

## Small Group Guide

### LIFE, LOVE, & GROWTH BY THE GOSPEL

*The Church at Brook Hills,*

*Matt Mason*

*July 15, 2012*

*1 Peter 1:22-2:3*

---

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**

#### **LIFE, LOVE, & GROWTH BY THE GOSPEL**

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

#### **The Gospel's Gift: Soul-Cleansing (1:22a)**

- John (1 Jn. 4:7-8; 5:1), Paul (1 Cor. 13:1-3, 13; Rom. 13:8, 10), and Jesus (Matt. 22:36-40) speak of the command to love as the all-encompassing summary of the Christian life.
- Peter motivates Christian love by appealing, firstly, to the soul-cleansing power of the gospel.

#### **The Gospel's Aim: Christian Love (1:22b)**

"The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."  
(1 Timothy 1:5)

- The problem of Christian intellectualism
- The challenge of love

#### **The Gospel's Fruit: Life, Love, & Growth (1:23-2:3)**

- God creates his people through the Word.

## Small Group Guide

### LIFE, LOVE, & GROWTH BY THE GOSPEL

*The Church at Brook Hills,*

*Matt Mason*

*July 15, 2012*

*1 Peter 1:22-2:3*

---

“Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”  
(James 1:18)

- How not to hear a sermon
- Love others in the shadow of the cross.

#### *Message Summary*

Although we live in a world that is not a greenhouse for Christian growth, Peter reminds believers of the life-changing power of the gospel and God’s Word in their lives. He reminds them how the gospel motivates his exhortations to exhibit brotherly love to fellow believers, to put away all evil, and to long for spiritual milk. The definitive soul cleansing that occurred at salvation occurred as a result of hearing and responding to the Word, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and this good news does not fade but abides forever. The result of our salvation is Christian love. Doctrine, specifically the doctrine of conversion, is meant to do more than to inform our intellect. It is to fuel us to live with sincere love for others and to be obedient to the commands of Scripture.

#### *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?).

- Who was Peter’s original audience (1 Pet. 1:1)? What was their situation (1 Pet. 1:6; 2:21; 4:12-13, 19)? What is the preceding context of 1 Peter 1:1-21?
- What are similarities and differences between Peter’s original audience and us today? Peter wrote that they were “exiles” (1 Pet. 1:1, 17). They were to conduct themselves as citizens of God’s Kingdom and exemplify Christian ethics while living in the Roman Empire. How does Peter’s message apply to believers today?
- In reading 1 Peter 1:22-23, what reason does Peter give for why believers are to love one another?
- Obedience to the gospel’s commands to repent and to trust in Christ as Lord and Savior results in a transformation in how we view and treat others. Rehearse together what your life was like before you responded to the gospel. Share with each other about when you trusted in Christ as Lord and Savior. How has this decision affected how you live and how you love? Praise God together for His salvation.
- In verse 22, Peter explains that those who have obeyed the truth are in the life-long process of being “purified” or sanctified. We do not merely give intellectual assent to the gospel, it changes our hearts and lives. Our friendships, marriages, schedules, and work ethic should express that we have been re-made by God. This past week, how has your life demonstrated evidence of the gospel’s work in your heart? Or how is your life exhibiting that you have been changed by the good news of salvation?
- In the sermon, Matt Mason expressed, “Biblical doctrines are meant to do more than inform the intellect. They are meant to create humble, happy, trusting, holy, hopeful, and thankful Christians.” What are ways in which believers can sometimes divorce doctrine from praise of God and obedience to God?
- Have you ever felt as though the Christian life was more of a duty than a delight? What was at the root of that feeling? What have you intellectually been learning from the Word? How is the truth of Scripture that you are currently learning affecting your heart, your lifestyle, or your relationships?
- Peter specifically states that the result of our salvation is the exhibition of a “sincere brotherly love,” and he gives the command to “love one another earnestly” (v. 22). These two phrases describe a genuine loving attitude towards fellow believers. What does brotherly love practically look like? In the sermon, Matt Mason described love as “Gethsemane-looking love” because the same word used in 1 Peter 1:22 to describe “brotherly love” is also used of Jesus when He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane the night of His arrest. Describe tangible characteristics of such a love. What are ways in which you are currently expressing “Gethsemane-looking love” to those in your small group? To other believers in your life? How has another believer recently exhibited such love towards you?

## Small Group Guide

### LIFE, LOVE, & GROWTH BY THE GOSPEL

*The Church at Brook Hills,*

*Matt Mason*

*July 15, 2012*

*1 Peter 1:22-2:3*

---

- We as believers are to be unwavering in our love and devotion to one another despite external pressures, personality differences, etc. Our witness to the world is tied up in our love for one another (Jn. 13:34-35). What are personal challenges for demonstrating “Gethsemane-looking love” to others? How are such challenges overcome? We cannot have a sustained love for people apart from the power of the Spirit in us and apart from abiding in Christ.
- In his letter, Peter has admonished believers from several areas to love one another. What responsibilities do we have toward brothers and sisters who do not attend our local church or live in close proximity to us?
- 1 Peter 1:23 attributes the believer’s spiritual rebirth to “the living and abiding word of God.” Hearing the gospel awakened you to your need for the Savior, and this living word is the *imperishable* seed. It neither fades nor diminishes in power, but it endures forever and gives eternal life to those who trust in the gospel (v. 25). By quoting Isaiah 40:6, 8 to his readers, Peter points out that the word of the Lord in Isaiah 40 is the same good news that has been preached to believers. Read Isaiah 40:1-8. What was the context of Isaiah’s readers in Isaiah 40? How was their situation similar to that of Peter’s original audience? In Isaiah 40, Isaiah prophesies of Israel’s deliverance from the Babylonian exile. Although Israel did return to their land from the Babylonian captivity, other prophesies in this passage did not come to pass until John the Baptist arrived (Isa. 40:3), and we are still waiting for God’s final deliverance, which word of the Lord promises will come. However, 1 Peter 1:23-25 assures believers of the faithfulness and endurance of word of God.
- In verse 24, Peter’s quotation from Isaiah 40 expounds on the transient nature of flesh and all of its glory. How might this perspective of the temporariness of this life have encouraged Peter’s original audience as they experienced trials, displacement, and persecution? How should this fleeting life affect how you live and view your possessions? Are you living for what is eternal and investing you life in what will abide? What changes do you need to make in your life?
- In contemplating how our lives ought to change to better reflect the gospel, it is easy to be discouraged by our failure to be able to obey. With what attitude do you approach studying and hearing God’s Word? Have you ever felt like you have been “flunking” in living out the Christian life? You cannot rely on yourself to obey God’s Word. The gospel gives us life and empowers us to live faithfully (1 Pet. 1:22-25). As a small group, share with each other truth from Scripture regarding the help of the Holy Spirit and other promises of God equipping His saints for holy living.
- The commands of 1 Peter 2:1-3 also flow as a result of a gospel-changed life. How can we demonstrate malice, deceit, hypocrisy, unforgiveness, pride, bitterness, and envy when standing next to the cross? Is there sin in your life that you need to confess and to turn away from as you examine your life in light of Christ’s demonstration of sacrificial love for you and for others? Take time in small group for personal examination and prayer. Offer the assurance of Christ’s promise of forgiveness in 1 John 1:9.
- In 1 Peter 1:2, Peter commands believers to crave spiritual milk. What does this mean? What is “spiritual milk”? Newborns have an incessant and instinctive longing for milk, and Peter uses this metaphor to express how believers should long for God, which indirectly also involves longing for the things of God and the Word of God and is tied to putting off all evil. Do you view Scripture as the sustenance you need as you live the Christian life? As you grow in the faith, are you single-minded in your pursuit of God and in your obedience to Him? This “milk” is the diet necessary for continued spiritual growth, and if you have tasted of the Lord’s goodness, you cannot help but desire more of Him and His Word.

## **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?

## Small Group Guide

### LIFE, LOVE, & GROWTH BY THE GOSPEL

The Church at Brook Hills,

Matt Mason

July 15, 2012

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

---

- 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: This Sunday we will be looking at Peter's final words in chapter one of his first letter. Here we see the joyful effects of a church changed by the power of God's Word in the gospel – the love of Christ for one another. In light of what you are reading in Peter's letter, pray that God would use this text to bring joyful remembrance of the Spirit's first work on our hearts through the gospel. Pray that God would cause each one of us to persevere faithfully in following him. Pray that God would produce and nurture an earnest love in each one of us for our faith family.*
- *Local: This week we are praying for First Baptist Trussville, Buddy Champion, Pastor. We are also praying for the forty 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders and eight adult leaders from Brook Hills who will be attending Student Life for Kids Camp July 16-19 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, AL. The theme for this week is BIG God, and kids will be learning about how God is BIG yet how He is still involved in every single detail of our lives.*
- *Global: This week we are praying for our Short-Term teams serving in East Asia. We are also praying for Long-Term Missionary, Kristina Ogren serving in Pune, India. Kristina is the director of Bright Star Education School that serves disadvantaged children in the Pune area, including those who are HIV positive, sick, and physically/mentally challenged. Through the school, each child receives a quality education and is exposed to the gospel on a daily basis. For more information, visit [brightstareducation.org](http://brightstareducation.org).*