

## Small Group Guide

# THE INDESCRIBABLE CHRIST AND HIS INDESTRUCTIBLE CHURCH

*The Church at Brook Hills,*

*Dr. David Platt*

*August 12, 2012*

*Revelation 1:9-20*

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 INDESCRIBABLE CHRIST AND HIS INDESTRUCTIBLE CHURCH**

Revelation 1:9-20

- We are a family of brothers and sisters.
- We are an army engaged in a battle.
  - We share in the sufferings of Christ.
    - As we portray Him.
      - The kingdom comes in the form of a suffering Savior.
      - The kingdom advances through the lives of suffering saints.
    - As we proclaim Him.
  - We participate in the reign of Christ.
    - We have confidence amidst suffering.
    - We experience victory over sin.
    - We lead others to salvation.
  - We endure in the power of Christ.

#### **The Indescribable Christ...**

- Jesus is a man.

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- Jesus is God.
- Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy.
- Jesus is the final high priest.
- Jesus is infinitely old.
- Jesus is infinitely wise.
- Jesus has knowledge of all things.
  - He searches every area of our hearts.
  - He sees everything we'd like to hide.
- Jesus is holy above all things.
  - His purity has no error.
  - His power knows no equal.
- Jesus' voice resounds with authority.
  - He declares eternal salvation.
  - He decrees final judgment.
- Jesus' face radiates with light.
- Jesus had the first word in creation.
- Jesus will have the last word in creation.
- Jesus was dead...for a time.
- Jesus is alive...for all time.
- Death is controlled by Jesus.
- No one or nothing compares to Jesus.

### The Indestructible Church...

- Jesus is present among us.
- Jesus possesses us.
- Jesus protects us.
- Jesus has a purpose for us.

### The Inevitable Commission...

- Fall down in worship.
  - Non-Christians: Have much fear.
  - Christians: Have no fear.
- Rise up as witnesses.
  - May His glory continually captivate our imagination...
  - May His grace supernaturally empower our devotion...
  - And may His gospel radically compel us on mission.

### Message Summary

In Revelation 1:9-20, the Apostle John describes to the seven churches a vision of the resurrected Christ, a sight that caused him to fall at His feet. As a whole, this picture of Christ presents as incomparable, awesome, and present among His people. As believers, we stand with each other as a family and as partners in advancing the Kingdom of God, and as the church, we are a lampstand bringing light to a dark world, compelled to worship and to mission because of our glorious Savior.

### 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?).

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- In verse 9, John writes that he is a “brother” to the believers. As Christ-followers, we are a family. Why is this so important? Are the people in this local church truly a family to you? If so, share an example. If not, identify hindrances. How can you be proactive in contributing and in growing a sense of community and family in this faith family?
- John also writes that he is a “partner” to the believers (v. 9). As an army engaged in battle, how is your small group currently partnering together to advance the gospel? How are each of you involved in the mission of Christ? In what ways are you supporting other brothers and sisters who are serving both locally and globally?
- The Apostle John’s original audience underwent persecution at the hands of Romans and Jews for their faith, and John partnered with his hearers in experiencing such tribulation as an exile on the island of Patmos. How can we better support brothers and sisters who are risking their lives by sharing the gospel? Take time right now to pray for national believers, short-term missionaries, mid-term missionaries, and long-term missionaries who are spending their lives in contexts around the world for the sake of the gospel.
- Why do Christians suffer? Read Philippians 1:29; 3:10-11; Colossians 1:24-25; 2 Corinthians 1:5; 1 Peter 4:13, which Pastor David referenced in this sermon. What do these passages indicate about suffering and the Christian life? Evaluate a past experience of suffering. How did you respond to that particular trial? How are you reflecting Christ to a lost world when you suffer? How can you prepare yourself right now for suffering that will come? While we may not face persecution for our faith as John’s original audience, how are we supporting and partnering with fellow believers who are currently suffering? Pray for those in the small group who are facing trials of various kinds, and pray for each other to have strength and to endure faithfully when suffering.
- The Apostle John was exiled because of “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (v. 9). This phrase is also used in Revelation 6:9; 12:17; 20:4. What characteristics describe those whom Revelation describes with this phrase? Proclamation of the gospel occurs at a price. What does sharing the gospel currently cost you? Relationships? Spending time and resources as you wish? Are you faithfully proclaiming the gospel? Identify people in your normal rhythms of life who need Christ and who need to know about His salvation by grace through faith. Write down their names and pray for their souls right now. Pray for an opportunity to share with them this week, and pray for boldness and wisdom as you seek to make the most of every opportunity this week to point others to Christ.
- In verse 9, John states that he is a “partner in...the kingdom.” What all does participating in the reign of Christ entail?
  - How does this give us confidence in suffering? Read the following passages that Pastor David referenced in this sermon: Philippians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Romans 8:31-39.
  - How does the knowledge that we reign over sin and darkness in Christ affect your personal worship of Christ?
  - Are you participating in the reign of Christ by extending it to others through sharing the gospel?
- In verse 11, a loud voice commands the Apostle John to write what he sees. Imagine seeing Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon and trying to explain what you see to someone who is blind. This is comparable to the task John faced in trying to record in words the vision that He saw of the Savior. As someone in the group reads verses 12-16, jot down what words, thoughts, or emotions come to mind as you hear this description. How did this description affect you? Why is this vision of Christ important?
- Read Daniel 7:9-14 and Daniel 10:5-6. What would John’s original hearers have thought when hearing Revelation 1:12-16? What would these verses have meant to them?
- The clothing described in verse 13 presents Christ as a priest (Ex. 28:4). What is the significance of Christ being fully God, fully man, *and* our great high priest?
- John compares the eyes of Christ to “a flame of fire” (v. 14), which represents His penetrating insight as the One who sees and knows all things. What are things for which you are thankful that He *does* see? What would you wish that He did *not* see? What areas of your life need to be confessed and submitted to the Lordship of Christ?

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- The description of Jesus' feet in verse 15 expresses His strength, sturdiness, and purity, and the comparison of His voice to a mighty waterfall communicates both power and majesty. The image of a double-edged sword in verse 16 expresses how He brings both salvation and judgment (Rev. 19:15). Share with each other how you have experienced the strength, stability, salvation, and/or power of Christ in your life.
- Read in verse 17 how John responded to this vision of Christ. When you heard this passage being read earlier in today's study, how did your reaction compare and contrast to John's response? Does it stir in you a greater sense of awe of the Savior and an increased zeal for mission? Does it flood with you with fear or shame? How should you respond in light of the Savior this passage describes? If you are a Christian, how should you respond? Are you captivated by the glory of Christ and fully devoted to Him? If you are not a Christ-follower, what is your response? Read back through the descriptions of Christ in Revelation 1:12-18 and in the message outline, and as a small group, physically move to a kneeling posture and praise Christ for His characteristics as demonstrated in this passage.
- Revelation 1:20 explains that the seven lampstands signify the seven churches to whom this epistle was originally written. A lampstand's purpose is to provide light, and The Church at Brook Hills exists as a lampstand in this community and in the world. Verse 12-13 depict Christ as standing "in the midst of the lampstands," and as His church, we experience His presence as we live out our purpose (Matt. 28:18-20). Discuss the significance and the comfort of an ever-present Savior. As a member of this faith family, how are you participating in God's purpose of His church?

## **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 . . . (from our worship guide)**

- *Pray for Our Lives: Pray for our continued guidance as we study Revelation together and for God to grow our knowledge and understanding. Pray we would all recognize the awesome glory of Jesus Christ. Pray our response to Christ's glory would be to worship Him with complete abandon. Ask God for strength to live without fear, relying on His saving work through Jesus Christ. Praise Jesus for His conquering of sin and death. Pray our church would be one consistently reflecting the glory of Christ.*
- *Pray for Our City: As we look toward a new school year resuming for children, teens, and adults, pray specifically for our teachers, homeschool parents, and adults serving in school administration as they prepare to lead children in our community*

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*this school year. We are also praying this week for Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Danny Wood, Pastor.*

- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills field partners Sanford and Mary B. serving in South Asia. Sanford and Mary B. shepherd and strengthen leaders who are being trained and disciplined to plant churches among unreached people groups in South Asia. This process is part of a greater strategy to share the gospel and see the church established where it does not exist.*