

Small Group Guide

THE CROSS AND THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE

The Church at Brook Hills

Dennis Blythe

August 11, 2013

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

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: Praise God for His plan for the redemption of His people He has been enacting since the beginning of time. Ask Him to help us all resist temptation to sin. Pray especially that we will flee from idolatry in all its kinds. Repent of your pride, which is idolatry of self. Ask God to develop Christ-like humility in each and every one of us. Pray we would each be worthy of imitation as we follow after Christ.*
- *Pray for Our City: Over the past decade, Birmingham has experienced the second fastest percentage growth of internationals of all the cities in the United States. This week, we are praying for our Hispanic Ministry's outreach to the Hispanic community in Birmingham. We are also praying for Valleydale Baptist Church and Jason Dees, Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week, we are praying for Brook Hills Long-Term Missionaries, Greg and Kathy Brown. Greg and Kathy, along with their two daughters Hannah and Haleigh, serve with OneWay Ministries in Guatemala. Join*

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us this week as we pray for the Brown Family. We are also praying for our teams serving in the Middle East.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

The Cross and the Christian's Life 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Let's Review...

- We are to limit our **liberty** for the sake of weaker believers.
- We are to relinquish our **rights** for the sake of the gospel.
- We are to run the race of **winning** others to faith in Christ.

Is it possible, as a believer who has been blessed by God and even used by God, to come to a point where I am no longer qualified to run the race?

Let's Hear the Passionate Warning (v. 12)

- Bottom line: We must avoid doing anything that hinders our **mission** in this world.
- If you preach the message of Jesus Christ, but live a life in **opposition** to it, you are a hindrance to the **gospel**.

Let's Realize We Are Blessed as People of God (vv. 1-5)

- The people of God THEN experienced...
 - God's **Presence**
 - God's **Power**
 - The Baptism of Moses
 - God's **Provision**
- As the people of God NOW...
 - We experience God's **direction** and **protection** in our lives.
 - We have been **delivered** from eternal death.
 - We have been baptized into **Christ**.
 - We are sustained by spiritual **bread** and spiritual **water**.
 - We have the **spirit** of Christ living inside of us.

Let's Avoid the Perils of Sin (vv. 6-11)

- The desire for evil things (Numbers 11)
 - Takeaway: the Christian who **controls** his body and his lifestyle remains qualified to run the race.
- Idolatry (Exodus 32)
 - An idol is anybody or anything that has our love and loyalty ahead of God, and as a result decreases our **dependence** on Him, our **desperation** for Him and our **devotion** to Him.
 - Takeaway: the Christian who has nothing in his life he desires more than **Jesus** remains qualified to run the race.
- Sexual immorality (Numbers 25)
 - Takeaway: the Christian who **flees** sexual immorality remains qualified to run the race.
- Putting God to the test (Numbers 21)
 - Takeaway: the Christian who refuses to bring God's **faithfulness** into question remains qualified to run the race.
- Grumbling (Numbers 16)
 - When believers grumble they **challenge** God's wisdom, grace, goodness, love, righteousness and sovereignty.

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- Takeaway: the Christian who possesses an attitude of **contentment** remains qualified to run the race.

Let's Embrace a Promise of Hope (v. 13)

- The experience of our temptation is **common** to all of us.
- The environment of our temptation is under God's **control**.
- The **escape** from our temptation is provided by God.

Message Summary

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul warns against spiritual arrogance, for membership in the family of God does not exclude Christ-followers from sin. To support his position, Paul describes how the Israelites experienced God's provision and presence as well as five particular sins they committed during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. In doing so, he cautions believers against becoming spiritually lazy, for when we depend on ourselves instead of on God and grow lax in abiding in Him, our exposure and resistance to temptation decreases. As Christ-followers, we must avoid doing anything that hinders our mission in this world and embrace the promise of hope we have in the One who enables us to faithfully face temptation.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Begin by reviewing what has been discussed in the previous two weeks with 1 Corinthians 8-9, specifically with regard to limiting our liberty and relinquishing our rights for the sake of the gospel. Highlight that the Corinthian believers had thought they were strong enough to be able to associate with unbelievers in their ceremonies and social activities and not be affected by it. They had become comfortable with their Christian liberty, but this comfort led to spiritual arrogance and to sinful actions, which affected weaker believers but also their own spiritual lives.

To the group, pose the question provided in the sermon outline: is it possible, as a believer who has been blessed by God and even used by God, to come to a point where I am no longer qualified to run the race? Identify what would potentially "disqualify" such a believer or keep them from being effective in sharing the gospel and ministering to others. Discuss the dangers associated with becoming a "comfortable" Christian as well as what happens in one's life to cause them to spiritually coast or plateau instead of grow. How can we avoid plateauing in our relationship with God? At a conference, one of our pastors, Dr. John Butterfield, had a woman in his session put on a straight jacket, and with it loosely secured, she eased into a cozy chair with someone fanning her and looking after her. Then he proclaimed to those in his session that this was unfortunately a picture of the church. The Christian life is not about us being comfortable, and most of the time, keeping the commands of Christ is highly uncomfortable. As believers, if we are pursuing comfort, that pursuit will become a straightjacket to us. It will prevent us from growing as a Christ-follower because we are looking out for our own self-interest instead of looking to Christ.

In discussing how we are blessed as people of God, questions might arise about the meaning of the phrases "baptized into Moses," "spiritual food," "spiritual drink," and "spiritual Rock." See the following explanations as an aid, but as you converse about what these phrases mean, be intentional in moving beyond obtaining information to learning why this is important and how it affects our lives today.

- **"Baptized into Moses"** – This does not mean that Moses baptized the Israelites. Paul uses baptism in a metaphorical sense and is not referring to a literal baptism. The generation of Israelites who escaped Egypt and walked across the parted sea experienced God's deliverance, and baptism

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provides for Christians a symbol or picture of God's provision of our salvation. After passing through the Red Sea, the Israelites went to Mt. Sinai where God established His covenant with the nation of Israel and made them His covenant people. For us, baptism is one way that we identify ourselves as Christ-followers, part of God's covenant community. This topic could easily segue into questions related to baptism, and don't take for granted that every person in your group has been baptized or understands the importance and significance of baptism, especially if they grew up in a different denomination or were unchurched. For more about the meaning and significance of baptism, see Pastor David's sermon "Baptism: Identification with the New Covenant" (March 22, 2009) on radical.net.

- **"Spiritual food" and "spiritual drink"** – The Israelites had experiences analogous to Christian baptism ("baptized into Moses") but also to the Lord's Supper ("spiritual food" and "spiritual drink"). All of the people in the wilderness with Moses experienced the same blessings from God. They received God's provisions of manna and water during their forty years of wilderness wanderings. God faithfully met the physical needs of His people in the wilderness, and He has faithfully met our greatest need – our need for a Savior – through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This could be a launching pad to rehearse how God has provided for the needs of His people throughout Scripture as well as how God has provided for the needs of the people in the small group. Remember the provision of the Lord and take time together to praise Him for His mercy and grace. Recounting His faithfulness to us in the past helps to grow our faith and trust in Him in the future.
- **"Spiritual Rock"** – Twice in the accounts of Israel's wilderness wanderings, we read of God providing water for His people using a rock (Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20:2-13). While we do not know if a physical rock literally traveled with the Israelites during their forty years in the wilderness, we do know that the rock implies God's continuing graciousness to His people in providing for them. He was with His people everywhere they went. When Paul states in 1 Corinthians 10:4 that "the Rock was Christ," he's not referring to a physical rock but to the divine source that supplied the needs of the people. Moses himself referred to God as a "Rock" (Dt. 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31), and this description of God communicates His stability and reliability. On this side of salvation history, we as Christ-followers have the Holy Spirit residing in us. We have the sustaining presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives 24/7. Discuss the role of the Holy Spirit and why we need the Holy Spirit to convict, to teach, and to guide us. John 14 and 16 are helpful passages in understanding the Holy Spirit's role in our lives.

In pointing out many of the similarities between the Corinthians and the Israelites of the Exodus, Paul demonstrates that the Corinthians are just as likely to disobey God as the Israelites were. Even with all of the blessings and miracles they had witness, "with most of them God was not pleased" (1 Cor. 10:5). Sometimes we read about people in Scripture and think, "How could they be so blind or ignorant, especially after what they had seen God do?" or "I wouldn't do that!" Ask if anyone in the group has thought such things in the past, and ask the group to describe the dangers associated with believing such thoughts. We are sinful human beings; therefore, there is no sin we are incapable of, even as Christ-followers.

Do we care about pleasing God? Do we desire to honor and respect Him with our hearts and with the way that we live? If so, then it is important to know what pleasing Him does and does not look like, and 1 Corinthians 10:5-11 explain particular actions that bring displeasure to God. In discussing the five perils of sin to avoid, be wary of spending a disproportionate amount of time reading the Old Testament context to the point that you know the story well but lack understanding of how to avoid such sin in your own life. Urge the group members to identify the peril with which they most struggle and to get to the root of this sin. How can they guard against temptation in this specific area? When temptation does come, what can they do to fight against it? How do we avoid these perils of sin? Encourage the group members to be as specific as possible. If the group is co-ed, this particular part of the discussion might be better if the men and women gather into smaller same-gender groups.

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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?).

- Is it possible, as a believer who has been blessed by God and even used by God, to come to a point where I am no longer qualified to run the race? Why or why not?
- Why is it a danger to become "comfortable" in the Christian life? How do we avoid this danger?
- In our lives, what could possibly hinder us from the mission God has given to us in this world? Our lives should match the message of the gospel. What does the world think and look like in each of the following areas: dating, marriage, parenting, time management, hobbies, consumerism, budgeting, and work? What should a Christian's life look like with regard to each of these areas? In what areas does our life not align with what Scripture teaches about these particular areas? What steps can we take for our lives to align with the gospel?
- Read 1 Corinthians 10:1. How did the people of God who lived during the leadership of Moses experience the presence of God? How can believers today experience God's presence?
- Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-2. What is the "baptism into Moses"? How is this significant? How does this relate to us today?
- 1 Corinthians 10:3-4 describes how God provided food, protection, and direction for the Israelites in the wilderness. Rehearse how God has provided for you at different times in your life. Together, offer praise to God for His faithfulness, even when we His people are unfaithful.
- Read 1 Corinthians 10:6 and Numbers 11. Paul instructs believers not to desire evil things as the Israelites did. In what ways did *they* desire evil? In what ways do *we* desire evil? How can we confront and fight against evil desires within us? Sometimes the things that we desire are not evil in themselves; it is the greatness of our desire for that person or thing compared to our lack of affection for God that constitutes the inordinacy. How do we foster an affection for God that is greater than our desire for anything or anyone else?
- How can we tell if we have made an idol of something or someone in our life? What types of idols do we worship in our culture? How do we guard against idolatry? Why does God despise our idolatry? Knowing He is jealous for the glory that He rightly deserves, why do we continue to sin by putting things and people before Him?
- Whether single or married, how can we safeguard ourselves against sexual temptation, particularly in what we look at, how we view others, and how we interact with them? Discuss the importance of emotional purity and how to avoid emotionally defrauding others. If we are to avoid even the appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22), how does this affect the way we interact with the opposite sex? What steps are you taking with your thoughts, your affections, and your actions to flee sexual temptation in your life?
- What does it mean to put God to the test? In what ways are we likely to do this? Why is it wrong to question God's His character? Why do we doubt His faithfulness? What is at the root of such doubt?
- Why is grumbling a sin? Grumbling communicates dissatisfaction with one's circumstances and with God. Why are we tempted to feel dissatisfaction and discontentment in life, particularly when we have been given so much by God? How do we develop contentment despite our circumstances? What has to change *in our hearts* in order for us to be content?
- Why does God allow us to be tempted? How can we be proactive now to prepare for temptation when it comes? How is God faithful in our temptation?