leadership_____.
 - Membership is implied by church accountability_____.

Discussion...

- Remind learners that each local church is a visible reflection of the universal church. How does this truth change the way we might view the local church?
- Read Matthew 18:15-17. How should this passage challenge a member of the local body to live?
- What makes it difficult to obey leaders in our life? Read Hebrews 13:17. How does this verse ease the heart of the believer that is obeying leaders in the church?

Application . . .

- Why do we often seem resistant to being accountable to a group of people?
- What do our actions indicate about what we believe about the local church?
- What does a life that is connected with the local body look like?

The Importance of the Local Church...

“A local body of baptized believers...”

- We are recipients of a new _____ covenant _____.
 - Baptism is a declaration that we belong to _____ Jesus _____.

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- We are members of a new _____ community _____.
 - Baptism is a declaration that we belong to _____ each other _____.

Discussion...

Read Ephesians 4:1-16.

- According to verse 5, what are the uniting factors in the church? Why is baptism included in these factors?

Application . . .

- How do we display the glory of God to the world through baptism?
- How does baptism show our connection with Christ and other believers?
- What does baptism show the world about our life? (Romans 6:4)

“...joined together under biblical leadership...”

- The church is _____ entrusted _____ with servants of the Word.
- The church is _____ equipped _____ to be servants with the Word.

Discussion...

Read Galatians 1:6-9. Explain how serious scripture is about those that are in leadership. All leaders will give account for the words they say and actions that they take.

- How does this affect how we view the leaders in the church?
- How does this affect how we act as a leader in the church?

Application . . .

- Are we lazy in the way we trust our leaders? Do we truly spend time in prayer for our leaders?
- Is our life a reflection of the Word? What do others see when they look at us?
- Are we equipping others with the Word? If so, how?

“...to grow in the likeness of Christ...”

- Together, we want to know the _____ truth _____ of Christ.
 - We guard one another from _____ deception _____.
- Together, we want to imitate the _____ character _____ of Christ.
 - We guard one another from _____ division _____.
- Together, we want to display the _____ fullness _____ of Christ.
 - We guard one another from _____ distraction _____.

Discussion...

Emphasis Ephesians 4:13-14 again. What are the three goals that are mentioned here?

- How are we kept from being tossed back and forth?
- Why is it important for believers to be connected to one another?

Application . . .

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- Could God point to you and say imitate what my child is doing? Why/why not?
- The purpose of the church is to grow into the image of Christ. Do others see that you are growing into the image of Christ?
- How are you helping others to grow into the image of Christ?

“...and express the love of Christ to each other and to the world around them.”

- Love is the distinguishing mark of the church.
- Love is the essence of church membership.
 - We join a church for the good of ourselves.
 - We join a church for the good of other Christians.
 - We join a church for the good of non-Christians.
 - We join a church for the glory of God.

Discussion...

- Read Ephesians 4:2. Paul states that we are to be patient, bearing with one another in love. How are you showing love to others around daily?
- Read Ephesians 4:15. What do your words say about love?
- Read Ephesians 4:16. How is the body supported? What causes it to grow?

Application . . .

- How are others able to hear the love of Christ in the words that you speak?
- There are many definitions of love. How does your life show love?

Defining the Relationship...

- Membership in the local church involves committing your life in covenant with other believers to show the Gospel to each other and to spread the Gospel to the world.

Divide learners into groups of 2/3. Allow them to process through the homework that David gave for this week.

Homework...

- What's your story?
- What is the Gospel and how has it changed your life?
- Look at Scripture and identify the Gospel in your own words.

Everyone needs to be able to identify how the Gospel has changed their life. We come in contact with people everyday that need to hear our story. They need to hear the story of the Gospel in our life. Use this time to get your Gospel story ready. Then pray that God will bring someone into your path that needs to hear His story in our life.