

Small Group Guide THE CROSS AND THE CHURCH

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

October 27, 2013

1 Corinthians 16:5-24

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 the gift of His Word and 1 Corinthians specifically. Ask Him to help us continue to reflect upon all we've learned in our study of this book and to apply it to our individual lives and corporate life as a church. Pray we will all encourage one another in our ministerial efforts. Ask the Spirit to grant us strength to stand firm in the faith. Pray we will be known by our love. Ask God to unite us as a church and together with other churches to see His gospel spread among all peoples.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for the ministry of our church plant in East Lake, the Church at South East Lake, as they start their third year of ministry together. We are also praying for Ben DeLoach, their Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Mid-Termer, Karina C. serving in Thailand. Karina is serving as an English teacher in a local school and partnering with Brook Hills Long-Term workers Dwight and Mary Kay Martin. To read*

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more about Karina, visit her blog at katijourney.blogspot.com. This week we are also praying for our Short-Term team serving in Central Asia.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

THE CROSS AND THE CHURCH 1 Corinthians 16:5-24

The Cross and The Church at Brook Hills...

- May we stand firm in this culture.
 - Preaching the cross and trusting God's wisdom.
 - Glorifying God through purity in our body...
 - Corporately through discipline and restoration.
 - Individually as men and women, in sexuality, marriage, and singleness.
 - Worshiping God in our work and our play.
- May we show love in the church.
 - In the ways we use our liberties and the way we spend our lives.
 - Through our use of spiritual gifts and a pattern of selfless giving.
 - In our gathering for worship and our scattering as witnesses.
 - The cross compels us to make disciples.
 - The cross compels us to multiply churches.

The Cross and The Hallows Church... Andrew Arthur, Seattle, WA

The Cross and Christ Fellowship Church... Bart Box, Birmingham, AL

The Cross and Cross Fellowship Church... John Crawford, Overland Park, KS

The Cross and The Church at South East Lake... Ben DeLoach, Birmingham, AL

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The Cross and All Souls Church... Josh Stahley, New York City, NY

Message Summary

As we conclude 1 Corinthians, we read Paul's final instructions and comments to the Corinthian church, which includes a window into the relationships that existed between churches in the first century. This points to a bigger picture of what God is accomplishing through many different churches and places, which correlates to the bigger picture of God's work that we are a part of as The Church at Brook Hills. In this abbreviated sermon on 1 Corinthians 16, we examine how the cross of Christ compels us to stand firm in this culture and to show love in the church. We also pause to hear reports from five church planters sent out from Brook Hills and to join with them in praising God for His faithfulness and in praying for the continued advance of the gospel.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

While this sermon concludes 1 Corinthians, it is not the final sermon in "The Cross and Christian Community" sermon series, for we will have four more sermons in this series from selected passages in 2 Corinthians. However, this sermon is unique, for much of the Worship Gathering focused on hearing from five church planters in North America who have been sent out from Brook Hills in the past three years. With this, 1 Corinthians 16:5-24 provides a window into the relationships that existed between the Corinthian church and other believers and churches in the first century, and it reminds us of the bigger picture of how God is working in many different local churches through local believers for the glory of His name, which corresponds to hearing about the bigger picture that we are a part of as The Church at Brook Hills.

While there are discussion questions below based on 1 Corinthians 16 and the abbreviated sermon on the passage, dedicate a significant portion of the small group time to praying for the five church planters, their families, the health and growth of the churches they are pasturing, and the spread of the gospel in their contexts. Consider praying as a whole group or dividing up into smaller groups with each group praying for a specific church planting family. To learn more about these church plants and how you can pray for them, visit brookhills.org/churchplanting. If you would like to encourage these families, your group could also write them letters or emails, post on their Facebook group's wall, or tweet at them to let them know how you specifically prayed for them this week. This contact information can be found at brookhills.org/churchplanting. If you are not from Brook Hills, we invite you to pray with us for these church plants, or you can use the time to pray for missionaries or church planters associated with your church or denomination.

The points in the sermon outline above take the structure of 1 Corinthians 16:5-24 and use it to rehearse themes and topics discussed throughout this sermon series. Use this time to review any particular sermon topics that resonated with the group during the course of this study or to revisit any subjects that the group has had questions about. Allow group members to share what God has taught them through this study, and take time to celebrate God's work in each other's lives.

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Take time to explain the command to “act like men” in 1 Corinthians 16:13. Relay to the group that the picture is to mature in the faith. Believers are to act like adults as opposed to acting like children. Use this phrase to spark a conversation about growing as a Christ-follower. As a group, identify characteristics of spiritual children and spiritual adults. What distinguish these two groups of believers? Some information is provided below to guide this discussion, but reference these *after* the group has had time to consider the characteristics for themselves. Keep in mind that some spiritual children may be physical adults who have been Christians for many years. Challenge the group to reflect on the characteristics described and to consider whether they are spiritual children or adults.

Make sure that group members are challenged – whether they are spiritual children or adults – to think through what steps they can take to grow in their relationship with God. None of us have arrived. There is always more to know, always areas of our lives that need to be submitted to God, and always sins with which we struggle. What does growth look like in the lives of each of the group members? How can you as the small group leader come alongside and help them? How can you coach the gap between where they are now and that next step that they need to take to grow? Do you even know where your group members are and whether they are spiritual children or spiritual adults? How can the group challenge each other, provide accountability for each other, encourage each other, and pray for each other in this process?

Spiritual Children	Spiritual Adults
Characterized by dependence, ignorance, and self-centeredness	Characterized by service, God-centered lives, and intentionality in making disciples
May or may not have head knowledge about what the Bible says, but what is known is not changing their heart or their actions	What they know and have studied from God’s Word affects their thoughts, desires, relationships, and actions
Their lives often look more like the world, and what they say they believe is inconsistent with how they live	They understand the cost of following Christ and trust that He is worth the cost. Their choices, words, and actions distinguish them from the world.
Studying God’s Word, praying to God, and practicing other spiritual disciplines is not a priority in their lives on a consistent basis	Cultivating a relationship with God and nurturing time with Him is central, and service overflows from an awe and adoration of Him
Participation in church and/or in a small group is based on what makes them feel good, and they operate more like church-shoppers or consumers who act like church is about <i>them</i>	They actively contribute to the church and/or small group
Do little to share the gospel with others, to pray for others, or to make disciples	They are compelled by the grace of God in their lives to make it a priority to pray for people, to share the gospel, and to walk alongside others and help them grow in their relationship with God
Responds to conflict with immaturity (anger, bitterness, avoidance, despair, retaliation, physical aggression, etc.)	Responds to conflict in a Christlike manner

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?).

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- Read 1 Corinthians 16:13. Describe what it means to “be watchful.” Why is this important? How do we remain alert to temptation, to adversaries, and to conflict?
- In 1 Corinthians 16:13, Paul also instructs believers to “stand firm in the faith.” What types of things or situations commonly shake the faith of believers? In what ways are we commonly led astray? Knowing these potential faith-shakers, how can we build a solid foundation of faith? How can we guard against attempts to waylay our faith in God? What truths do we need to imbibe and to fill our minds with? How do we engage these truths in a way that encourages head knowledge to transform our affections, actions, and relationships?
- How does church discipline glorify God and strengthen the local church? Based on 1 Corinthians 5-6, what is the purpose of church discipline?
- Standing firm in the faith involves practicing purity in what we expose ourselves to, participate in, and think about. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. What should motivate us to practice purity? In what ways do we struggle with being pure? How can we with God’s grace glorify God in this? What steps can we take this week to honor Christ and to live pure lives?
- How do we avoid taking good things from God (i.e., work, play, etc.) and turning them into idols? How does this relate to standing firm in the faith?
- In 1 Corinthians 16:13, Paul tells the Corinthian believers to “act like men.” What does this command mean? Describe the characteristics of a spiritual child and a spiritual adult. Which are you? How does a believer grow into maturity in the faith? Where are you right now in your love for God and relationship with Him? What action step can you take this week to grow? Why would some believers act like spiritual Peter Pans and choose not to grow in faith and godliness?
- Read 1 Corinthians 16:14 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. In what ways can the small group express such love for each other? In relationships with unbelievers? With family members? With co-workers? With neighbors? What would it look like to be intentional in demonstrating love this week to another person in your life?
- How are you showing love in the way that you are using your liberties? In the way that you are spending your life? In how you are using your spiritual gifts? In how you are giving?
- Why is it important to make disciples and to multiply churches? Why is this such a priority at Brook Hills? Are you participating in the work of Christ in these two areas? If not, why? How can you further develop in your understanding and in your ability to proclaim the gospel with urgency, to live out the gospel with authenticity, and to help other believers do the same?