

Small Group Guide

THE CROSS AND THE CHRISTIAN'S WORK

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

August 25, 2013

1 Corinthians 10:31

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 good gift of work, which He designed for our good and His glory. Pray we will find delight in our work just as He does. Ask God to help us be good stewards of creation and developers of culture. Praise Christ for is sufficient work of salvation and freedom. Pray we will all use our freedom in Christ to love others and worship God through our work. Pray we will all work hard to advance the mission of God.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week we ask the church to pray for the advancement of the gospel among internationals across the Birmingham community. We are also praying for The People's Church at Oak Mountain and Todd McMichen, Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Jenny W. as we commission her out to serve in East Asia. Jenny is a physical therapist who is taking a position at a large hospital in East Asia. There she will be supervising the physical therapy department and training recent graduates. This came about as Jenny prayed and sought out career opportunities where she could use her skills in a place where there are many unreached*

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people groups. Join us this week as we send Jenny out and pray for her as she moves her life to East Asia.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

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1 Corinthians 10:31

The Gospel at Work...

- The Character of God...
 - God delights in work (Gen. 1-2; Ps. 104:10-31; Prov. 8:27-31; Jn. 16:8-11).
 - He works for us and He works through us.
 - God designed our work (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:15-17; Ex. 20:9).
 - By His grace, for our good, and for His glory.
- The Sinfulness of Man...
 - Work is a mark of human dignity (Gen. 1:26-30; Ps. 8).
 - We are stewards of creation.
 - We are developers of culture.
 - Work has been marred by human depravity (Gen. 3:16-19).
 - Though work was designed to be fulfilling, it is frustrating (Rom. 8:20-22).
 - Though work was designed to be purposeful, it feels pointless (Eccles. 1:2-3; 2:18-26).
 - Though work was designed to be selfless, it becomes selfish (Gen. 11:1-4).
 - Two primary distortions of work:
 - The idolatry of work...(Ex. 20:2-5; Ez. 14:3-7; Prov. 23:4; Mk. 10:17-31)
 - We overvalue work, thinking that it provides ultimate meaning.
 - We fail to see God's limits for our work.
 - We resist rest.
 - Idleness in work...(Prov. 6:6-11; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:6-15)
 - We undervalue work, thinking it has little to no meaning.
 - We fail to see God's purposes for our work.
 - We prioritize retirement.
 - The Sufficiency of Christ...(Matt. 11:28-30; Rom. 3:21-20; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:3-14)
 - Christ's work has secured our salvation (freeing us to rest in His work as the only superior work.)
 - Christ's work has secured our satisfaction (freeing us from the idolatry of work).
 - Christ's work has secured our significance (freeing us from idleness in work).
 - The Necessity of Faith...
 - We are free to worship God wholeheartedly as we work (Matt. 22:37-38; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-24).
 - Work competently (with excellence).
 - Work honorably (with integrity).
 - Work humbly (with respect).
 - Work eagerly (with joy).
 - We are free to love others selflessly in our work (Matt. 22:39-40; 1 Thess. 4:9-11).
 - Provide for your family.

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- Serve your co-workers and customers.
- Better our world.
- Care for the needy.
- We are free to trust God completely with our work (Prov. 16; Rom. 8:28-30).
 - Be confidence in His reign.
 - Be responsible with your rest.
 - Be focused on His reward.
- The Urgency of Eternity...
 - We are looking forward to a new earth...
 - Where everyone and everything will work perfectly (1 Cor. 15; Rev. 21).
 - We are living for the sake of eternity...
 - Work hard to adorn the gospel of God (Tit. 2:9-10).
 - Work strategically to advance the mission of God (Matt. 28:18-20).
 - Build meaningful relationships.
 - Weave gospel threads.
 - Engage unreached peoples.

Message Summary

God has created us to make His glory known in all nations, and our job is part of that plan. First Corinthians 10:31 instructs Christ-followers to do *all* things to the glory of God, and this verse informs how we do work. Foundationally, we must understand that God delights in work and has designed us for work, but work has been marred by human depravity. Two primary ways that sin's distortion manifests itself includes idolatry of work and idleness in work. However, Christ's work has secured our salvation, our satisfaction, and our significance. As a result, we are free to worship God wholeheartedly as we work, and we strive to live now for the sake of eternity, utilizing work as a means to advance the mission of God.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Begin by having everyone in the group tell what their current profession is. If the group includes students, have them tell what field they are studying and what they plan to do with their major. An option during the group time is to divide into smaller groups based on similar professions (lawyers in one group, homemakers in a group, etc.) in order to further discuss how they can build meaningful relationships, weave gospel threads, and engaged unreached peoples through their particular profession. These groups can also pray together for each other as they go to work this week.

For those who heard the sermon, what was the biggest takeaway gleaned? Use this question as a launch pad for discussing God's design for work.

Read Genesis 1:26-28; 2:5, 15-20. What work did God assign Adam and Eve in the Garden? Genesis 1 describes God's mandates to have dominion over creation and to multiply and fill the earth. Exercising dominion involves leading others, protecting those under your authority, and caring for God's creation. Ask what is practically involved in stewarding creation and developing culture. Genesis 2 depicts the setting in which God placed man and woman to fulfill His commands and the unique callings He gave to men and women. How does God's design for man and woman give significance and purpose for each life? As image-bearers, He created us to reflect Him and to represent Him on this earth. In Genesis 1, God lovingly issues the creation mandates to Adam and Eve so they and we would know how to do this well. Our gender, personalities, talents, experiences, interests, training, spiritual gifts, and role all play into how He wants us to represent and reflect Him.

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God works, and God designed our work. How should this truth influence our attitude towards work as well as our work ethic? Genesis 3 describes man and woman's failure to keep God's command to exercise dominion by protecting the earth from a dangerous threat. Since work is not a result of the Fall, how has the Fall corrupted work? Read Genesis 3:16-19 and identify the consequences of sin with regard to work. While work is a mark of human dignity, an outcome of the Fall is that humanity is tempted to base their identity and dignity on what they do. Why is this wrong? Where do we find our identity? Where should we base our dignity?

Man's sinfulness distorts work in two primary ways – idolatry and idleness, and we all gravitate towards one distortion. Guide the group's conversation to process how to combat these two distortions, and be wary of merely discussing the descriptions of idolatry and idleness. Also, highlight how Christ satisfies and frees us from these two distortions.

- **Idolatry**
 - Overvaluing work points to finding our meaning and purpose in what we do rather than in God. How do we change our thinking with regard to work, our value, and our identity? What truths do we need to remind ourselves of?
 - What limits does God place on work? What boundaries do you need to set in order to devote more time to your family, your relationship with God, rest, serving, etc.? What changes need to be made in your life, and what steps can you take this week to implement such changes?
- **Idleness**
 - With this distortion, be sensitive to those in the group who either have lost their jobs recently or have a disability that prevents them from being employed.
 - If someone airs on this end of the spectrum, what truths do they need to consider from Scripture (see Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:10)? What changes need to be in their life? How can they combat idleness this week?
 - Consider what purpose God has for each person's work. It is not simply a means to an end. How can you combat discontentment, dissatisfaction, discouragement, joylessness, and complaining with regard to your work? Why are each of these things wrong? What do they express about your relationship with God and your trust in Him?
 - How can you use retirement for God's glory? If your group consists of people who have retired from a job, how can they use this additional time to serve others, to share the gospel, to pray for people, etc.?

When discussing how to utilize work for the spread of the gospel, ask the group to express challenges that they have faced or are facing as they seek to establish relationships with people at work and weave gospel threads with people at their workplace. For those unfamiliar with the five threads of the gospel, take time to review the five threads (the character of God, the sinfulness of man, the sufficiency of Christ, the necessity of faith, and the urgency of eternity). If needed, refer back to the Threads sermon series from February-April 2013 as an additional resource (radical.net).

As a group, flesh out what it looks like to worship God wholeheartedly as we work. How does this look in each of the professions represented in the group? How can those in the group use their work to care for the needy? In what ways can they serve their co-workers and customers? Encourage the group to identify one person at work (of the same gender) that they will intentionally get to know, serve, and try to share with in the upcoming weeks. Discuss how to build meaningful relationships with co-workers. Invite group members to share ideas and things they have done to establish relationships and to witness to people at work. In the sermon, Pastor David cites C.S. Lewis who wrote about how one's vocation creates a web of relationships in which believers can speak the gospel. Identify who is in your web of relationships at work. Do you know if they are Christ-followers or if they even believe in God? Encourage group members not to miss the opportunity they have to invest in the people in their web of relationships.

In what ways can the group members specifically pray for each other with regard to honoring Christ in the way they work and in sharing Christ with the people God has placed in their sphere of influence?

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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?).

- Identify unhealthy perspectives that the world and even some Christians have regarding work. Why are such perspectives detrimental?
- Is one person's work nobler than another person's profession? Why? Why are both just as important to the glory of God?
- Why is it essential to understand that God delights in work and has designed our work?
- In what ways does God work *for* us? In what ways does He work *through* us?
- Read Genesis 3:16-19. How has the Fall affected work?
- How is work a mark of human dignity? In what ways are we tempted to base our dignity on what we do? Why is this wrong?
- Since work has been marred by human depravity, how should we respond to frustration, to feelings of pointlessness, or to selfishness that will accompany work?
- What sort of boundaries should establish with regard to work? Do you need to allocate more time away from work for rest, your relationship with your family, your relationship with God, etc.? How will you establish such boundaries?
- What is your attitude about work? Does your attitude towards work, your co-workers, your customers, or your employer glorify God? Is there any sin of which you need to repent? How can you combat complaining about the people at work or facets about your work? How can you worship God as you work? How are you adorning the gospel by the way that you work and by the way that you interact with others at work?
- How should you respond if you have distorted work by making it an *idol* in your life? How should you respond if you have distorted work by your *idleness*? How can you combat idolatry and idleness?
- What purpose(s) could God have for your work? Why does He have you where you are now? How are you using your current position for the spread of His Name?
- Why is the concept of retirement unbiblical? How should your retirement from your job be spent for God's glory?
- Discuss what it looks like in your current work situation to work competently, honorably, humbly, and eagerly. In which of these areas do you struggle? What steps can you take to fight against temptation?
- Do you have to enjoy the mechanics of your work in order to find a measure of enjoyment or satisfaction in your work? Why or why not? If you don't experience enjoyment in your work, why?
- In what ways can you serve the people you encounter at work? In what ways can you share the gospel with them?
- How are you using your current job situation to care for the needy? How are you using what God has provided for you to bless others?
- Is work a source of anxiety or stress in your life? Why? How can you face such anxiety or stress in a godly manner? Why is worry a sin?
- How is resting exhibiting trust in God? How is overworking a sign of pride? What are telltale signs of being a workaholic? How should a Christ-follower address the temptation to overwork?
- With whom at work can you build a meaningful relationship? How can you establish a relationship with them? How can you be praying for them, growing your relationship with them, and sharing with them this week?
- How are you leveraging your job for the spread of the gospel? Is there a way that your work, your job, your skills, and your education could be used to make the gospel known among one of the neediest places in the entire world?