

Small Group Guide

THE CROSS AND THE CHRISTIAN'S CALLING

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

September 29, 2013

Romans 15-16

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 involving us in His mission of making disciples of all nations. Ask the Spirit to guide you in your personal efforts and us in our corporate efforts to fulfill His mission. Pray for our mid-termers and those God will call out to serve mid-term. Pray for our long-termers and those God will out to serve long-term. Pray for each of our church plants, both here in North America and around the world. Pray for us all to respond in obedience to God's calling on our lives.*
- *Pray for Our City: The mission of 40 Days of Life is to bring together the body of Christ in a spirit of unity during a focused 40-day campaign of prayer, fasting, and peaceful activism with the purpose of repentance, to seek God's favor to turn hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life, thus bringing an end to abortion. This fall, 40 Days of Life will occur September 25-November 3, 2013. We are also praying for Asbury United Methodist Church and Kip Laxson. Pastor.*

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- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Long-Term Missionaries, The Hansen Family, serving in Kenya. Erik Hansen serves as a pediatric surgeon at the Kijabe Hospital outside of Nairobi. He and his wife Amanda raise their four children and minister to other children alongside an organization called Bethany Kids. They are also engaging those they meet with the gospel in order to strengthen the local church in Kenya. To learn more about Erik and Amanda and ways to pray for their family, visit their blog: uncommonroad.blogspot.com.*

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

THE CROSS AND THE CHRISTIAN'S CALLING

Romans 15-16

THE CHURCH AT BROOK HILLS...

A family of brothers and sisters radically saved by God's grace, miraculously filled with God's Spirit, and absolutely surrendered to God's purpose: praying, giving and going together for the spread of God's gospel and the sake of God's glory among all the peoples of the world.

- We are God-centered.
 - His grace saves all of us.
 - His Spirit fills all of us.
 - His purpose includes all of us.
 - Jesus Christ died to purchase a people from among all the peoples of the world for the eternal praise of God.
 - We as Christians live to reach people from among all the peoples of the world for the eternal praise of God.
- We are peoples-focused.
 - We know we have not been commanded simply to make disciples among as many people as possible.
 - We know we have been commanded specifically to make disciples among all the peoples of the world.
 - So we prioritize going to unreached peoples.
 - And we prioritize going to unreached places.

What Is Common To All Of Us...

- As the entire church...
 - Men and women, single and married, young and old, rich and poor.
- We pray...
 - For the church and for the lost.
- We give...
 - To spread the gospel and serve the poor.
- We go...
 - Right where we live and wherever God leads.

What Is A Calling For Each Of Us...

- How often we pray and whom we pray for.
- How much we give and whom we give to.

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- Where we go, how long we stay, what financial support we have, and what kind of work we do.
 - Where we go...
 - Inside our community or outside our community.
 - Among our culture or across other cultures.
 - On this continent or beyond this continent.
 - How long we stay...
 - Short-term (1-2 weeks)
 - Mid-term (2 months to 2 years)
 - Long-term (More than 2 years)
 - What financial support we have...
 - Fully supported
 - Partially supported
 - Self supported
 - What kind of work we do...
 - Among the reached, we're strengthening the church to make disciples.
 - Among the unreached, we're planting the church by making disciples.

THE QUESTION EVERY ONE OF US IS CONSIDERING TODAY...

By God's grace, through God's Spirit, and for God's purpose, might the Lord be leading me (or my family) to leave Birmingham for at least two months of my life (or our lives) to spread His gospel for the sake of His glory among unreached peoples in the world?

Message Summary

We break from our study of 1 Corinthians to pray for God to call certain ones of us from Brook Hills to spread the gospel in places outside of Birmingham and to cast vision for who we are as The Church at Brook Hills. As people who are saved by God's grace, filled with His Spirit, and surrendered to His purpose, we recognize that Christ died to purchase a people from among all the peoples of the world for the eternal praise of God, and we as Christians live to reach people from among all peoples for the eternal praise of God. As a result, we prioritize making disciples among all the peoples of the world. While what this looks like will differ for each of us, Scripture teaches all Christ-followers to pray, give, and go to spread God's gospel for the sake of God's glory among all the peoples of the world.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Explain to the group why this sermon is a break from our church's study of 1 Corinthians. For those who missed the sermon, relay that this service was set apart as "Casting the Net Sunday" and was dedicated to inviting those in our faith family who believe that the Lord may be setting them apart to move outside of Birmingham for the sake of the gospel to indicate this so our church could join with them in prayer about this possibility. Discuss as a group why this special focus is important in the life of our church. For all of us, this focus provides an opportunity to reflect on whether or not we are offering God a blank check with our lives, what He is wanting to do with our blank check, and what it looks like for us to continue walking in faithfulness to Christ. If there are those in the group who are not familiar with the blank check analogy, flesh it out as a group. Whether or not the group members were present for the sermon, challenge every person to question whether or not the Lord is setting them apart for the spread of the gospel outside of Birmingham. For those who were at Sunday's Worship Gatherings, ask if anyone stood or indicated that they feel led to consider this possibility. Ask the group to share their responses or questions to the sermon.

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Take the statement about The Church at Brook Hills in the sermon outline, and as a group, use it to evaluate the status of the small group. Is everyone in the small group saved by God's grace and filled with God's Spirit? Surrendered to God's purpose? Praying, giving, and going together for the spread of God's gospel and the sake of God's glory among all the peoples of the world? Flesh out the meaning of each of the statements in this description. Is the group God-centered and people-focused? How so?

In our lives, we need to keep these two (God-centered and people-focused) in proper order. In the name of being God-focused, we as believers can begin to put serving Christ ahead of abiding in Christ. We can do the work of the ministry, invest in others, and make that our priority instead of our relationship with Christ. When one's relationship with God comes first, service will be an overflow of the worship and adoration of Him. Ask the group if this is something that they have faced. How do we guard against this? How can the group help each other with regard to this temptation? At some point in the group time, break off into pairs or triads, and in those groups, have each person share one way that those in their smaller group can pray for them as a disciple of Christ and one way that the group can pray for them as a disciple-maker.

In discussing the sermon point about being specifically commanded to make disciples among all the peoples of the world, some in the group may point out that there are lost people here in Birmingham and question why they should move elsewhere when there are lost people here. Included below is helpful information shared during the sermon in response to such a question.

- Out of over 11,000 distinct people groups in the world, over 6,000 of them (about 2 billion people) are still classified as unreached by the gospel, which means they are less than 2% evangelical Christian. The difference between here and there is that there's not even access to the gospel among those 6,000 people groups.
- Turkey, a nation of 70 million people, has about 3,000 evangelical Christians, which means that more Christians gather at our church on Sunday than there are Christians in the whole country of Turkey.
- There are 360 unreached people groups living here in the United States (Arabs in Detroit and Dearborn, South Asian peoples in New York, Somalis in Minneapolis, Bosnians in St. Louis, Kurds in Nashville, and Yemeni Arabs in New York).
- Birmingham is 45% evangelical Christian while cities like Provo-Orem, Utah, are 0.5% evangelical Christian.
- The purpose of God in the world is that people from every single people group be rescued and ransomed by Christ. Therefore, commitment to the Great Commission in our lives and in this church necessarily involves commitment of our lives and our resources to get the gospel to people groups that have still not been reached. This is not an option for us biblically. Our mission is not just a lot of people; our mission is all peoples.
- The default among us should probably be to go, and we should only stay if God is making clear that He is telling us to stay.

In discussing why we should all question whether or not God is calling us to leave this faith family to take the gospel to another context, address that this does not minimize serving and sharing locally and it does not mean that those who stay in this context are second-class Christians. Read Romans 15:19, 23. While not everyone in those places had been saved, Paul's work was done in those regions because the gospel had been proclaimed, disciples had been made, the church had been founded, and the work was going on. However, point out that there were often other people whom Paul himself urged to stay while he moved on (Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete). Express that the ultimate issue is whether or not each person is obeying God. For some, obeying will mean staying, and for others, obeying will involve going. Ask the group to pray and consider what obedience looks like in their life. Clarify that we are all called to pray, give, and share the gospel, but the details of what this looks like will differ for each person. Challenge the group members to pray and to consider the questions related to the "What Is A Calling For Each Of Us" portion of the sermon. Consider making time in the next group meeting to discuss people's responses and what they have processed regarding how praying, giving, and going is supposed to look for them right now.

Resource those in the group to know what next steps to take regarding how to determine what God is calling each of them to do. For those at Brook Hills who express that they are prayerfully considering leaving our

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church to share the gospel in another context, there are two global interest meetings available to help people learn more about next steps to take: **Wednesday, October 2**, at 6:30pm in the Worship Room and **Sunday, October 6**, at 4:00pm in the Student Building. The same information will be presented at both meetings. For more information about serving short-term, mid-term, and long-term through Brook Hills or about church planting, visit brookhills.org/global. For more information about serving locally in Birmingham, visit brookhills.org/localmissions.

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?).

- What does it mean to be "God-centered"? What does it look like for the local church to be God-centered? For your small group? For your own life? How do you know if your life, the small group, and the church are all God-centered? What would indicate this? Describe the contrast, what it looks like for the individual, the small group, and the local church to be self-centered?
- While God's grace saves, is His grace what drives your life? Are you compelled to live the way that you do because of His grace? If grace is not your motivation for obedience, what is? If a change is needed in your motivation, how does such change occur?
- The Holy Spirit fills and empowers us for service. Are you going to waste your life on that which you can only do on your own power, or are you going to spend your life doing that which you can only do in His power? Practically, how do we rely on the Holy Spirit's power? Why is it important that we not depend on ourselves? What does such dependence on self express about one's beliefs about God?
- How does the purpose for Christ's death inform the purpose for our lives as Christ-followers? We as Christians should live to reach people from among all the peoples of the world for the eternal praise of God. Is this what your life is about? If you are called to remain in your current context, what does this purpose look like in your life here? What does it look like if you're called to a different context? How are you currently participating in God's purpose? If you are not currently praying, giving, and going for the spread of the gospel, then what steps can you take to be obedient? What prevents us from being obedient in participating in God's mission?
- Why should we prioritize unreached people groups over areas of the world where people are heavily reached?
- Read Romans 15:30. Paul appeals to the church in Rome to pray with him for the church and for the lost. As Christ-followers, we should all be striving together in prayer amidst this mission to make the glory of God known in all nations. On a continual basis, is there a global component to your prayers? As a small group, how can you incorporate this in your time together? Individually, how can you be more intentional in praying for global mission? As a group, pray by name for the people whom the group members are specifically trying to reach with the gospel. How can the group pray for each other on mission?
- God has given us worldly wealth for His worldwide worship. With regard to giving, how are we planning for this in our budget? What steps can we take to be more faithful in this area? Do we give generously, sacrificially, and cheerfully for the sake of the gospel and the sake of the poor?
- Is there a way that your work, your skills, or your education could be used to make the gospel known among one of the neediest places in the world? For students, what degree can you get that would open doors for you around the world? For parents, how can you train your children to work hard in school so they can be ready to go to people around the world with their skills, training, and degrees and make the gospel known among peoples who have never heard it before?
- How do we discern whether or not God is calling us to leave our current context and to share the gospel in a different place? How do we discern where that is? What is your motivation for going or for staying? What should be our motivation for going or for staying?

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- What next steps do you need to take in your life in order to live more faithfully for the spread of God's gospel?