

Small Group Guide REPENTANCE AND RESOLUTIONS

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

January 1, 2012

Matthew 3:1-17

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

REPENTANCE AND RESOLUTIONS Matthew 3:1-17

The Ministry of John the Baptist: Prepare the Way...

- The man:
 - Prophesying boldly.
 - Living simply.
 - Baptizing openly.
 - Serving humbly.
- The message:
 - Repent...
 - Repentance involves confession (admission of sin).
 - Repentance involves contrition (sorrow over sin).
 - Repentance involves conversion (turn from sin).
 - ...for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
 - Salvation is here.
 - Damnation is near.
- The method:

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- The baptism of Jews...
 - Renounce your dependence on self.
 - Your family heritage.
 - Your personal righteousness.
 - Your worldly successes.
 - Rely on the mercy of God.
 - The Savior King is coming.
 - He will transform your hearts.
 - He will purify your lives.
 - The Righteous Judge is close.
 - His wrath is imminent.
 - His punishment is eternal.
- The baptism of Jesus...
 - The Son obeys.
 - An identification with sinners.
 - He who had no sin took His place among those who had no righteousness.
 - An example for saints.
 - He began His ministry by showing what would be central in our mission.
 - A picture of salvation.
 - His immersion portrayed His future death and resurrection.
 - The Spirit anoints.
 - The Father speaks.
 - Jesus is God's beloved Son.
 - Jesus is our suffering servant.

The Ministry of The Church at Brook Hills: Tell the World...

- Repent and be baptized...
 - Turn from your sin.
 - Trust in the Son.
 - Rest in His righteousness.
 - Bear the fruit of faith in Him.
- Resolve to proclaim this gospel...
 - God's Son has come.
 - God's judgment is coming.

Message Summary

John the Baptist, who announced Jesus' coming, was the forerunner of the Savior King. John's message recorded in Matthew 3:1-17 is a message of repentance because divine judgment and salvation are here. He is calling people to mourn for their sin, turn from their sin and trust in God, for God has come in the person of Christ to establish His kingdom and judge the world. Then John baptizes Jesus as He identifies with our sin, gives us an example to follow, and paints a picture of His future death and resurrection for our sins. God gives us a glimpse of the trinity's involvement in our salvation at the Son's coronation as King as the Father speaks and the Spirit descends upon Him.

This picture of baptism sets up a strong theme for a New Year's Day message as we, too, are called and call others to turn from sin and struggles and to start again—with Christ as King and Lord over every facet of our lives. The calling to repent and be baptized is deeper, however, than a New Year's resolution, for a life of repentance produces fruit through our lives for the glory of Christ and the advancement of His kingdom.

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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?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- How do repentance and resolutions relate to each other? How can they be different?
- Read Matthew 3:3,11. Why is it significant that John knew and articulated his role as a prophet?
- When you consider the message of repentance (confession, contrition, conversion), can true repentance occur without all three parts? Why not?
- How would you articulate what the Kingdom of heaven is to someone who doesn't know Christ?
- Are you tempted to depend on or trust in anything that the baptism of Jews renounces (family heritage, personal righteousness, worldly successes; see Matt. 3:7-10)? What does it mean to renounce those things? (See Luke 14:33 for how John's message correlates with Jesus' message.)
- What are two results of relying on God's mercy mentioned in today's message? Why does a right understanding God's mercy always change what you value?
- How should your desires also change when you see Jesus as a righteous Judge who is close? What are the dangers of ignoring Christ's role as Judge?
- What are some fruits of repentance that Christ-followers should show? (See the parallel passage in Luke 3: 1-22 and the Sermon on the Mount for further discussion.)
- Is turning from your sin an inward or outward action? Why?
- What does it mean to rest in Christ's righteousness?
- Why does a life resting in Christ always bear fruit?
- With whom can you resolve to share the gospel this year?
- Will your time in God's Word and your prayer life need to change as you seek His wisdom and strength to share His message this year? How?

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:

- 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 . . .

- **Lives and Church:** *The ministry of John the Baptist, which we are studying this week, calls us to join him in testifying to the fact that our King, Jesus Christ, is greater than us all. Pray this week that those who do not know Jesus would come to recognize Him as the Son of God. Pray that we would all be continuously transformed and refined by the One that baptizes with "the Holy Spirit and fire." In light*

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of who Jesus is, spend some time this week repenting of any sins and seeking His Kingdom in your own life and on earth.

- **Local Prayer for City:** *This week we are praying for the ministry of the Birmingham Baptist Association and for Grace Life Baptist Church, Joel Frederick, pastor.*
- **Global:** *This week we are praying for short-term teams serving in the Middle East and for Brook Hills Long-Term Missionaries, the Frost Family.*