

Small Group Guide THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE (PART 2)

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

June 9, 2013

1 Corinthians 5:1-6:11

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 we will all diligently seek the Spirit's guidance as we implement a practice of church discipline within our faith family. Pray for our Elders as they lead us in practicing church discipline and model it for us. Pray for humility, conviction, grace, love, and repentance to be present within each of us as we practice and respond to discipline. Praise God for the loving discipline He uses to form us more into His likeness. Ask God to help us settle disputes with one another without having to seek mediation outside of the faith. Pray church discipline will result in great glory for God and greater gospel impact.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for the ministry of Hearts in Hands (heartsinhands.org). Hearts in Hands is a ministry coordinated by Brook Hills members who seek to meet physical needs for elderly, disabled, hospice patients, and widows who do not have financial resources or family support. We are also praying for Shades Mountain Baptist Church and Danny Wood, Pastor.*

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- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Long-Term Missionaries Josip and Kelly Debeljuh. Josip and Kelly serve with their five children in Josip's home country of Croatia. There they work in their community to do evangelism and disciple new believers. Josip runs a basketball league and uses sports to engage young men with the gospel. He also leads a weekly Bible study for these men who are interested in the gospel and who are being saved. Kelly teaches art classes and homeschools their children. Join us this week as we pray for the Debeljuh family. We are also praying for our short-term team, led by Melissa Cantley, as they serve in New York City.*

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE (PART 2)

1 Corinthians 5:1-6:11

What About Church Disputes?

- The Overall Problem...
 - Christians were denying the wisdom they had in the church (6:1-5).
 - Christians were destroying the witness they had in the world (6:6).
 - Christians were disobeying the will of God in the gospel (6:7-8).
 - We sacrifice our rights to show the love of Christ (1 Cor. 4:12-13; Mat. 5:39-40; 1 Thess. 5:15).
 - We strive for reconciliation with one another in Christ (Rom. 12:1-21).
- The General Principles...
 - We recognize in this text that Christians should settle disputes with other Christians in the church outside of court.
 - We remember from other texts that Christians should subject themselves to governing authorities for our good (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14; Acts 24:2-4; 25:10-11).

Discipline, Disputes, and The Church at Brook Hills...

- Let's obey with the love of Christ (5:1-2; 6:1-8).
 - Let's do church discipline not only because we love righteousness, but also because we long for a brother or sister's restoration (Jas. 5:19-20).
 - Let's settle church disputes not only because we have a responsibility to do this, but also because we desire reconciliation through this (Eph. 4:1-3).
 - Let's be humble (Col. 3:13; Prov. 19:11).
 - Let's be biblical.
 - Is there unrepentant sin that is dishonoring God (5:11; 6:9-10)?
 - Is there unrepentant sin that is denying the gospel (1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18)?
 - Is there unrepentant sin that is detrimental to a brother or sister (Heb. 10:24-31)?
 - Is there unrepentant sin that is harming the unity of the church (Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:9-11)?
 - Is there unrepentant sin that is hurting the witness of the church (1 Cor. 10:32; Phil. 2:14-15; 1 Thess. 4:12)?
 - Let's be pure (Mat. 7:1-5).
 - Examine your life.
 - Examine your motives.

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- Let's be prayerful (2 Tim. 2:24-26).
- Let's be quiet before others (Eph. 4:29-32).
- Let's be quick to act (Mat. 5:23-26).
- Let's be gentle to others (Gal. 6:1a).
- Let's be careful ourselves (Gal. 6:1b).
- Let's be intentional (Mat. 18:15-17)...
 - Private Correction
 - Small Group Clarification
 - Church Admonishment
 - Church Excommunication
 - A clear change in relationship (5:9, 11; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 3:10; 2 John 10; remember also Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Cor. 7:10-16; Eph. 6:1-3; 1 Tim. 5:8; 1 Pet. 3:1-2).
 - A continual call (and continual prayer) for repentance (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:19).
- Let's trust in the authority of Christ (5:3-5; 6:2; Mat. 18:18).
 - Let's pray according to His promise (Mat. 18:19).
 - Let's be confident in His presence (Mat. 18:20).
- Let's honor the cross of Christ (5:6-8).
 - We want a Christ who pardons, but do we want a Christ who purifies?
 - When we tolerate unrepentant sin in the church, we trample on the sacrifice of Christ.
- Let's celebrate new life in Christ (5:9-13; 6:9-11).
 - Realize...
 - Who you once were.
 - What He once did.
 - Who you now are.
 - What you will be.
 - Rejoice...
 - The death of Christ on the cross transforms our lives and relationships in the church.

Message Summary

Following last week's sermon that defined church discipline and why it should be practiced, this week's message deals with the practical implications of addressing unrepentant sin and disputes among believers within the fellowship of the church. Christians should not be complacent about sin among its members but should be personally zealous for the purity of everyone in the church. When we have disputes with other brothers and sisters, we should handle these matters within the church without involving civil authorities, except in extreme cases. Out of love for the truth and love for each other, we lovingly and gently practice church discipline.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

This week's message builds off of last week's sermon. Spend a few moments at the beginning of your time together to review what you discussed last week. Discuss the following questions: What is church discipline? Does everyone in the group have a solid understanding of what it is? What are the four steps involved? What passages in Scripture inform our understanding of church discipline? Why should the goal of each step of the process be reconciliation?

1 Corinthians 6:1-11 deals with disputes among believers, for the believers in Corinth were taking each other to court. Remind the group that Paul is not saying that public courts are inherently bad or corrupt. Rather, he exhorts the believers to handle their disputes with other believers within the fellowship of the church. Ask the

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group why Paul would discourage believers from going to court with each other. How do disputes among believers destroy the witness of the church in the world? How do they ultimately hurt the progress of the gospel? How do the people in your small group handle their own disputes with other believers? Do they first rely on the wisdom of the church, or do they consult non-believers? Are their conflict resolution strategies similar or different from the world's methods? How are they similar or different? How does reconciliation glorify God?

Consider passages like John 13:34-35 and Matthew 5:39-40. According to Jesus, how should believers relate to one another? What types of actions and attitude should characterize our relationships with other believers? Is this love evident among those in your group? If an outside observer were to examine the relationships among your small group, would they see a people who love each other? Discuss how you would handle a dispute among members of your group. Clarify the process for how your group will respond to conflict with regard to any members in the group.

Remind the group that church discipline is used to address *unrepentant* sin in the life of a believer. Use the five questions from the outline to think through different types of sin in the life of a believer. Challenge the individuals in the group to use these questions for reflection in their personal time with God this week.

- Is there unrepentant sin that is dishonoring God?
- Is there unrepentant sin that is denying the gospel?
- Is there unrepentant sin that is detrimental to a brother or sister?
- Is there unrepentant sin that is harming the unity of the church?
- Is there unrepentant sin that is hurting the witness of the church?

What might these types of unrepentant sin look like in the life of a church or in an individual believer? How can we guard against these? Often we harbor sin that may not be evident to others, but all sin is obvious to God. Is there someone in your life who knows what your besetting sins are and who can hold you accountable? If they have not already, encourage everyone to develop accountability with someone in the group or outside the group with whom they can confess their sin and share their struggles. Help the group to understand that true accountability is more than simply telling another person what you have done wrong. Biblical accountability does involve confession, but it also includes speaking truth to each other, encouraging each other, praying for each other, bearing one another's burdens, showing hospitality to one another, and pointing each other to the hope of the gospel.

Discuss church excommunication with the group. Ask what thoughts or connotations come to mind when they hear the phrase "excommunication." Are their ideas biblically grounded? Has anyone seen church discipline taken to this step? How is the practice of church excommunication God-honoring? How would you explain the purpose and practice of church discipline to someone who is new to the faith? How would you explain it to a child or to a non-believer? For those who have children, what questions can they ask and what examples can they use in discussing this text and this sermon with their child?

Review Matthew 15-17. In Matthew 18:17, Jesus says to treat the unrepentant person as a "gentile and a tax collector." What might this look like today? Discuss with the group the difference between relationships with those who are inside the church and those who are outside the church. How are their relationships with non-believers different than their relationships with believers? Remind those present that a Christian's primary responsibility with those who are outside of the church is to share the gospel with the hope that they will be reconciled to God and be welcomed into the fellowship of the church. How does this relate to church discipline and, specifically, to church excommunication?

Does anyone in the group know someone who is no longer in the fellowship of the church because of church discipline? How can you pray for these men and women and seek restoration and reconciliation with them? Is there someone whom you can reach out to over the next week? Conclude your time together by praying for these people. Pray that God would graciously reveal Himself to them and bring them back into the fold.

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NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

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?).

- First century Corinth was a litigious society, and legal proceedings were as much about entertainment as they were selfish gain. How is modern American culture similar to the Corinthian culture Paul addressed? Why do we so often rely on civil court to settle our disputes rather than institutions like the church and the family? In our disputes with other believers, how can we rely on the wisdom of the church? When a dispute arises with another believer, how should we respond? How do we know when a dispute should be taken to court?
- What does it mean to sacrifice our rights to show the love of Christ? Is there a situation in your life where you could sacrifice your own rights and preferences to show this love to another brother and sister this week?
- Paul does not mention the reason the Corinthians were going to court. To Paul, the reason for the lawsuit is immaterial. Rather, he suggests that Christians should always seek to settle their disputes within the church. How can we promote a church culture where handling our disputes this way is not the exception but the rule?
- Read Romans 13:1-7. How are Christians to relate to governing bodies that exercise authority over them? Are there limitations to this? What should the relationship between the church and human institutions such as elected officials, and civil courts?
- If we are not addressing disputes with other Christians or practicing church discipline, how are we dishonoring God? Are you currently dishonoring God in this way? If so, what steps can you take to correct this over the next week?
- Read Proverbs 19:11 and Colossians 3:13. What should our attitude be as we seek to practice church discipline?
- As we seek to obey these commands regarding church discipline, why is it crucial that we know God's Word? Are you regularly seeking to know God through the study of Scripture? What role does prayer have in the practice of church discipline?
- Read Matthew 7:1-5. Why do we need to examine our own life before lovingly confronting another brother or sister? Do you make it a regular practice to confess sin before God and others? Do you ask yourself difficult questions to root out sin in your own life? Spend some time in prayer over the next week asking God to reveal areas of disobedience in your own life. Praise God for His forgiveness!
- Why is it important that we zealously guard the character of our brothers and sisters as we confront one another in church discipline? How is gossip dishonoring to God? How does it affect the practice of church discipline?
- The church is a faith family. When one of our brothers or sisters goes astray, God loves us enough to send a whole family after the one lost person. How is church admonishment a great example of God's love? Why should this only happen in the presence of members and not on a Sunday morning where there are likely to be lots of guests?
- What is the difference between someone who has never followed Christ and someone who has been excommunicated? How does Scripture address the necessary change in relationship between the church and those who have been excommunicated from the fellowship of the church? What might this look like for a brother or sister whose spouse or child is removed from the church?
- Read Matthew 18:18-19. How does Jesus' promise in these verses compel us to practice church discipline and restoration? On whose authority and strength do we practice church discipline and settle disputes between fellow believers?
- Are we content to have a Christ who forgives but who does not purify? What role does personal holiness have in the life of a believer? What place does it have in your own life?