

Small Group Guide

WHY PRAY? TO MOBILIZE LABORERS

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. Jim Shaddix

November 18, 2012

Luke 10:1-20

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

TO MOBILIZE LABORERS

Luke 10:1-20

- Prayer fuels a missional strategy of sending rather than sensing. (Luke 10:1; cf. Luke 6:12-16; 9:1-6,51-62; 10:2-3)
- Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscle of sovereignty. (Luke 10:2)

Pray for God to...

- Send out witnesses with the gospel. (Acts 1:4-5,8,14; 13:2-3)
- Give boldness to share the gospel. (Acts 4:29-31; Ephesians 6:18-20; Philippians 1:18-20)
- Open doors for spreading the gospel. (Colossians 4:3-4)
- Clarify understanding of the gospel. (Colossians 4:3-4)
- Advance the message of the gospel. (2 Thessalonians 3:1)
- Deliver messengers of the gospel. (Romans 15:30-31; Philippians 1:19; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2)

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- Pray-ers are laborers and laborers are pray-ers on God's mission. (Luke 10:3-20; cf. Luke 9:1-6; 22:35-38)

Pray for laborers who...

- Depend on Jesus completely. (Luke 10:4a)
- Don't waste time unnecessarily. (Luke 10:4b)
- Discern openness to the gospel. (Luke 10:5-6)
- Desire provision instead of luxury. (Luke 10:7-8)
- Demonstrate and share the gospel. (Luke 10:9)
- Declare God's impending judgment. (Luke 10:10-15)

Pray for laborers to remember...

- The Sender of the servant is the Shepherd of the sheep. (Luke 10:3)
- Rejection of the message is rejection of the Master. (Luke 10:16)
- Security in the Lord trumps success in the labors. (Luke 10:17-20)

Message Summary

Praying is not an aspect of spiritual life that is separate from missions or even a part of missions that should be differentiated from "going." Jesus' life indicated that God's strategy for missions begins with and is bound with prayer. Each time that Jesus broadened the circle of involvement in His mission—from His own public ministry to sending His own followers—prayer was abounding as an essential point. In fact, the New Testament is full of admonishments to cry out to God for witnesses to boldly proclaim the gospel as well as for God to open minds, hearts, and opportunities for the gospel to advance. Christ commands those who labor for the gospel and those who pray for others who labor for the gospel to continue in a necessary posture of prayer. Laborers must pray for complete dependence upon Christ, for focus on the task at hand, for a mind set upon God instead of the world, and for boldness to model and to proclaim the gospel.

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?).

- Throughout Luke, prayer was an essential role of sending out laborers for God's mission. Although God can and will work through prayer to reveal details of how He is specifically calling us, how do we sometimes use "prayer" as an excuse for inaction in God's mission?
- How can we pray intently for direction while not passively waiting to get involved with God's mission?
- How does Jesus' admonishment to His disciples to pray for more laborers indicate that His followers have a responsibility to engage God in urging His power in the accomplishment of His mission on earth?
- How does prayer show a relationship between prayer and God's sovereignty?
- Why can a prideful reliance on ourselves show a diminished view of God's sovereignty?
- How can lazy fatalism in light of God's sovereignty reveal a diminished view of our responsibility in God's mission?
- Jesus used a phrase for "pray earnestly" that gives the meaning of crying out to God because of our own insufficiency. How does this definition impact our understanding of what it means to pray to God in light of His calling? How does it inform the necessity of prayer in our lives?
- What attitudes can get in the way of our ability to "pray earnestly" as Jesus commanded? How can we address those attitudes?
- What does it mean about our desire to hold onto our home, friends, family, children, and others when we pray for the Lord to raise up laborers?

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- Why are we often scared to pray for laborers to go to the hard places? What does this fear reveal about us?
- A repeating theme in the New Testament regarding proclamation of the gospel is that of fear and our need for boldness. Why must we attack our tendency toward fear with prayers for boldness?
- Verse 3 initially may seem unsettling to Jesus' followers. But how does the phrase "I am sending you" provide a sense of security for those who are being sent out among those who do not believe?
- Why is it important to consistently remember who is sending us on this mission? How can we mentally engage in the battle to keep our focus on the one who sent us?
- In verse 20, how does Jesus describe success? Why must we remember that happy endings, safety, and large numbers of conversions do not always describe success in God's plan?
- How can we encourage those who are deeply involved in insecurity and struggles as they are serving God in hard-to-reach places?
- This week, how will you live out what you learned from this passage and sermon?

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: God has determined that prayer would be a primary means of resourcing active workers as well as mobilizing more workers in the announcement of His glory among the nations. Harvesting is hard work, even when there are others helping. The field is massive with very few workers in comparison to help reap the great harvest. Instead of praying for an easier job, Jesus told us to pray for more laborers. These two ministries go hand-in-hand. Pray for God to use the next few weeks to teach us how to pray. Pray for God to raise up laborers from among us to take His gospel to the nations. Pray for all those who are visiting to be impacted by the need for involvement and to cease simply watching and join our church in God's mission.*
- *For Our City: This week we are praying for the outreach efforts of our brothers and sisters from The Church at Brook Hills who planted The Church at South East Lake. We're praying that God would grant them gospel conversations through their many efforts. We are also praying this week for Ben DeLoach, Pastor of The Church at South East Lake.*
- *For Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hill's long-term missionaries, Dwight and Mary Kay Martin, serving in Thailand. They are active members at The Church at Brook Hills for over 10 years. They currently run an organization that uses technology and research to resource the local Thai church with information how best to strategically reach those in their country who have never heard the gospel and provide disciple-making materials to equip the church to multiply. The Martins*

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are currently stateside visiting friends and family in Birmingham this month. We are also praying for our team serving in Ecuador this week.