

Small Group Guide

WORDS FROM CHRIST TO A CHURCH AT WAR

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

August 19, 2012

Revelation 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

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Revelation 2-3

- Jesus knows us truly.
- Jesus loves us deeply.
- Jesus guards us zealously.
- Jesus uses us purposefully.

Jesus commends His church.

- For faithful perseverance in the Word of Christ.
 - Guarding the church internally.
 - Advancing the church externally.
- For faithful proclamation of the name of Christ.
 - In light of opportunity.
 - In the midst of opposition (religious, governmental, social, and economic).
- For trusting God amidst testing in the world.

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- Satan is subordinate, and he intends suffering to sabotage us.
- God is sovereign, and he uses suffering to sanctify us.
- For loving God amidst temptation from the world.

Jesus rebukes His church.

- For compromise.
 - In the church...
 - Tolerance of evil (idolatry and immorality).
 - Tolerance of error (false teaching and false teachers).
 - With the world...
 - For the sake of financial gain, social acceptance, and personal safety.
- For complacency.
 - Self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency.
 - Failure to complete the works of God and failure to confess the Word of God.

Jesus commands His church.

- Remember...
 - Who you are and what Jesus says.
- Repent...
 - Turn from sin and trust in Jesus.
- Receive...
 - Find your treasure in Jesus, clothe your life in Jesus, and fix your eyes on Jesus.

Jesus warns His church.

- God gives warnings to Christians about falling away to keep Christians from falling away.
- By grace through faith, true followers of Christ will persevere to the end.
- By grace through faith, true followers of Christ work to persevere to the end.

Jesus rewards His church.

- Total vindication of Christ's ways in this world.
- Triumphant victory over Satan's powers in this world.
- Secure protection from the horror of hell.
- Shared participation in the reign of Christ.
- Permanent citizenship in the city of God.
- Perpetual celebration in the presence of God.

Message Summary

Today's message centers on the words of Christ to His churches as recorded by John in Revelation 2 and 3. Rather than looking at the specific the message given to each individual church, this sermon considers broad picture issues contained in Christ's words: how Christ commends, rebukes, commands, warns, and will

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ultimately reward His church. Though at war and tempted every day, believers receive encouragement to repent, stand firm, and look forward to the eternal celebration prepared for them in the New Kingdom.

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?).

- Why is it important to start the study of this passage with four truths about Christ—that He knows, loves, guards, and uses us?
- When you consider the ways Jesus commended the churches in Revelation, what commendations do you feel apply to our church today? What's biblically right about our church? Based on Scripture, what rebukes apply to our church? Why? Take time to repent as a small group as well as to pray and to brainstorm how each of you can address the area of rebuke.
- As the churches faced opposition, why did God allow and even ordain that His children be thrown in prison and put to death?
- What are some examples of opposition that uncompromising believers face today? What labels does the world place on Christ-followers? How do we guard against compromise?
- Why should we value God's testing? What is the purpose of being tested?
- Why were the churches in today's text tempted to compromise their beliefs? In America, why is it often easy for the church to blend in with the world? What happens when Christians' lifestyles are indistinguishable from the world? In what areas of your life are you indistinguishable from the world?
- What is the difference between compromise and complacency? How are they often intertwined? Are you coasting through life, or are you living and enduring faithfully?
- Pastor David emphasized a key danger the church faces: When lured by physical prosperity, we become blind to our deep spiritual poverty. He also noted that if we are not careful, we surround ourselves with all our wants and wane in our want for God. How does what we choose to value affect how easily we are enticed? What habits reveal your values? What habits change your values?
- Christ commands His church to remember, repent, and receive. What do you need to remember this week? How does God use His Word to help us remember truth? From what do you need to repent? What true treasures do you need to receive from Christ?
- Pastor David noted that the dominant rebuke in Revelation 2—3 was that the people failed to confess God's Word to others. In what ways are you intentionally confessing God's Word to others? Who are people around you who need to hear the gospel and with whom you have the opportunity to share God's Word?
- Were any of these churches written off by Christ? What did He tell them to do to be restored? Why is that essential to our hope?
- When you consider Christ's warnings, what strikes you about His sternness? Why does His warning prove that He keeps us instead of rejects us?
- When you consider the eternal rewards in store for the church, how do those rewards change the way you view and value this world? What specific steps do you need to take this week to focus less on material things and more on Christ?

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?

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- 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)

- ***Church:*** Pray that God would cause us to cling to His gospel as a church. Pray that God would not only guard us from false teaching, but that He will help us to reject it if it comes into our midst. Pray that God would give us the grace we need to live daily in a manner worthy of His great and glorious gospel.
- ***Local:*** This week we continue to pray for our students and their leaders as the new school year begins across the Birmingham area. We are also praying this week for Double Oak Community Church, Randy Overstreet, Pastor.
- ***Global:*** This week we are praying for Brook Hills field partners Randy and Debbie M. serving in India. Randy leads a team that is making disciples and planting churches among an unreached people group in Northern India. With its complex culture and people, India is not an easy area to make disciples. Join us this week as we pray for our partners and for God to make His name known in India.