

Small Group Guide

FIGHTING FROM (NOT FOR) VICTORY

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

September 23, 2012

Revelation 12:1-15:4

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

Eight Reflections From Bihar...

- Ordinary believers...
- Doing extraordinary things...
- With God's Word...
- For God's glory...
- Making disciples...
- Multiplying churches...
- Knowing that the cost is great...
- Believing that the reward is greater.

Seven Visions From Revelation...

- Satan has been conquered by Christ the Savior and is being conquered by Christians as they suffer. (Revelation 12)
 - The birth of Christ declared the death of the ancient serpent; the death of Christ defanged the adversary; and the resurrection of Christ demolished all his accusations against the church.
 - When Satan attempts to use suffering and persecution to defeat Christians, he ultimately contributes to their eternal delight and his own eternal destruction.

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- Satan works through government that functions as divine authority instead of under divine authority. (Revelation 13:1-10)
 - Is this beast a physical person, a particular empire, or an evil spirit behind earthly systems?
 - God permits the beast to curse His name, crush His people, and control the nations.
- Satan deceives through teachers who look like friends yet speak like enemies, stimulating idolatry while slaying the innocent. (Revelation 13:11-18)
 - He massacres all who refuse him.
 - He marks all who follow him.
- Faithful followers of Christ will one day stand boldly with him, sing loudly to him, and be satisfied completely in him. (Revelation 14:1-5)
 - This is the reward of uncompromising purity in the world.
 - This is the reward of unapologetic proclamation of the gospel.
- Who we worship on earth determines where we go in eternity. (Revelation 14:6-13)
 - All who indulge in the enticing wine of this world will one day drink from the everlasting wrath of God.
 - All who endure amid the trials and temptations of this world will one day enter into the rest and relief of God.
- The judgment of God is inevitable and intense. (Revelation 14:14-20)
 - He will harvest all the saints who trust in him.
 - He will tread every sinner who turns from him.
- Soon all the saints throughout all of history will rejoice together in the song of the redeemed. (Revelation 15:2-4)
 - Conquering Christians will shout as they consider God's incomprehensible works.
 - Conquering Christians will sing as they behold God's incomparable worth.

Message Summary

John's vision of the dragon presents a picture of the battle between heaven and hell that has been taking place "behind the scenes" since sin entered the world. The Old Testament events reveal the cosmic battle of Satan trying to prevent the birth of the child (Jesus) by attempting to destroy the Jews. The New Testament and beyond reveals the battle of Satan attempting to thwart the glory of God from being displayed in and by people of God by causing suffering, by persecuting them, and by tempting them to sin. Believers must be aware that Satan will use any means necessary to cause them to abandon their pursuit of Christ, but John calls Christians to persevere through struggles because Jesus' life, death, and resurrection has decidedly defeated Satan. Although Christ's peace has not been fully enforced, the war has been decided long ago. At the end, there will be judgment for all people, and those who have trusted in Christ will rejoice in His presence forever, while those who have rejected Him will be under the full wrath of God for eternity.

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 does our view of the history of God's people and world events change when we view them through the lens of the battle between God and demonic forces? How does that shape our view of God's sovereignty?
- Name some times in the history of God's people when God thwarted Satan's attempts to prevent Christ from being born.
- What are some times in your life that God has used for His glory and your good when the world may have seen the possibility of failure or defeat?
- Although the peace of Christ has not been fully enforced in this world, the message of Christ's victory over Satan is clear throughout Revelation. How does this (or should this) truth affect the way that we view persecution and suffering?
- Looking at the pursuit of Satan against God's people in chapter twelve, why would Satan choose to attack God's people when his attempts to defeat Christ were greatly thwarted at every turn?

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- What tool does Satan use to make you feel defeated? How does defeat threaten your faith and your usefulness in the kingdom of God?
- What must we be doing as believers to guard ourselves against attacks and to fight them when they come?
- Why does fighting spiritual battles in our own power always lead to defeat? What does this say about the reality of our need to fight from Christ's victory instead of fighting for our victory?
- John's vision of the second beast clearly reveals that God has allowed Satan to have limited power in this world and that he (Satan) works through governments that usurp the authority of God and pretends to bring peace while persecuting believers. How is this truth both encouraging and discouraging? How does it force us to lean on the sovereignty of God and the importance of knowing His Word?
- Do we often place a limit on how much we are willing to endure for Christ in the midst of persecution? How do we teach our families and others to follow Christ in such situations, no matter the cost?
- How does the description of God's judgment in chapter fourteen depict the holiness of God?
- How does the redemption of God's people in chapter fourteen depict the love and forgiveness of God?
- How would our lives differ if we made decisions based on the reality of spiritual warfare and the inevitable judgment of God?
- How can we live with eternity at the forethought of all that we do?

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)

- *For Our Lives: Praise God for His triumph over Satan. Pray for our own perseverance through Satan's attempts at deception and temptation. Pray that we would cling to God's Word as the only source of truth. Ask God to graciously grant us wisdom and discernment to recognize the difference between truths and falsehoods. Pray for God to help us live Christ-honoring lives in the midst of this fallen world. Ask God to grant us the strength to endure this life, trusting Him to fulfill His promises to us in His perfect timing.*
- *For Our City: This week we are praying for the efforts and ministry coordinated by The Christian Service Mission in downtown Birmingham. We are also praying this week for Dr. Kip Laxson, Pastor, Asbury United Methodist Church.*
- *For Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Mid-Termer, Grace T. serving in England. Grace serves as a communications specialist for a mission organization. Her main role is to develop stories supporting missionaries serving in the 10/40 Window. She also leads a small group in her neighborhood that is seeing people come to faith in Christ and make disciples of others in their*

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community. Join us in praying for Grace this week as she ministers to those in her neighborhood and across the 10/40 Window. This week we are also praying for our short-term team serving in India.