

Small Group Guide THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN RESURRECTION

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

October 13, 2013

1 Corinthians 15

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 the Father for resurrecting Jesus Christ. Ask God to grant us insight and wisdom as we seek to understand the implications resurrection from the dead has for our lives. Pray we will all begin by valuing Christ's own resurrection. Thank God for the hope we not only have in this life but in our eternal life with Him to come. Thank Him for the victory He grants us through Jesus Christ. Pray we will all be steadfast in the work God has given us.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for our Marks Village Fall Festival outreach event this Saturday, October 19, from 10:00am until 2:00pm at Ambassadors for Christ Church, next door to Marks Village Public Housing Community. We are also praying for Chelsea Creek Community Church and Matthew Roskam, Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Long-Term Missionary, Sharron Schaefer in Guatemala. Sharron was commissioned from our faith family last year and is currently serving at a home caring for orphaned, abused, and*

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mistreated children. Sharron is a master seamstress and teaches sewing classes to the older girls at the children's home. This week we are also praying for our Short-Term team, led by Maria Luttrell, as they serve with Sharron.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15

Why should we follow Christ with radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience?

- Because death is coming.
 - Our death is coming.
 - Others' death is coming.
- Because resurrection is real.
 - If Jesus wasn't raised from the dead...
 - Our faith is futile and we stand guilty before God.
 - Our message is false and our mission is destructive.
 - Those who have died in Christ have been damned before God.
 - Radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience is to be pitied in this world.
 - Because Jesus was raised from the dead...
 - Our faith is well-founded and we stand forgiven before God.
 - Our message is true and our mission is urgent.
 - Those who have died in Christ now dwell with God.
 - Radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience is to be envied in this world.
 - When Jesus returns to the earth...
 - He will fully destroy death.
 - He will physically raise us to life.
 - Our resurrection bodies will be similar, yet different.
 - Our resurrection bodies will be imperishable and immortal.
 - Our resurrection bodies will be beautiful and powerful.
 - Our resurrection bodies will be perfectly Spirit-filled.
 - Our resurrection bodies will be permanently Christ-like.
- Because of where all history is headed.
 - At this moment, Jesus has dominion over all things.
 - He became the victorious King through radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience to God.
 - He is advancing His kingdom through radical, sacrificial, risk-taking children of God.
 - One day soon, Jesus will deliver over all things...
 - The enemies of God will finally be defeated.
 - The glory of God will forever be exalted.

Message Summary

1 Corinthians 15 presents believers with truth about Christ's resurrection and why it is essential. As Christians, we should follow Christ with radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience because death is coming, because the resurrection is real, and because of where all history is headed. We live in vain if the resurrection

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did not occur, but because Jesus was raised from the dead, we will waste our lives if we live for anything other than the glory of God.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

If someone in the group has a laptop, tablet, or smart phone, have them access www.worldometers.info/world-population/ at the beginning of small group. Give an update of the current world population, the number of births today, and the number of deaths today. Have someone write down the number of deaths, so the group can refer to this information at the end of small group. Using these statistics, remind the group that our time on earth is fleeting (Jas. 4:14), and if we do not want to waste the time God has given to us, we ought to consider how God intends for us to live.

In the sermon, Pastor David commented that “Birmingham Christianity” (or cultural Christianity) falls short of biblical Christianity. How do these two contrast? What are the primary differences? Depending on the group, there are likely some present who align more with the cultural Christian category and who will find this entire discussion uncomfortable. As you prepare, pray for the Holy Spirit to convict hearts and for Him to guide the discussion. Express that Christians are not called to live comfortable lives. In contrast, what does Scripture say with regard to how we are to live? In the sermon, we looked at Paul’s explanation of his life in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, and while not every believer’s life will look like Paul’s life, he was willing to lay his life down on a daily basis because he wanted to complete the task that God had given to him. Paul’s life only made sense if the resurrection is real. Ask the group whether or not *they* are living in such a way that their life only makes sense if Christ died and rose again. Ask them to think through why they would respond “yes” or “no” to that question. You might consider providing paper and time for the group to jot down reasons for their response or discussing their response with a neighbor.

How should the resurrection of Christ strengthen us to obey and to abound in the Lord’s work? What does “radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience” look like for someone who lives in Birmingham, Alabama (or in your particular context)? Flesh out reasons for why we do not live radical, sacrificial, and obedient lives. What thoughts or beliefs are at the root of such reasons? How do those thoughts and beliefs compare to the truths of God’s Word? Do we even want the Holy Spirit to change our desires? How do we join with the Spirit in renewing our thoughts, changing our affections, and submitting our will to reflect the truth of the gospel? How do we ensure that we do not waste our lives and live in vain? Challenge the group to think through whether or not they are spending their life on what is eternal and whether they are willing to obey God in whatever He leads them to do this week.

When discussing the resurrection, some people in the group might question how we can know that Christ was raised from the dead. For resources to equip believers about proofs of the resurrection, listen to the following sermons by Pastor David found on radical.net: “Testimony to the Resurrection” (March 31, 2013), “The Ultimate Question” (April 8, 2012), and “Risen” (April 12, 2009). Additional questions from the group might focus on the timeline of when the bodily resurrection of believers will occur, what heaven will be like, and what we will be like in heaven. While these questions are important, be careful of spending the bulk of small group time on such questions and missing the main point of the passage. Challenge the group to consider how they should live in light of 1 Corinthians 15.

Conclude with an update from the Worldometers site about the number of births and deaths. Taking the number of deaths from the beginning of small group, identify the number of people on earth who died just while the small group was meeting. Ask the group to think about how many of those people entered an eternity separated from God and how many of them had an opportunity to even hear the gospel while they were alive. With the number of births, how many of those born today will live and die without ever hearing the

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gospel? As a group, pray for the Holy Spirit to draw the unsaved to repentance, to burden our hearts for the lost around the world, and to convict us to live radical, sacrificial, and obedient lives.

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?).

- Has the Lord brought conviction to your heart about something in your life that needs to change? Why do we so often put off that conviction? What hinders our obedience? What prevents us from taking risks for God? If the Lord is impressing on you to act in some way, what steps can you take this week to be obedient?
- What are different motivators for obedience in the Christian life? What should be our motivation for obedience? How do we cultivate thoughts and affections that compel faithfulness for the right reasons? Why should we follow Christ with radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:58. Discuss the meaning and implications of each of the action words in this verse. Paul spends fifty-seven verses describing the resurrection before giving the instructions in this verse. Why should the truth of Christ's resurrection and our future bodily resurrection fuel obedience in our lives?
- 1 Corinthians 15:58 speaks of the ability to know that our "labor is not in vain." Describe what a life lived in vain looks like in Birmingham, Alabama (or in your particular context). Why would an individual choose to live their life in such a way? In contrast, what would it look like for your life *not* to be wasted? How do we know whether or not we are wasting our lives? Right now, are you living the way that you would have wished you would have done when you come to die? How do we ensure that we do not live in vain?
- Do we live in such a way that recognizes that our life is a vapor? Do we live in light of the reality that people in our families, neighborhoods, classrooms, and offices *will* die and that many of them will die *without Christ*? How should our lives change to reflect this reality? How desperate are we about praying for the Holy Spirit to change hearts? If we are not faithful in sharing the gospel, why? What will it take for us to consistently live in light of the fact that thousands of people die every day with little to no access to the gospel? How can we grow in faithfulness this week with regards to praying for the lost, taking initiative in building relationships, and weaving gospel threads into conversations?
- How can this small group come alongside and encourage each other to live radical, sacrificial, and obedient lives?
- Why is Christ's resurrection vital to our theology? What did His resurrection accomplish?
- Why is a bodily resurrection significant for us as Christ-followers?
- Because Jesus was raised from the dead, our message is true and our mission is urgent. Why do we so often lack urgency with regard to mission? How do we cultivate such urgency in our lives?
- Discuss the similarities and differences between our current bodies and our resurrected bodies based on Scripture. What was Christ's body like after His resurrection (Matt. 28:1-20; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:1-53; Jn. 20:1-21:23; Acts 1:1-9)?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:24. In the sermon outline, one of the reasons listed for why we should follow Christ with radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience is because of where all history is headed. Why is this reason important? How should it affect the way that we live and the motivations behind our actions?