

Small Group Guide Christian Faithfulness And Covenant Storytelling

The Church at Brook Hills,

Matt Mason

December 30, 2013

Psalms 78:1-8

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

Christian Faithfulness and Covenant-Storytelling

The Question of Faithfulness Psalm 78:1-8

- A question looms over the unfolding narrative of the Old Testament: how could Israel be so well loved and yet so wayward?
- Is faithfulness to God even possible?
- How can we and the generation after us pursue faithfulness to God in 2013?

We Faithfully Hear the Story: "Our Fathers Have Told Us"

- There's a vital relationship between what we hear and our present/future faithfulness to God.
- Faithfulness to God displays itself in an attitude of eagerness to hear, to retain, to remember, to respond to what is heard.

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- The call to “Give Ear” comes first because biblical faith doesn’t begin with an open mouth. It begins with an open ear.

We Faithfully Tell the Story: “We Will Not Hide Them from Their Children”

- Faithfulness to God is demonstrated not only in our being hearers but also heralds of the Covenant Story – the story of the rescuing power of God in Christ.
- Multi-generational faithfulness is a community effort.

“Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ through the gospel.” (1 Cor 4:15)

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” (1 Cor 15:3-4)

- The heart of Paul’s message was the Story of the Covenant with its central Character, Jesus Christ, and His central work: living a righteous life, dying a substitutionary death, and rising from the dead so that any who turn from sin and trust Him alone become eternal objects of the mercy and blessing of God.

“And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.” (Judges 2:10)

They Faithfully Tell the Story: “They Arise and Tell Them to Their Children”

Message Summary

God has chosen to give His covenant people His truth in the context of a Story. Many times throughout the history of God’s people, He encourages them to remember the story of what He has done. The Bible expresses the story of God’s work to redeem and to deliver His people from their sin. An essential relationship exists between hearing this message and faithfully proclaiming it. God desires that His work be remembered and recounted among His people. The centerpiece of God’s Story is the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. As the church, we should be eager to regularly hear God’s story and respond to what we have heard. We transition from being hearers of the Word to heralds of the Word by telling the next generation and the whole world about God and His Story.

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?).

- Psalm 78 teaches us the importance of remembering God’s Story. Often, we have the tendency to view the Bible as a series of disjointed stories. In a few short sentences, how would you express the basic premise or storyline of the Bible? Why is it important to know that the Bible tells one story with Jesus at the center? How does this help us reflect upon and share our faith?

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- Psalm 78:1 gives us a command to hear God's Word. Why is it important to diligently hear from God in His Word? Are you regularly hearing from God in this way? How can you cultivate habits now that allow you to hear from God more over the next few days, weeks, and months?
- Do you see a correlation between hearing from God in the reading and teaching of His Word and living faithfully before God? How does faithful hearing of God's story lead to faithful living? What hinders the pursuit of faithfulness in your life?
- Psalm 78 describes covenant storytelling as telling of "the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done" (v. 4) as well as teaching His commandments. As a small group, rehearse for each other the Lord's works both in Scripture as well as how He has worked in your own life. Does reflecting on God's action in your life inspire faithfulness? Praise God for His faithfulness!
- Pastor Matt talked about the dangers of pragmatism (seeing is believing) and romanticism (feeling is believing). In opposition to seeing and feeling, the Bible stresses hearing. What are the dangers of pragmatism and romanticism? Do you tend to err towards one of these ideas? Why is it more important to listen?
- Read Psalm 78:3-4. Hearing God's Word should lead to sharing His Word. Who in your life needs to hear God's Story? How can you begin to share it with them this week?
- We have been redeemed into community. Are you actively seeking to teach God's story to the next generation? Who are people from the next generation in your life whom you can invest in? How can you share God's Story with them? How are you equipping the next generation and those around you to tell God's Story?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. What does Paul say is the most important part of God's Story? What elements are part of the story?
- Read Psalm 78:7-8. God desires that we place our hope in Him. How do we practically place our hope in God? What is the result of not placing your hope in God?
- Read Deuteronomy 6:4-12. What does God emphasize in this passage? How can we orient our lives, activities, and conversations around remembering God's story and telling it to others?
- Read Deuteronomy 6:20-25. What is the result of hearing and telling God's story?
- In your life right now, are you simply a hearer of God's Word or are you a herald? What specific characteristics or instances guided your personal assessment? Are you allowing God's Story to stop with you, or are you relaying this Story to others?
- Pray with your small group for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to share God's story of salvation.

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)

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- *Church:* Praise God for choosing us to be a part of His Story. Thank Him for His Word and for the Bible, through which we learn of His Story and who He is. Pray for the Spirit to convict each of us about our role in proclaiming the Story of God to the next generation and the greater world around us. Ask God to reveal to us the potential each of our lives holds, especially in relation to making Him known. Pray for this new year to be marked by the spread of God's Word from our individual lives as well as our corporate life as a church. Please with God to keep us from losing His Story amidst the distractions of this world.
- *Local:* This week we are praying for ministry to residents at East Lake House. East Lake House is an income-based living center for adults ages 55-90 and for others with disabilities, located in the East Lake area of Birmingham. Members from Brook Hills lead regular Bible studies and fellowship times with the residents living there. We are also praying for True Vine Baptist Church and Ralph Garth, Pastor.
- *Global:* This week we are praying for Brook Hills Mid-Termer Michelle N. Michelle serves as a teacher at a local international school in Central Asia. There she engages children from different countries with the gospel through education. Michelle has been at her school for almost two years and has a unique opportunity to teach and influence children from around the world. Please join us in praying for Michelle this week. We are also praying for our short-term team serving in East Asia.