

Message Discussion Guide

RADICAL: WHAT THE GOSPEL DEMANDS

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

September 7, 2008

Luke 14:33

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

Discuss the following questions:

- What does the word radical mean to you?
- What emotion comes to you when you hear that word?
- Describe what you think it means to be a radical Christian?
- Name someone who you think of as a radical Christian. Why do you say that he/she is a radical Christian?
- Name someone that you come in contact with everyday who is a radical Christian. What characteristics do you see in that person everyday that demonstrates that he/she is a "radical Christian?"

Explain to learners that the call to follow Christ is a call to a radical lifestyle. It should be the "norm" for all Christians to have a life that is described as being "radical." This lifestyle will include some of the things that they have mentioned and should be seen in every Christian's life day-by-day.

Option 2

Enlist 2 volunteers to read John 3:16 and James 2:19 and ask the following questions:

- Describe the 2 types of "believing" that is spoken of in the Bible.
- What are the implications of truly believing something?
- How do you demonstrate that you truly believe something?

Lead the learners to see the difference between believing something in your head and truly believing something in your heart. Truly believing something causes you to live your life differently in light of that belief. It causes you to change your behaviors/actions when your life doesn't line up with your beliefs. Then, ask the following questions:

- Do we believe this Book?
- Are we willing to change our behaviors/actions in view of what this Book says?

Review the Message . . .

The All-Important Question...

Do we _____ believe _____ this Book?

- Do we believe what this Book says about the _____ church _____?
Luke 9:57-62...

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- Will we choose comfort or a cross ?
- Will we choose maintenance or mission ?
- Will we choose indecisive minds or undivided hearts?

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read Luke 9:57-62. What were the 3 responses that were given to Jesus' invitation in this passage? What were the 3 responses that Jesus gave?
- What does Jesus' response to the first man in v. 58 imply about following Him? (Lead the learners to see that following Jesus will cost us comfort).
- David pointed out that the parallel passage in Matthew 8:19 tells us this man was a teacher. He was probably looking to attach himself to Jesus for personal gain. What does Jesus answer mean in light of that information?
- David noted that, in the culture of that day, burying one's father was a religious and family obligation. What does Jesus' response to the second man in v. 60 imply about our obligations?
- The third man says that he will follow Jesus, but he adds a condition. What does Jesus' response to him in v. 62 tell us about the demands of the gospel?
- What does this passage imply was the final decision of these 3 men in following Jesus? Do you think that Jesus was too harsh with them? Why or why not?

Application . . .

- What feelings does it strike in us to hear Jesus' response to these 3 men?
 - Do we really expect that we will have to make such a radical commitment to follow Christ? Why or why not?
 - What are ways that we, as believers, choose comfort instead of a cross?
 - Invite a few individuals to share about ways that he/she has had to give up comfort to follow Christ?
 - What are ways that we can choose to maintain the status quo instead of joining Christ in His mission? What obligations do we see as more pressing than following Christ in His mission?
 - What conditions do we have a tendency to place on following Christ?
 - What are some practical ways we can devalue comfort and maintenance, and obtain an undivided heart? What is keeping us from doing this?
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- **Do we believe what this Book says about the lost ?**
 - **2 Thessalonians 1:7 – “This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.”**
 - **Revelation 20:15 - “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”**
 - **Over 4.5 billion people (including hundreds of thousands in metro Birmingham) today on a road that leads to eternal hell.**

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Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read 2 Thessalonians 1:7. What are the 2 conditions for punishment mentioned in this verse? What are the 3 descriptions of the punishment of those who die without Christ?
- Read Revelation 20:15. What does this passage say will happen to those who die without Christ?
- It is estimated that 2/3 of the world will face the punishment described in these verses. What does this tell us about how we should use our time, money and other resources?

Application . . .

- What emotions does it stir in us to know that the penalty for rejecting Christ is punishment as described above? Is it hard to believe that this is the reality facing those who do not trust in Christ? Explain your answer.
 - It is estimated that over 4.5 billion people are on the road that leads to eternal hell. What feelings does this invoke?
 - How should it make us feel to know that hundreds of thousands in the metro Birmingham area are on the road of eternal punishment? Does this seem realistic? Why or why not?
 - How should this truth (i.e. knowing that so many people are under the judgment of God) cause us to change the way that we live our lives everyday?
 - What are some practical ways that our small group can respond to “Share the Word” to the vast number of unbelieving people in Birmingham and around the world?
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- **Do we believe what this Book says about the poor ?**
 - Today, over a billion people live (and die) in desperate poverty (less than a dollar a day).
 - Close to two billion others live on less than two dollars a day.
 - 30,000 children today will breathe their last breath due to either starvation or a preventable disease.
 - We are not even inconvenienced by this extreme poverty because those stricken by it are not only poor...they are powerless .
 - Literally millions of them are quietly dying in relative obscurity and we can comfortably ignore them in our affluence, pretending like they don't even exist.
 - Meanwhile, they do exist, and God measures the integrity of our faith by our concern for the poor.
 - On a most serious note, Jesus tells those with abundance that if they do not feed the hungry and clothe the naked, they go to hell...
 - Proverbs 14:31 – “Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker.”
 - Proverbs 21:13 – “If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.”
 - Proverbs 28:27 – “He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.”

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- **Luke 6:20-25** – “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied....Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.”
- **James 5:1** – “Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.”
- **Matthew 19:21-23** – “Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.’”
- **Matthew 25:41** – To those who do not feed the hungry and clothe the naked, Jesus says, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Discussion Questions

- Invite 2 volunteers to read Proverbs 14:31 and 28:27. Why is it insulting to God to oppress the poor? What is the difference between oppressing the poor and closing your eyes to the poor?
- Enlist a volunteer to read Luke 6:20-25. Why does Jesus speak so positively toward the poor and negatively toward the rich? According to this passage, what are the dangers of being rich?
- Invite someone to read Matthew 19:21-23. Why did Jesus respond to the rich young ruler in this way? What does Jesus’ response say about having possessions?
- Read Matthew 25:41. What does this verse say is a characteristic of those who do not trust in Christ? (i.e. they do not feed the hungry and clothe the naked) Is this a lifestyle that characterizes most Christians you know today? Is this a blind spot for Christians today? Explain your answers.

Application . . .

Read these statistics to the group and ask the following questions:

Today, over a billion people live (and die) in desperate poverty (less than a dollar a day). Close to two billion others live on less than two dollars a day. 30,000 children today will breathe their last breath due to either starvation or a preventable disease. At this rate, all of the children in Shelby County, 18 years and younger, would be dead in 1 ½ weeks.

- What emotions do these statistics stir up?
- What are ways that we oppress and close our eyes to the poor? Is this something that we do daily, occasionally, or rarely? Why do we do this?
- Why is it easy for us to ignore the poor?
- David said that we are all rich according to the world’s standard and that it is difficult to get to heaven from Birmingham. Why do we have a hard time loving our possessions more than we love Jesus? What are ways that we can use our possessions to demonstrate our love for and commitment to Jesus?

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- What are practical ways that our small group can care for the poor and needy in Birmingham and around the world?

The Necessary Conclusion...

It is time to get radical.

Discussion Questions

- What part of Sunday's worship exercise stands out to you the most? Why did that part of the exercise particularly impact you?
- What question in the exercise was the hardest for you to answer? Why was that question particularly hard?

After discussing the above questions, ask each person to share their individual response to the following question:

- How is God calling you to be more radical in your obedience to Jesus?

Challenge the members in your group to think meditate on this question for the rest of the week. End your time together by praying for each other. Pray that God would reveal ways that He is calling each member to be more radical in his/her obedience to Him. Pray that God would use your small group to make an impact on the world in evangelizing the lost and caring for the poor and needy.