

## Small Group Guide

### TESTIMONY TO THE RESURRECTION

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*March 31, 2013*

*John 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**

#### **TESTIMONY TO THE RESURRECTION**

John 20

*Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb.*

*Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.*

*John 20:1-10*

#### **Others' Testimonies...**

*But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said*

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*to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).  
John 20:11-16*

I was hurting, and He gave me hope.

*Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."  
John 20:24-29*

I was doubting, and He showed me truth.

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.  
John 20:30-31*

I was dead, and He brought me to life.

#### **Your Testimony...**

I turn away from Jesus in my life.

I trust in Jesus as my Lord.

### *Digging Deeper*

Was anyone in your small group able to bring any unbelieving friends or family members with them to a worship gathering this week? If so how did they respond? What questions did they have? Were the people in the group able to continue weaving threads since the worship gathering? How can the rest of the group continue to pray for these people as they continue to weave gospel threads?

Many people in our culture who do not follow Jesus often attend worship gatherings on Easter. How can believers use this week as an opportunity to weave threads? Who are those in your life who may have an increased receptivity to the gospel message this week in light of Easter? Pray that the Holy Spirit would continue to work in the heart and lives of those who were presented with the reality of the resurrection in Easter gatherings this week.

Consider using part of your time this week to review the five gospel threads. How well do the people in your group know them? How comfortable do they feel sharing each thread with others? Sharing the gospel involves continual effort. Check in with each member in your group or consider breaking into small groups of three or four. How have their gospel weaving opportunities gone over the last few weeks? Is there anyone

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that is particularly struggling? Has anyone added names to their list that someone else in the group can begin to pray for as well?

How are those in your small group doing with memorizing the Scripture associated with each thread? If you were to give them a blank sheet of paper, how many of the verses would they be able to recall from memory? If there are people who have done particularly well at this discipline, could they offer some guidance to the rest of the group? Encourage your small group to remain vigilant in memorizing Scripture.

The sermon this week focused on testimonies to the resurrection. The resurrection is an objective historical reality. This reality has numerous ramifications for all of our lives. Many who do not believe in the reality of the resurrection place the burden of proof on believers. Lead your small group to consider common objections to the resurrection. How would you answer each of the following objections?

- It was not actually Jesus on the cross, just a man that looked a lot like Him.
- Jesus did not die but was only hurt really badly.
- Jesus fainted and was unconscious, so people thought He was dead.
- The tomb was not empty, the disciples went to the wrong tomb, or the disciples stole His body.
- The disciples were only delusional and hallucinating when they saw Jesus.

John records several testimonies to the resurrection among early believers.

- I was hurting, and He gave me hope.
- I was doubting, and He showed me truth.
- I was dead, and He brought me to life.

Most of people in your small group likely identify with at least one, if not all, of these. How can we begin to incorporate these truths into our own gospel stories? Every follower of Christ has their own testimony to the resurrection. How does their story reflect the hope, truth, and life available to all who believe in Jesus? Do the people in your small group identify with Mary or Thomas? What Scriptures, events, or people lead them to consider the reality of the resurrection?

### *Message Summary*

Pastor David's Easter message focused on the resurrection account found in John 20. In this passage, the Apostle John presents the reaction of several people to the reality of the resurrection. Through John 20, we also see that Jesus gives us hope when we are hurting, He shows us truth when we doubt, and He brought us to life while we were dead. The burden of proof for the reality of the resurrection lies with each person, for Christ does not call us to blind faith but to a reasonable faith based on truth. The key question for every person is whether or not they believe that Jesus is *their* Lord and God, and as we consider our own testimony to the power of the resurrection, each person should question whether they are turning *away* from Jesus or turning *to* 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?).

- How did the reality of Jesus' resurrection spread throughout the whole world? How does it continue to spread today?
- The reality of Easter is the resurrection. This is not resuscitation. Why is the historical fact of resurrection so important? How does this idea make Christianity distinct from all other religions?

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- Pastor David mentioned several different types of evidence to the resurrection. What are they? Why is it important that we be able to reasonably defend our faith? How would you address someone who doubted the historical validity of the resurrection?
- How has the resurrection given you hope personally? How can you weave the hope that is available to each of us in Christ into how you sew gospel threads?
- Read John 20:11-16. What threads of the gospel are present in Mary Magdalene's testimony to the resurrection?
- In what ways does the power of the resurrection give hope to the hurting?
- The resurrection of Jesus is an objective truth. How would you respond to someone who saw belief in Christ as a matter of subjective opinion?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:17-19. If the resurrection is not true, how should the world view Christians?
- What are the different beliefs of people who deny the resurrection? How are each of these objections implausible?
- How does the reality of the resurrection demand obedience to each of Jesus' commands?
- Read John 20:24-29. Jesus does not call us to blind faith. How did Jesus reach out to Thomas? How did Jesus respond to Thomas' doubts? What doubt did you have before coming to faith in Jesus?
- Do you know anyone who is currently struggling with doubts about Jesus? How can you make yourself available to those people in your life this week? How can you come alongside someone who wrestles with doubt?
- Read John 20:30-31. How does the Bible define belief? How is the Christian understanding of belief different from every other major world religion?
- What is the distinction between intellectual belief in Christ and being a follower of Christ? How is it possible to know all the facts about Christ, but stop short of actually following Him?
- How would you begin to reach out to someone who has only an intellectual belief in Jesus?
- How should the reality of the resurrection affect how you live each day?

### **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)**

- *Church: Praise God for sovereignly orchestrating His plan for salvation. Ask for Him to embolden us to stand as witnesses of the gospel. Pray for His strength to endure our own sufferings as we identify with Christ. Pray for many around the world to hear the story of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and come to confess as the centurion did that He is truly the Son of God. Pray that God would use the truth of His resurrection*

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*to bring many to Christ who will be gather with us this week. Ultimately, pray we will all maximize our opportunity to weave gospel threads which week as our culture embraces the celebration of Easter.*

- *Local: This week we are praying for the kickoff of our new Bible Club for kids in Marks Village Public Housing Community on Sunday afternoons beginning Sunday, April 7. We are also praying for Greater New Antioch Baptist Church, Ensley, and E.O. Jackson, Jr., Pastor.*
- *Global: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Church Planters Chris and Leah, serving in East Asia. Christ and Leah are serving among a Muslim unreached people group in East Asia. There they will intentionally work and share the gospel in order to see disciples formed and the church established. The people group they work among are very difficult to reach with the gospel. Join us as we pray for God to make His name known among Muslims in East Asia.*