

Message Discussion Guide

THE GOSPEL DEMANDS RADICAL COMPASSION

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

September 21, 2008

Matthew 9:35-10:42

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 paragraph to the group and discuss the questions that follow.

Over a period of some 300 years of terrible persecution, ten generations of Christians dug nearly 600 miles of catacombs beneath and around the city of Rome. Archaeologists estimate that perhaps a total of 4 million bodies were buried there. A common inscription found in the catacombs is the sign of the fish, the Greek word for which (ichthus) was used as an acrostic for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior."

- What does this fact tell us about Christianity in those times? (Observe that this practice would only be necessary if there was great persecution present.)
- What emotions does it stir in you to hear of Christians living in such secrecy and fear for their lives?
- When people see an ichthus today, do you think they envision Christianity as described above? Why or why not?
- If we were living in times like this, how do you think it would affect our mission as the church?
- If this was our situation and the cost for us was so great, would we really want to follow Christ? Explain your answer.
- If being like Christ causes us to have to live like this, do we really want to be like Christ? Remind everyone that many of our brothers and sisters in Christ still face persecution such as this. If we were in their shoes, would we be following Christ today?

Explain to the learners that the group will be studying how the gospel radically changes our lives. Persecution is promised for everyone who desires to live godly in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:12). Christianity involves identifying with Christ and not the world. As a part of identifying with Christ, we must answer His call to have deep compassion for the lost.

Option 2

Invite members of your small group to share about a mission trip or a local ministry project that they have participated in. Ask them the following questions:

- What were some of the health and socio-economic circumstances that you saw? What were some of the worst living conditions that you saw?
- What are some of the emotions that you have felt in seeing people in those situations?
- What are some of the things that you did to help the people that you were ministering to?
- Were there any that you saw and had compassion for, but did not have the opportunity to minister to them? Explain.
- How did this experience help you to see people in Birmingham differently than you did before the experience?

Lead the learners to see that we must be moved with compassion in order properly respond to Jesus' commission of going to the lost. We will never be moved with compassion if we do not see people in the condition that Jesus saw them in or go where we can see them..

Review the Message . . .

Two Ingredients of Radical Compassion...

- Supernatural awareness of the condition of the lost.
- Sacrificial obedience to the commission of Christ.

The Condition of the Lost...

- See their size.
 - Over 4.5 billion people (including hundreds of thousands in metro Birmingham) today on a road that leads to eternal hell.
- Feel their suffering.
- Realize their separation.
 - 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.”

Discussion Questions

- Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 9:35-38, and ask the following question concerning the idea of “multitude”. David said that historians estimate that there were at least 3 million people living in this small region. What was the emotion that Matthew says Jesus felt over seeing the multitude? What does it mean to have compassion?
- What 3 phrases, in v. 36, are used to describe the multitudes? (i.e. harassed, helpless, like sheep without a shepherd) In what ways do these phrases describe lost people in Birmingham and the world today?
- Enlist a volunteer to read Joel 3:12-14. What images does Joel use to speak of the coming judgment? (i.e. a sickle, ripe harvest, squashing grapes to make wine, vats overflowing, valley of decision. Explain to the learners that this is imagery of cutting and blood flowing.) Why do you think Jesus used this same harvest imagery to commission His disciples? (i.e. the destiny of the lost is one of destruction. Eternal realities are at stake.)

Application . . .

- What are things that keep us from seeing the vast number of lost people there are in Birmingham and the world?

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- How does knowing the number of lost people in Birmingham and the world change the way that we approach the mission of the church?
- David spoke about how Jesus felt people's suffering and that His ministry was characterized by touching those who needed healing. Why are we afraid to touch people as Jesus did?
- David said that the compassion that we need can only come from Christ in us. What are ways that we can know Christ more deeply and have our compassion increased?
- How should it make us feel to hear of the coming judgment in terms of cutting and blood? How should this change the way we approach church and ministry?

Take a few moments to pray. With these things in mind, invite a learner to pray for your small group. Pray that God would give each member a supernatural awareness of the condition of the lost and a supernatural compassion for the lost. Pray that He would help each member to see the vast number of lost people both in Birmingham and throughout the world.

The Commission of Christ...

- Jesus beckons us to pray .
- Jesus summons us to go .

Instructions:

- Go to great need .
 - Go to the diseased .
 - Go to the dying .
 - Go to the despised .
 - Go to the dirty .
 - As you go to the needy, you will learn to trust His provision .
- Go to great danger .
 - Be as foolish as sheep.
 - Be as smart as snakes.
 - Be as pure as doves.
 - As you go into danger, you will learn to depend on His power .
- You will be betrayed .
- You will be hated .
- You will be persecuted .
 - The reality we must face...

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- The danger of our lives increases in proportion to the depth of our relationship with Christ.
- The question we must ask...
 - Do we really want to be like Christ?
- Fear will tempt you.
 - See with an eternal perspective.
 - Speak with a holy boldness.
 - Sacrifice with reckless abandonment.
- The Father will take care of you.
 - He rules you sovereignly.
 - He knows you completely.
 - He loves you deeply.
- Confess Him publicly.
- Love Him supremely.
- Take the ultimate risk.
- Find the ultimate reward.

Discussion Questions

- Read Matthew 9:37-38 again. What is the one command that Jesus gives in these verses? Does anything stand out as odd about this command? (Some may observe that Jesus did not command to go, but to pray. Take the time to emphasize the importance of prayer in God's mission. Some may observe that Jesus calls God the "Lord of the harvest" and that we would ask God to send out workers into His harvest. Emphasize the fact that God is Sovereign – He is Lord of the harvest – and that He cares very deeply about this mission. Some may observe that it is odd to have to ask God to send out workers into His harvest. Remind the learners that prayer is an invitation to join God in what He is doing.)
- Invite a learner to read Matthew 10:1-2. David said that the word "summons" means "to call someone to oneself in order to confront him face-to-face or to give orders." What does this word tell us about the commission of Christ and our response to it?
- Enlist a learner to read Matthew 10:5-10. What kinds of people does Jesus commission His disciples to go to? What does Jesus say about having our own needs met?
- Read Matthew 10:16. Jesus says, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves." What does this tell us about the circumstances that the believer will face? What are the other 2 images that Jesus uses to describe the commissioned believer in v. 16? What do these images tell us about how our attitudes should be?

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- Invite a learner to read Matthew 10:17-20. What can we learn from going through persecution?
- Read Matthew 10:28-31. What does Jesus say about fear? What does He say about God's provision for us?
- Enlist a learner to read Matthew 10:32-39. Jesus says that His commission involves confessing Him publicly, loving Him supremely, and taking ultimate risk. What does v. 39 say is the result that makes any sacrifice worth it? (i.e. truly finding your life)

Application . . .

- Why do we often fail to ask God to send out workers into His harvest field?
- If we know that persecution is promised to the believer, why do we try to avoid it at all costs?
- Does God really expect us to go toward dangerous situations? Explain your answer.
- Matthew 10:21-23 says that the believer will be betrayed, hated, and persecuted. Should we expect this to be the reality that Christians today face? Explain your answer.
- If we truly understood that being like Christ means that we will face persecution, do you think we really would want to be like Christ? Why or why not?
- How should Jesus' words in Matthew 10:28 affect the way we view others' treatment of us? Opinions of us?
- What are things that would describe a life of reckless abandonment? Are our lives characterized by these things? Why not?
- What are things that keep us from loving God supremely? Would it be best for us to simply get rid of these things that compete for our affections? Why or why not?

Radical Compassion...

**The Gospel demands that we sacrifice our lives
for the sake of people who do not know Christ.**

End your time together with prayer. Pray that God would give each member a willingness to sacrifice their lives for the sake of people who do not know Christ. Pray that God will give each member the courage to go to the hard places. Pray that God would help each member to surrender completely to His instructions given in His commission to us. Finally, pray for God to send out workers from His church and this small group into His harvest.