

Small Group Guide

FASTING THAT CHANGES THE WORLD

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

February 13, 2011

Acts 12:25–14:28

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

FASTING THAT CHANGES THE WORLD

Acts 12:25-14:28

We fast because we want God’s glory more than we want food.

- We are united by His gospel.
- We are enthralled in His worship.
- We are abandoned to His mission.

We fast because we need God’s direction more than we need food.

- In our church...
 - The Spirit leads...
 - The church follows.
 - The Spirit calls...
 - The church confirms.
 - The Spirit sends...
 - The church supports.

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- In our brothers and sisters...
 - Pray that they would be confident in God's Word.
 - Pray that they would be filled with God's Spirit.
 - Pray for their victory in spiritual warfare.
 - Pray for their success in gospel witness.
 - Pray for peace with other believers.
 - Pray for favor with unbelievers.
 - Pray that the gospel will be clear through them.
 - The character of God.
 - The sinfulness of man.
 - The sufficiency of Christ.
 - The necessity of faith.
 - The urgency of eternity.
 - Pray that God will open hearts around them.
 - Pray for their joy in the midst of suffering.
 - Pray for their kindness in the midst of slander.
 - Pray for supernatural power to accompany them.
 - Pray for Christlike humility to characterize them.
 - Pray for their patience.
 - Pray for their perseverance.
 - Pray that God would use them to make disciples.
 - Pray that God would use them to multiply churches.
 - Churches filled with people who know the Word.
 - Churches led by pastors who teach the Word.
- In our lives...
 - We all have the same commands.
 - We all have different callings.
 - Always be obedient to His command.
 - Always be open to His calling.

Message Summary

Pastor David began by setting forth the reason why we, as Christians, fast. We fast because we want God's glory more than we want food. Acts 13:1–3 describes a singular worship experience in Antioch—a specific time of worship, prayer and fasting—from which the church moved out by God's grace and turned the world upside down. As we, like the church in Antioch, behold God's greatness, we are compelled to declare His goodness to the nations as well.

We also fast when we require the Spirit's clear direction in order to discern the ways in which we must follow the Lord's commands as individuals or as a church body. When the church at Antioch fasted and prayed, the Spirit led them to set apart Paul and Barnabas to declare the gospel to the Gentiles. We need to be open to God's calling in our lives as well, finding the context in which He calls us to make disciples of all nations. Based on the first missionary journey recorded in Acts 13–14, Pastor David laid out a number of helpful prayers we can offer for the church, for those who already have gone out from The Church at Brook Hills, and for us.

Discuss

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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.

- **The church in Antioch was made up of men and women from a variety of backgrounds. What united them? What captivated them? What was their common mission? What unites your small group? What is the mission of your group?**
- **Does your small group represent people from a variety of backgrounds? How could it better reflect the diversity of God’s people?**
- **What opportunities might you have for crossing cultural, economic, or national barriers to advance the gospel of Christ?**
- **Do you have a passion to make disciples of all nations? If your desire is weak, what is the root cause? How is a passion for God’s glory the key to unlocking a passion for making disciples of all nations?**
- **How could more time in worship, prayer, and fasting ignite our desire to share the gospel with people from all nations?**
- **What did Barnabas and Paul have to be willing to leave behind in order to be obedient to the Spirit’s leading?**
- **What, if anything, prevents you from giving God a blank check as He pleases to do with your life? How can you remove that from your life? How can you stay open to His calling, whatever that may be? Have you prayed about opportunities to serve Him in Birmingham and beyond?**
- **Is everyone called to move to East Lake? North Africa? India? How does one discern God’s specific calling in life? What role does prayer and fasting play? What role does the body of believers play?**
- **How can we fuel our passion for God and His mission for our lives? Are you committed to reading the Word? To prayer? To fasting? To corporate worship?**
- **What are some commands that God has clearly laid out in His Word that we might need to pray and fast for additional direction to fulfill?**
- **Why do you think some Christians and churches often fall into what Pastor David called “a spectator mentality”? How can a church foster that mentality? How can a church discourage that mentality? How can your small group encourage active participation in obedience to God’s commands, including His command to make disciples of all nations?**
- **Do you spend time in prayer for the cause of Christ around the world? If not, why not? How can your small group pray more regularly for our brothers and sisters who have gone out from us to other contexts? How can you regularly pray for unreached people groups?**
- **How can your small group support our brothers and sisters serving in Birmingham, other cities in the US, or overseas?**
- **Are you clearly sharing the gospel with others? Review the five aspects of the gospel listed in the sermon outline. Review the presentation of the gospel on our website under “New to Brook Hills?” and “What we believe”**

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?

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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 ...

- ***Church:*** Pray that God will give us great faithfulness and great fruit as we proclaim the gospel and become more intentional in making disciples.
- ***Local:*** This week we are praying for the ministry at The Lovelady Center, a transitional facility for women located in East Lake. We are also praying for First Baptist Church of Pelham, Mike Shaw, pastor.
- ***Global:*** Our weekly prayer focus will be for MC in the Middle East. We are also praying for Brook Hills team in East Asia.