

Small Group Guide

PRAY

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

January 12, 2014

Genesis 6-13; Matthew 6-12

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

Before Small Group

Weekly Readings for January 6-12

<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
<i>Genesis 6</i> <i>Matthew 6</i>	<i>Genesis 7</i> <i>Matthew 7</i>	<i>Genesis 8</i> <i>Matthew 8</i>	<i>Genesis 9-10</i> <i>Matthew 9</i>	<i>Genesis 11</i> <i>Matthew 10</i>	<i>Genesis 12</i> <i>Matthew 11</i>	<i>Genesis 13</i> <i>Matthew 12</i>

Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (Genesis)

As the first book of the Bible, Genesis explains that God is the all-powerful Creator who cares about His creation, and it teaches that God takes evil and transforms it for His glory (Gen. 50:20). Written by Moses when Israel was wandering in the wilderness, Genesis also provides the history of God's covenant with Israel by telling about Adam and his descendants, which include Noah and Abraham. In this week's readings, God responds to the overwhelming wickedness of mankind by sending a worldwide flood. Questions abound regarding the identity of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6 with the most likely explanation being that these "sons" were evil despots who were, perhaps, demon-possessed. And the language of Genesis 6:2 intentionally mirrors that of Genesis 3:6, for both Eve and the sons of God "saw" something that was desirable and "took" it. Whatever view one holds regarding the identity of the sons of God, Genesis 6-8 emphasizes the wickedness of humanity, and their sin grieved the heart of God, warranting His judgment. A worldwide flood would wash the earth clean, reflecting God purging the earth of sinful man. His judgment was so severe because the peoples' sin was so great, but even in the midst of great judgment, God demonstrates grace and mercy with Noah's family.

In Genesis 8:20-9:17, God establishes a covenant with Noah (the Noahic Covenant) in which He promises to never again destroy the earth through a worldwide flood and gives the rainbow as the sign of this covenant. God's commands in this section parallel His original commands to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:26-31, for He commissions Noah and his family to be fruitful, to multiply, and to fill the earth (Gen. 9:1, 7). God also institutes capital punishment in Genesis 9.

Although God had commanded humanity to fill the earth after the flood, people flagrantly rebelled God's original commission and attempted to live in one place (Gen. 11:4). The building of the Tower of Babel reflects their hubris, and because of their attempt to make a great name for themselves instead of making God's name great, God intervenes by destroying their common bond – language. By creating a variety of languages, God both judged the people and prevented further apostasy such as what previously led to the flood. Their language barrier also led them to scatter across the earth as God had originally intended.

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Genesis 11:27-32 introduces us to Abram (a.k.a. Abraham) whom God blessed and made the founding father of the Israelite nation, and while Abram demonstrates faith in God by leaving his family and country to move to the place God led, he was still a sinner, as evidenced by his deception in Egypt. The God who made the universe was not surprised by man's sin, and He chose people like Noah and Abram to carry out His plan.

Structure: Genesis is organized into ten sections (Gen. 2:4-4:26; 5:1-6:8; 6:9-9:29; 10:1-11:9; 11:10-26; 11:27-25:11; 25:12-18; 25:19-35:29; 36:1-37:1; 37:2-50:26), and each section opens with the phrase "these are the generations of" and serves as the beginning of a genealogy. The first person mentioned in the genealogy ("these are the generations of Adam") describes the subject of the following narrative section. Genesis 6-13 focuses on the generations of Noah, Noah's sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth), and Terah (Abraham's father).

Where We Are In The Story ~ New Testament (Matthew)

Matthew is the first of four Gospels that tell about the life of Christ. As one of the twelve disciples (Matt. 9:9-13), Matthew focuses on demonstrating how Jesus fulfills Old Testament promises concerning the Messiah, and in this selection of readings, Matthew demonstrates how even Jesus' healing ministry was prophesied by Isaiah (Matt. 8:17; 12:15-21; Isa. 42:1-3; 53:4). Jesus Himself quotes Hosea 6:6 as a justification for why He spent time with tax collectors and sinners (Matt. 9:13).

These readings also describe Jesus' clash with Israel's religious leaders. They accuse Jesus of blasphemy when He forgives sin (Matt. 9:3), state that He casts out demons by the power of the evil one (Matt. 9:34; 12:24), and desire His destruction because they believed He broke the Sabbath (12:14). Why did Jesus warrant so much resistance from His fellow countrymen? Because He exposed their hypocrisy, for His words spotlighted that their hearts did not match their outward deeds of piety.

Structure: Matthew includes five collections of Jesus' teaching (Matt. 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25), and each of these sections concludes with a statement saying, "And when Jesus finished these sayings..." The first of these collections is in Matthew 5-7 and is called "The Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5:1-7:29). In it, Jesus teaches His disciples about life in the kingdom of heaven and how to live as His followers. Matthew 8-9 includes acts of power that support His authority to teach such things, and in Matthew 10, Jesus presents another collection of teachings also directed towards His disciples that includes instructions for their mission.

During Small Group

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.

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Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives: Celebrate God for His might, everlasting love, and for all He has done throughout history and in your life. Confess any sin in your life and ask for His forgiveness. Pray for God to help you resist temptation to sin in the future. Thank Him for His provision for your daily needs. Pray for those in your life you know are in need of God's sustaining grace. Pray for the Spirit's guidance as you seek to follow God wherever He leads.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for the Breakfast Club at Ossie Ware Mitchell Middle School in East Lake. The Breakfast Club started a year ago with a group of middle school boys meeting on Thursday mornings with men from the community to have breakfast and character-building lessons. This year, a Breakfast Club has been added for middle school girls. The Club meets every other week before school and is coordinated by our partner church, The Church at South East Lake. To be involved with the Breakfast Club, contact Ben DeLoach at bdeloach@churchatsoutheastlake.org.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Church Planters, JD and JJ serving in North Africa. JD and JJ serve among the Arundo* people of North Africa. The Arundo are a people group of over 10 million located primarily in North Africa. Currently, there are less than 0.01% Evangelical Christians among them. The need is great. Join us this week as we pray for JD, JJ, their family, and the broader North Africa Church Planting team. We are also praying for our Short-Term team of college students serving in the Middle East.
Arundo is an adopted nickname for a people group whose identity must be kept secure.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

PRAY

Genesis 6-13; Matthew 6-12

PRAISE:

Worship God for Who He is.

REPENT:

Confess your sin to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.

ASK:

Intercede for particular needs in your life and other's lives.

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YIELD:

Surrender your life to following Jesus wherever and however He leads you.

Message Summary

What we read in Scripture should inform our time in prayer and, ultimately, lead us to pray. As we pray, we praise God for Who He is, and recognizing His character, we repent, confessing our sin to God and acknowledging our need for Christ. God also invites us to ask Him for particular needs in our life and in others' lives, and as we pray, we yield our lives to follow Jesus wherever and however He leads us.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

In the previous sermon "In The Beginning," Pastor David referenced the following categories of questions: How will I fill my mind with truth? How will I fuel my affections for God? How will I share God's love as a witness in the world? How will I show God's love as a member of the church? How will I spread God's glory among all peoples? How will I make disciple-makers among a few people? Today's sermon addresses prayer, which relates to how we fuel our affections for God and how we will pray for the nations. Last week, this guide encouraged small groups to process through all of the questions and to be as specific as possible with their responses. Ask if anyone in the group would be willing to share their responses, particularly with regard to the questions about prayer. For those who missed the previous week's sermon or small group meeting, review the questions from the personal disciple-making plan that was incorporated in that sermon.

As you lead the small group to discuss this sermon and the topic of prayer, avoid spending the bulk of the time discussing prayer, especially at the cost of actually praying together. How can you structure this week's small group to make the most of the time together? Also, you might have some in your small group who are uncomfortable or unwilling to pray aloud. How can you be sensitive to these brothers and sisters as well as help them grow in this area?

In your personal time with God, you should be asking what God wants to say to *you* through His Word. In addition to this question, encourage the small group members to also ask what God is saying to *us* both as a small group and as a The Church at Brook Hills. How is God's Word informing your small group – both what you do when you gather together and what you do when you scatter? Begin asking this question on a weekly basis in small group and challenge group members to pray this question as they read God's Word.

Consider modeling your small group's time after the format of this sermon. For example, discuss the questions related to praise, then take time to identify what this week's readings say about God. Invite the group to share these traits with one another either as a large group or in pairs or smaller groups. Incorporate a time to not only share these traits but to praise God for Who He is. This could be done through a prayer of praise, musical worship, art, etc. With regard to the section focused on intercession, use this time to ask about specific needs and requests that those in the group may have. Also, ask the group to identify missionaries, people groups, unsaved people they know, etc. that the group can also be praying for. Take time together to intercede for these requests.

As we all seek to grow in praising God, repenting of sin, asking for particular needs, and surrendering our lives to Jesus, ask the group to share what these things look like in their own lives. For example, Pastor David shares how he designates the days of the week to pray for specific requests, so on one day, he prays for our

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church and, on another day, for his wife. What other practices or ideas do the small group members have regarding these four areas of prayer and what it can look like to practice them on a daily basis?

For those who have children, how will you discuss these four areas of prayer with your child(ren)? How can you model prayer for them and intentionally teach them to pray? How can you grow in praying specifically for your child(ren)? Two resources that you can point families to: "A Simple Guide to Family Worship" (listed with the 2014 Bible Reading Plan on brookhills.org) and the Faith Family Worship Guide that accompanies each week's Bible readings (can be downloaded with each sermon on brookhills.org/thisweek).

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?).

- How does prayer fuel our affections for God?
- What did prayer look like in your life this past week? What was the content and the frequency of your conversations with God? What needs to happen this week for your prayer life to be different than it was last week?
- Would you describe your current practice of prayer as "healthy"? Why or why not? Describe what vibrant, growing communication with God can look like in a person's life.
- What is the purpose of prayer? What is the point of praying, especially since God already knows what we need?
- What does praise look like in your relationship with God?
- How does Scripture help us to pray and to praise? How can you incorporate Scripture into your conversations with God?
- How can we avoid a wandering mind when we pray?
- Using the passages from Scripture that were read this week, what do these passages teach you about Who God is?
- Using the passages from Scripture that were read this week, what do these passages teach you about sin in your life?
- What does confession currently look like in your life? How have you sinned against God this week? Have you confessed those sins to Him?
- How can you grow in your sensitivity to sin? Why is this even important? Contrast the right and wrong ways to grieve over sin. Godly sorrow should lead to repentance rather than despair. Knowing the sins you commonly struggle with, how can you, by the power of the Spirit, begin to turn away from these sins this week?
- How do we navigate the tension between asking God for particular needs and treating Him like a divine Santa Claus?
- What are reasons for why we do not come to Him with our requests? Do we trust God's response, even if His reply is "no" or "wait"? Do we trust God's character?
- How do our prayers affect God and affect the people or situations that we lift up?
- In what ways do you need to yield to God this week, especially in light of what you read in God's Word?