

Small Group Guide THE CHURCH AT WAR

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

October 23, 2011

1 Timothy 6:11-21

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and 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 with 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 review 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 for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)

Message Outline

THE CHURCH AT WAR

1 Timothy 6:11-21

Recognize the Global Reality...

- We are involved in a spiritual war. (1 Tim. 6:12)
 - The Bible is clear: we are in wartime, not in peacetime. (Hebrews 12:4; 1 Peter 2:11; Jude 3; Ephesians 6:12)
- The enemy in this spiritual war is formidable.
 - He aims to defame God's glory, distort God's gospel, and destroy God's people.
- The scope of this spiritual war is universal.
 - It involves every language, every people, every nation, every tribe, every family, and every life.
- Involvement in this spiritual war is inevitable.
 - Spiritual retreat only leads to spiritual defeat.
- The stakes in this spiritual war are eternal.
 - Casualties of this war plunge into a hell of everlasting torment.

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Fight the Good Fight...

- Flee evil that pulls you from God. (1 Tim. 6:11)
 - Run from sinful actions. (1 Tim. 6:4-5)
 - Run from sinful desires. (1 Tim. 6:9-10)
 - Run from sinful thoughts.
- Pursue goodness that draws you to God. (1 Tim. 6:11)
 - Righteous thinking and living.
 - Godly belief and behavior.
 - Deeper trust in God.
 - Greater affection for God.
 - Patience amidst difficult circumstances.
 - Kindness toward difficult people.
- Experience the life that you have been given. (1 Tim. 6:12)
 - He has called your name.
 - You have confessed your faith.
 - Live in light of God's presence.
 - He is with you!
 - Live in view of Christ's faithfulness. (1 Tim. 6:13)
 - He is the Savior who died for you!
 - He is the King who's coming for you! (1 Tim. 6:14)
 - Live in awe of God's greatness. (1 Tim. 6:15-16)
 - His rule is universal!
 - His reign is invincible!
 - He is immortal!
 - He is unapproachable!
 - He is inconceivable!
 - He possesses all power!
 - He deserves all praise!
- Give away material treasure. (1 Tim. 6:17-19)
 - Receive gratefully.
 - Live simply.
 - Give extravagantly.
 - Thrive eternally.
- Guard all spiritual truth.
 - We fight to be faithful to the gospel. (1 Tim. 6:20)
 - For our sake.
 - For others' sake.
 - We fight as we're filled with God's grace. (1 Tim. 6:21; Colossians 1:28-29)
 - We are never alone in this war.
 - We do not fight this war for victory; we fight this war from victory.

Message Summary

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Concluding his letter to Timothy, Paul strongly reminded Timothy that his life of faith was a life of waging battles against a spiritual enemy. This kind of fighting, however, was not worthless or hopeless. Rather, it is a good fight to fight. It is a fight worth giving everything to fight.

In living through the daily battles against his faith, Paul instructs Timothy to flee from everything that pulls him from God—sinful actions, desires, and thoughts. As he flees from evil, he must pursue righteousness and godliness. In light of the weariness of battle, Paul encouraged Timothy to take hold of the abundant life that comes from living as a child of the only Sovereign King, who fights for him and loves him and calls him His own.

In this spiritual warfare, Paul told Timothy that the wealthy should give generously of their resources so that they would not be tempted to focus on that which doesn't matter. Paul warned Timothy to guard the purity of the gospel—for his sake, for the sake of the church at Ephesus, and for the sake of those who have yet to trust in Christ. Finally, Paul closed with the encouragement that God's grace would be with Timothy and the church to fight these spiritual battles. God did not expect Timothy to fight alone, nor could Timothy have done it alone. God's grace would be sufficient.

Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- How is your view of following Christ affected by the truth that we are fighting a spiritual war?
- What is the danger in not recognizing that there is an intense spiritual battle going on around us?
- What happens when we flee evil but neglect to pursue righteousness?
- Why must we value both admonitions in order to fight the good fight? Which is easier to value? Why?
- How are sinful thoughts the origin of sinful actions? How do sinful thoughts originate from struggling with beliefs about God and His character?
- Why, then, is the pursuit of righteous thinking and deep trust in God essential to overcoming sin?
- What are some practical steps we can take every day to draw closer to God and to strengthen our belief/trust in Him?
- What can we do during a crisis of faith to help us move closer to God instead of farther away? How can we help each other draw closer to God during crises of faith?
- Our hope does not solely rest in the promise of heaven. How can we live in view of God's gracious presence with us now and for His sovereign glory in our lives while still here?
- What is the appropriate response to the realization that the Sovereign King of the universe calls us His own children?
- What does it look like to flee evil and pursue godliness in our relationship with material blessings?
- As the holidays are approaching, how can we practice the ideas of living simply, giving extravagantly to those in need, and setting family-friendly boundaries within those values?
- Why is the purity of the gospel so important? Considering the plights of numerous churches in Europe and around the United States, why is the fight for the purity of the gospel imperative to the spread of the gospel?
- What role does God's grace active through a community of fellow believers play in our ability to stand firm in the fight for our faith?
- How can we as a community in a small group better encourage each other as fellow soldiers in the battle to "fight the good fight?"

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of today's study. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

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- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/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 study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church..

Weekly Prayer Focus ... (from our worship guide)

- *Lives and Church:* Pray that any and all weaknesses in our church would be strengthened for the sake of the gospel going forth from us. Pray that the gospel would saturate who we are and how we live together.
- *Local:* This week we are praying for the ministry of Marks Village, which is a Birmingham Housing Authority Community with 500 housing units located in Gate City. On October 29, Brook Hills will partner with Divine Faith Missionary Baptist Church and Mission Birmingham to bring the residents of Marks Village a Health Clinic, Fall Festival, and Clothes Closet. We are also praying for Valleydale Baptist, Calvin Kelly, Pastor.
- *Global:* This week we are praying for Troy, a Brook Hills partner working among Muslim people in London.