

Small Group Guide

WHAT KIND OF LOVE IS THIS?

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. Bart Box

August 21, 2011

John 3:16

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

What Kind of Love Is This?

John 3:16

"Babes in Christ and men in Christ here feed upon one common food. Come, ye aged saints, be children again; and you that have long known your Lord, take up your first spelling-book, and go over your ABC's again, by learning that God so loved the world, that he gave his Son to die, that man might live through him. I do not call you to an elementary lesson because you have forgotten your letters, but because it is a good thing to refresh the memory, and a blessed thing to feel young again." (Spurgeon)

A Love that Is Surprisingly Provided

- God's love is surprising because He doesn't need to love us.
 - In Himself, God has no need to love us.
 - The Father is perfectly satisfied in the Son. (John 3:35; 5:20)
 - The Son is completely devoted to the Father. (John 14:30-31)
 - Yet, in His goodness, God does love us.
- God's love is surprising because we don't deserve His love.
 - The world is unloving in its rebellion against God.
 - Yet, God is resolute in His love for the world.

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A Love that Is Surpassingly Great

- God's love is surpassing because He gives His only Son.
- God's love is surpassing because he gives His only Son as our substitute.

"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:4-6)

A Love that Is Supremely Important

- For the unbelieving, there is an urgency to trust God's Son.
- For the believing...
 - There is a reminder of God's unlimited provision for us.
 - There is a reminder of God's unwavering affection for us.

Message Summary

At the heart of Christianity is the truth of God's love for the world found in John 3:16. By asking the question, "What kind of love is this?" believers are reminded of three basic elements of God's lavish love for the world He created: it is surprisingly provided, surpassingly great, and supremely important. God's love is quite a surprise when one considers God for who He is—complete in Himself, lacking nothing and having no needs that would cause Him to love people. Yet He has set His love on sinners who do not deserve it. God's love is great, for out of everything He could have given the people He loves, He chose to give His unique, perfect Son as our substitute for sin. In response to these truths, sinners should repent and trust in the God who loves them, and believers should live differently, trusting God's provision and standing secure in the truth of God's unwavering affection for His people.

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.

- When did you first learn John 3:16? How has your understanding of the verse changed as you have grown in your walk?
- Would you describe your knowledge of John 3:16 as familiar or fresh? Are you surprised by the fact that God loves you, or is His love so routine or taken for granted that you fail to worship Him?
- Are you ever guilty of thinking God needs to love you? Why is that a wrong view of God?
- How does understanding God as perfectly satisfied in Himself change the way you view yourself and others?
- Read Romans 5:8. What surprising aspect of God's love does this verse reveal? How does this fact change the way you value God's love?
- Why is it significant that of all the things God could have chosen to give His people, He chose to give His perfect, unique Son?
- Why is it important to be grounded in the basic truth of God's love on a daily basis? What is life like when this basic truth is out of perspective?
- How does the truth of God's love for the world demonstrated in Jesus transform the way you view and treat nonbelievers?

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- How does God's promise of everlasting life transform the way you treat the following: Your time? Your money? Your relationships? Your job? Your family? Your church family? Your education?
- Read Isaiah 45:22. What one, simple thing does this verse tell unbelievers to do? How is this one act grounded in a proper understanding of God's love?
- Read Romans 8:31-32. In what ways do you need to be reminded of God's constant, unlimited provision for you?
- Read Romans 8:38-39. In what ways do you need to be reminded of God's unwavering affection for you?
- Do you live in the forgiveness and the freedom found in John 3:16?

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)

- **Lives and Church:** *Pray that our leaders would come to a knowledge of the truth and rule in a manner consistent with that truth.*
- **Local:** *This week we are praying for The Church at South East Lake, Ben Deloach, Pastor. This is a church plant of The Church at Brook Hills that is creating a network of house churches in the East Lake community. Their goal is to lead people to know and become like Christ so that they may honor God regardless of their life situation.*
- **Global:** *This week we are praying for Brook Hills Long-Term Missionary, Kristina Ogren, serving in India.*