

Small Group Guide REAP

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

January 26, 2014

Genesis 22

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 20-26

<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
Genesis 21 Matthew 20	Genesis 22 Matthew 21	Genesis 23 Matthew 22	Genesis 24 Matthew 23	Genesis 25 Matthew 24	Genesis 26 Matthew 25	Genesis 27 Matthew 26

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 even when they disobey Him, 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 12-50 emphasizes the development of the nation of Israel by focusing on their founding fathers – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This week's readings specifically focus on the lives of Abraham and Isaac. God keeps His promise to Abraham and Sarah by giving them a son (Gen. 15; 17), and when Isaac is young, God tests Abraham's faith by asking him to trust God enough to obey Him even though he does not understand the reason for the command (Gen. 22). Abraham demonstrates great faith in God by obeying Him and sacrificing Isaac and by relying on God to later provide a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24). Although God promised to use Abraham's family to bless the nations, Abraham and his descendants were sinners, and Jacob's deception in Genesis 25-27 demonstrates the sinfulness of man. However, God chose this family knowing their sinfulness, and His choice was not based on what they had to offer or what they could do for Him. Nor did their actions catch Him by surprise. God's plan is unstoppable and perfect, even if we do not understand what He is doing.

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 21-27 focuses on Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandsons Jacob and Esau.

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. With regard to 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..."

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Matthew 21-25 tells of the week leading up to Jesus' death (Passion Week), and during this week, Jesus taught the contents of the fifth collection of teachings recorded in Matthew (Matt. 24-25), which focuses on the second coming and on the end of the age. Matthew 26 begins with Jesus celebrating the Passover meal with His disciples when He establishes the new covenant (Matt. 26:26-29), and it focuses on the night of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, and trial.

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.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives:* Praise God for revealing Himself and His Word to His children. Praise God for His desire to reconcile man to Himself and to restore right relationship with Him. Praise Him for the sacrifice of Christ that atones for our sins and allows us to know God. Ask Him to give us, as individuals and as a faith family, a deep desire to know and understand His Word. Praise God for displaying His character through His Word. Praise God for the truth that His Word does not return void, but accomplishes His purpose in our hearts. Ask Him to grant us all hearts that are quick to obey and worship God alone. Ask God to transform us more into His likeness as we read His Word.
- *Pray for Our City:* This week we are praying for the ministry of Biblical Marriage Institute, founded by Brook Hills members Alonza and Vanessa Jones. BMI teaches couples how to mentor other couples, helps couples rekindle their marital commitments through Bible-centered retreats, and gives hope to inner-city teenagers through relationship education. We are also praying for New Rising Star Missionary Baptist Church and Thomas Beavers, Pastor.
- *Pray for Our World:* This week we are praying for Brook Hills Long-Termers, Greg and Kathy Brown, who are serving in Guatemala. Greg, Kathy, and their daughter Haleigh serve with OneWay Ministries and are currently ministering at a small

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church plant in the village of Sajcavilla. Join us this week as we pray for the Brown family. To follow the Browns, visit their blog at thebrownsinguatemala.com. This week we are also praying for the Northern Yemeni of Yemen. For more information and ways to pray, visit brookhills.org/thisweek.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

REAP

Genesis 22

READ

EXAMINE

- What is happening in this passage? What words, phrases, or ideas seem particularly important?
- What does this text teach you about the gospel?
 - (Character of God) What does this text teach you about God?
 - (Sinfulness of Man) What does this text teach you about man?
 - (Sufficiency of Christ) What does this text teach you about who Jesus is and why we need Him?
 - (Necessity of Faith) What does this text teach you about trusting and following Jesus?
 - (Urgency of Eternity) What does this text teach you about the hope of heaven or the horror of hell?

APPLY

- What sin(s) do I need to repent of and/or avoid?
- What truth(s) do I need to believe?
- What command(s) do I need to obey (what do I need to give up, stop doing, start doing, or continue doing)?
- What principle(s) need to change the way I think, speak, and/or act, and how will I implement this change?
- What relationship(s) do I need to establish, strengthen, or change?
- By the power of God's Spirit, what can I do today to apply God's Word to my life?

PRAY

Pray according to what you've read, asking God to change your heart, mind, attitudes, actions, and relationships based on the time you've spent in His Word. Let this specific praying lead you more generally to...

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

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Message Summary

As we read the Bible together during this sermon series, we focus on equipping each other in how to study God's Word. Using Genesis 22, we practice studying Scripture together in this sermon, and we utilize the acrostic REAP to guide us in studying God's Word. First, we *read* the passage carefully, prayerfully, thoughtfully, humbly, and joyfully. Next, we *examine* the passage in order to understand what God's Word says about God, man, Christ, faith, and eternity. We *apply* God's Word to our lives, and we allow the Word to guide us in how we *pray* and what we pray for.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

As you focus on how to study Scripture, do not assume that the people in your small group know how to do this or that they do it consistently. Also, ensure that everyone in your group has a Bible, that it is a translation that they easily understand, and that they know how to find passages of Scripture in the Bible. For those who are new to small group, who are behind in their reading from the Bible Reading Plan, or who have not started the Bible Reading Plan, encourage them not to get discouraged or to feel like they have to backtrack and catch up in all their readings. Instead, direct them to simply picking up with what the readings are for that day. Remind the group that the goal of the reading plan and this sermon series is to equip the people in this faith family to read God's Word for themselves.

For those who heard this sermon, ask what they learned with regards to studying Scripture. How did what they hear affect how they approach God's Word? It might be helpful to bring copies of the "Simple Guide to Personal Worship" for everyone in the group since it explains the REAP questions that were discussed in the sermon. This guide can be downloaded from brookhills.org under the "2014 Bible Reading Plan" rotating feature.

One idea for how to spend your group time together is take a passage from the week's readings or from that day's selection and to do in your group what we did together in the sermon. Divide the group members into smaller groups of 3-4 people and give them the REAP questions from the sermon outline. Provide 25-30 minutes for them to simply walk through the passage together using the principles of Reading, Examining, Applying, and Praying. Then, gather the group back together and ask them to share insights that they gleaned. For those who have children, encourage them to do this exercise with their families as a way to teach their children how to study God's Word.

Identify common struggles that believers have with regards to studying God's Word. Address those struggles and ways to overcome them.

- Many people struggle with finding time to spend in God's Word. Brainstorm ways that can help with this such as writing it in their planner, setting an alarm, carrying a Bible in their purse, arranging to spend this time somewhere other than their bed or dorm room, etc. Discuss how the time might vary on certain days of the week depending on one's schedule but to plan for this time and to arrange everything else around it.
- Another common struggle is the overwhelming flood of thoughts that occur when sitting down to pray and to study Scripture. An idea is to keep post-it notes close by so you can write such things down and come back to them after you have had your time with God.
- Often, we are just lazy and simply prefer to spend time doing other things. How can we address the sin of our own laziness and begin to consistently spend time studying Scripture? Address why we do not desire God's Word and how we can cultivate a desire to study Scripture.

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One misconception held by many believers is that devotion books, praise music, and spending time alone in nature can substitute for studying Scripture. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What does this passage say about God's Word? Point out that we do not have this promise about music or other books or nature. Also, explain that a relationship with God involves spending time *with Him*. If we substitute reading *Jesus Calling*, a John Piper book, or hearing a sermon for time studying God's Word, then we are relying on what God said to someone else rather than going to God directly for what He wants to say to *us*. We cannot fall in love with someone by proxy or by a third party, so how do we expect to cultivate a love for God if we only rely on other people to tell us about Him instead of spending time with Him ourselves? Discuss why many believers default to a devotional book or to a sermon instead of studying God's Word for themselves. Explain that such resources are good when used as *supplements* to our study of Scripture, but they should not replace our personal study of God's Word.

We examine Scripture in order to locate the timeless truths of the passage (what it says to *all* people in *all* cultures at *all* points of history). As you help those in your group learn how to examine a passage of Scripture, included below are additional questions that can assist someone in understanding what is happening in what they are reading. To help, think of these as interviewer-type questions that ask who, what, why, when, and where. Discuss with your group how they can locate the answers to these questions as they are studying Scripture.

- Who wrote this and who read this originally?
- Who are the main characters here?
- Where is all of this taking place?
- When is all of this taking place?
- What is the sequence of events?
- What is the flow of argument?
- What is happening in the text?
- What is wrong in the picture?
- What is the author communicating?
- Why is the author communicating this?
- Why did he say it this way, and why did this happen that way?

With regards to applying Scripture, encourage small group members to be as specific as possible with their application. Remind them that the goal of studying Scripture is not to amass more information but to be changed by what they are reading. God wants to transform us into His image through our time in the Word. Challenge group members to not only alter their lives based on the truths that they read but to also share what they read with others, whether another believer or someone who is lost. Discuss why this is important as well as how it augments and changes the way that we study Scripture.

As you walk alongside your group members, how can you all keep each other accountable with regards to the consistent study of Scripture? What does this need to look like in your group?

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?).

- Why is the Bible important for us to study?
- What are reasons for why Christians do not study the Bible consistently? What needs to happen in our lives for us to practice this discipline on a daily basis?
- How can you grow in your desire to study God's Word? Why do we often *not* hunger for God's Word?

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- What does Scripture say regarding the role of the Holy Spirit as we study Scripture? Read John 16:7-15 and 1 Corinthians 2:10-16.
- What are common mistakes that people make when reading the Bible?
- Why is the question "What does this passage mean to me?" a dangerous way to approach Bible study? What questions should we be asking when we read God's Word?
- With what attitude do you approach studying God's Word? What should be our attitude? How does our attitude affect our time in the Word? If you are frazzled, distracted, or stressed when you sit down to read the Bible, how can you deal with these distractions? What can you do to focus on the Word in front of you and what God has for you to learn?
- Why is it important to examine the passage *before* attempting to interpret it?
- How can we *avoid* twisting Scripture to mean what we want it to say?
- How do the truths of Scripture shape how you live each day?
- Read Luke 24:44-45. When studying the Old Testament, how do we determine what the passage teaches us about Jesus and why we need Him? How does the Old Testament passage point to Christ and to our need for a Savior?
- How is faith more than just an intellectual practice?
- Why is application of Scripture so important for the Christ-follower? Why do we often *not* take the time to focus on application when studying Scripture?
- How can we use resources (commentaries, devotionals, sermons, etc.) in a way that aid our study of God's Word without replacing our time in the Word?
- Why is memorizing Scripture important? How do we start memorizing Scripture? What steps can you take this week to begin memorizing God's Word?