

Small Group Guide

THE DANGER OF WORLDLY DESIRES

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

October 7, 2012

Revelation 17-18

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

What Is Going On?

- An attractive woman who symbolizes worldly seduction...
 - A symbol of infidelity.
 - A symbol of idolatry.
 - A symbol of immorality.
- Sitting on a beast that symbolizes worldly persecution.
 - Seven heads symbolizing seven mountains and seven kings.
 - Ten horns symbolizing ten kings.
- The woman is devoured by the beast.
 - According to the purpose of God.
- The woman disappears from the earth.
 - As a result of the judgment of God.

What Does This Mean?

- What we learn about this world...
 - This world is full of deceptive attractions.
 - Sensual pleasures.
 - Material possessions.

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- The promise of satisfaction.
- The hope of security.
- The insatiable lust for power.
- The subtle lure of pride.
- This world is headed to a definite conclusion.
 - This world will be destroyed completely.
 - This world will be destroyed suddenly.
 - This world will be destroyed eternally.
- What we learn about sin and Satan...
 - Sin is self-destructive and eventually damning.
 - Satan is a destroyer who knows he is inevitably doomed.
- What we learn about Jesus...
 - By His overcoming grace, He calls us to be saved.
 - With His overcoming power, He calls us to be faithful.
- What we learn about our lives...
 - Love for the world and love for God cannot coexist.
 - Love for the world pushes out love for God.
 - Love for God pushes out love for the world.
 - Every one of us has a choice.
 - We can love the things of this world.
 - Our pleasures will always be fleeting.
 - Our destiny will be hell.
 - We can love the God of this world.
 - Our pleasure will be unfading.
 - Our security will always be in heaven.

Message Summary

In today's passage, an angel gives John a vision that clearly warns against the lure of worldly seduction in the midst of worldly persecution. In this vision, a woman portrayed as an alluring prostitute represents the worldly desires that trap humanity and renders useless those who claim to be spiritual. This woman sits upon the beast who represents the persecution of believers and who ultimately will turn against the worldliness of the woman and devour her. This symbolic picture gives a graphic taste of the destructive nature of the world without Christ; sin turns upon itself so that it destroys whatever lays in its path. The sinful nature of this world entices all people to pursue that which will replace God in their lives. The world encourages us to place ourselves as the focus of our lives, leading us to infidelity, idolatry, and immorality against God. But God has conquered sin, and those who trust in Him for salvation find eternal security in Him.

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?).

- What desires fuel the attractiveness of the world? (Note that the world in this discussion is not centered on the people of the world but on worldliness, the inherent sinfulness of the flesh.)
- The world lures us with temptations such as sensual pleasures, more possessions, power, and pride. How are these pursuits consumed with our own personal satisfaction instead of faithfulness to God? How do they entice us to replace God with ourselves—the sin of idolatry?
- Considering these attractions, why is it fitting that a prostitute is used to symbolize the lure of worldliness?
- How does the idea of infidelity and idolatry against God reveal that the problem with worldliness is a problem with our hearts?
- What are some of the greatest worldly enticements that our culture faces? What are some of the greatest worldly enticements that we face in our churches? What are some of the greatest worldly enticements that you face?

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- What does the difference between the two previous answers indicate about our tendency to mirror the world or to mask worldliness within our current religious circles?
- How can we tell whether our wealth/possessions are a tool for the gospel or are controlling us in a race to always have what is bigger, better, newer, or cooler?
- How has the pursuit of worldly endeavors impacted your marriage, children, jobs, dreams, spending patterns, and decisions in practical, everyday ways? What sins do you need to repent of in those areas?
- How would your life differ if you were intentional about pursuing God with all of your resources, including money, time, and skills/talents?
- In Revelation 18:16-17, we can see that the lures of this world will ultimately be destroyed. How is that truth also illustrative of how sin will destroy individual lives?
- How does the conquering Lamb, King of kings, and Lord of lords in Revelation 17:14 give us hope in the midst of a culture entrenched with pursuing more of what doesn't matter?
- What are small choices that you can make today that will help you begin to pursue God over a love for the world? Pray for each other to have power by the Spirit to resist worldliness and to walk in faithfulness to God. Praise Christ together for being the conquering Lamb who loves and who satisfies His people.
- How can we practically consider our pursuit of God in the small and big decisions of our lives? What questions should we be asking and what actions should we be taking that can help us stand apart from the world?
- How can we help our children have a healthy approach to using their activities as an avenue for gospel proclamation instead of a way to pursue talents, pleasures, security, or satisfaction?

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: Confess your sins, ask for God's forgiveness, and praise Him for His patience, mercy, and grace. Repent of worldliness and ask for God's continued consecration in your life. Pray for God to strengthen us to resist the temptations this world has to offer. Praise God for His justice, even in His judgment. Pray for those you know personally and those around the world that need to repent and place their faith in Christ. Pray for God to keep us ever mindful of His promised coming judgment.*
- *For Our City: This week we are praying for the efforts and ministry coordinated through the UAB Friendship partners Program as they seek to connect international students to host families in Birmingham. This is a great way to build relationships with internationals while they are living here. We are also praying this week for Ron Pate, Hilldale Baptist Church.*
- *For Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills field partner Craig H. serving in South Asia. Craig and his wife lead a large team throughout an unreached portion of South Asia. Their goal is to*

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engage the unreached with the gospel and see churches multiplied throughout their region. Craig and his team oversee a training and disciple-making center that is equipping new believers to share the gospel and make other disciple-makers in their community. Through Radical Giving, our faith family has partnered with this team and there is great movement and growth in this difficult area of the world. This week, we are also praying for our short-term team serving in North Africa.