

Small Group Guide THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. Jim Shaddix

May 26, 2013

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

GETTING STARTED

Welcome – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

Looking Back – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

Looking Up – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives: Pray for all leaders in our church, especially our elders, as they seek to shepherd us well. Pray for the potential new elders as they prepare to take on this weighty responsibility. Ask God to protect our leaders, to keep them from temptation and above reproach. Ask Him to grant them great grace, wisdom, and humility in their leadership. Pray they would be worthy of imitation. Pray we will all submit to their leadership while also providing them with appropriate accountability.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week we were praying for the ministries coordinated by NorthStar Youth Ministries (www.northstarym.org) serving in the Smithfield Community near Legion Field. We are especially praying for Camp NorthStar, a six-week summer outreach hosted at Birmingham-Southern College. We are also praying for Trinity Baptist Church (Smithfield) and John E. King, Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for our partner Ramesh Landge and the Cooperative Outreach of India ministries (COI). COI has been a partner for a*

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number of years and will host a Short-Term team from The Church at Brook Hills this week. COI focuses on training pastors for church planting engaging unreached peoples through community projects, and serving the poor through multiple ministries. Join us this week as we pray for Ramesh and his staff at COI. We are also praying for our Short-Term teams serving in the Middle East in India.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

We should view our leaders as...

- Faithful stewards in the service of the gospel
 - Church leaders are loyal to Christ alone. (1-2)
 - Church leaders are looking for God's approval alone. (3-5)

- Foolish spectacles for the sake of the gospel
 - Church leaders teach the humility of the cross. (6-8; cf. Acts 14:22; Romans 8:16-17; Colossians 1:24; 2 Timothy 3:12)
 - Church leaders trust in the power of the cross. (9-10)
 - Church leaders live out the death of the cross. (11-13; cf. Isaiah 53:2-3; Mark 8:34-38; Philippians 3:10)

- Spiritual fathers to the children of the gospel
 - Church leaders admonish their people in love. (14-15)
 - Church leaders give their people examples to follow. (16-17)
 - Church leaders discipline their people for righteousness. (18-21; cf. Hebrews 12:5-11)

Message Summary

This week's message continues our time in 1 Corinthians and focuses on the cross and leadership within the church. The ministry of church leaders is weighty and often thankless work. Church leaders are called to be faithful stewards in service of the gospel who are loyal to Christ alone. They willingly make themselves spectacles for the sake of the gospel and become spiritual fathers to the children of the gospel. Leadership in the church is a good and God-ordained gift. We should seek to follow their example and obey their instruction as they lead us toward Christlikeness.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

What background do the people in your group have with leaders in the church? Have they ever given any thought to biblical church leadership at all? While church government is not a major doctrine like the Trinity or

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the authority, it does represent a second tier issue that affects Christian life and practice. While the Church at Brook Hills is governed by a multiplicity of elders, many in your group may have come from a church or a Christian tradition that practices a different form of leadership. Do not take for granted that there may be new Christians in attendance that have little experience with church leadership. How does the bible speak about leadership in the church? What passages in scripture inform our view of how the church should be governed? If there are people interested in reading more about this issue, books like *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever and *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches* by John S. Hammett have helpful information for thinking about church leadership.

In a local church the size of our faith family it is hard to care for every member, this is one of the reasons our elders felt led to walk through 1 Corinthians. However another inevitable effect result of the size of our faith family is that many people may not personally know any leaders in the church. Do the members in your small group feel vertically connected to our pastors and leaders? If they don't, then why don't they? How could you as a small group leader help in this way? One way to connect with leaders in our faith family is to serve in a particular area. Have all the members in your small group found an area to serve? How could you help them better connect to life of our faith family? Do they know what their spiritual gifts are? How could they use the unique way that God has gifted them in service to the church?

As Paul notes in 1 Corinthians's chapter 4, being a leader in the church is an incredible privilege and responsibility. As members of our faith family we should love support and encourage the men that God raises up to serve as pastors and leaders within His church. How could you begin to better express your love and appreciation for the leaders in our faith family? There are many ways, but here are a few suggestions:

- **Pray for them.** Pray that our leaders would exhibit lives of discipline and be above reproach. The world is a perilous place, and we should be on our knees to call out to God on behalf of these brothers. Pray that they would be full of the Holy Spirit to do the work of ministry. Pray that the Lord would guard them from temptation, and allow them to be leaders in their home. Pray for their families when they must take time away from them to serve our faith family. Ask them how to better pray for them. If you know that one of our pastors is speaking at a conference or traveling, consider taking time to ask them how you could pray for them specifically.
- **Encourage them.** The task of ministry is too often accompanied by discouragement. Take the time to regularly encourage our leaders. If God uses a particular sermon or teaching to work in your life, consider staying around after the worship gathering to say so. Consider writing a note or sending an email telling an elder you appreciate all that they do. Introduce yourself, and let them know you are thankful for all that they do.
- **Obey them.** Lovingly affirm and obey faithful teaching. God has appointed the office of elder to lead and shepherd His church. Our elders are regularly and faithfully before the Lord in prayer on behalf of our faith family. Submit to their leadership under the Holy Spirit by obeying them. Do not simply sit and take in information. Allow their teaching and teaching to motivate you towards obedience and action.
- **Support them.** The bible regularly encourages us to support the work of ministry through tithes and offerings. The local church is supported through the tithes and offerings of its members. What are your giving habits? Do they reflect a love and appreciation for our leaders? Ministry is often time consuming could you support our leaders by taking them a meal or giving them a night off with their families? Consider praying and asking God if there is some way you and your small group could better support the leaders in our faith family.

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

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Group Discussion & Application

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?).

- Why should our fondness or preferences for certain elders, pastors, or teachers in the church never lead us to criticize or compare them to other leaders? How does favoritism hurt God's purpose in appointing leadership in the local church?
- Chapter 4 is about leadership but it is written to all of us in the church. How does leadership affect every member of the church? Why is maintaining a biblical view of church leadership vitally important to the health of a church?
- What does Paul mean when he says that leaders are stewards of the mystery of God in verse 1? What does this designation reveal to us about the incredible responsibility of leaders in the church?
- Leaders should be loyal to Christ alone. Do you actively pray for our leaders that that would be true of their lives? Could you identify one or two leaders in our church that you could intentionally pray for this week? Praise God for faithful pastors and elders in our faith family!
- What is the humility of the cross? Does this humility mark your own life? Read Philippians 2:5-11. What does this teach us about the humility of Jesus? What is the reward of Jesus' humility?
- Read 1 Corinthians 4:9-10. What types of words does Paul use to describe in these verses? How does this cut into our own sense of pride? Why are we so often, tempted to honor ourselves while following in the footsteps of servant leaders?
- Jesus gives a description of the type of life that should characterize his followers in Mark 8:34-38. How closely does your life line up with Jesus' description? What thoughts, attitudes, or actions might you need to repent of to follow Jesus more closely?
- There is a dangerous tendency in the church that would tell us that because Christ was suffered and humiliated that we do not have to be? How does this type of thinking undercut the gospel and the witness of the bible?
- Are you tempted to put certain leaders on a pedestal, or do you seek to imitate the life and faith of Godly leaders?
- Paul gives the example of a parent – child relationship to describe leaders in the church. How is that image helpful? How could you use this image to explain church leadership to non-believers or new Christians?
- Why must we maintain a healthy relationship with Godly discipline? What is the relationship between discipline and discipleship?
- As our elders are seeking to think about what church discipline looks like at the Church at Brook Hills, take a few moments to pray for our leaders as they seek to be faithful to the noble and God-honoring task of Church discipline.