

Small Group Guide THE GOSPEL AND NEPAL

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

March 2, 2014

Luke 9-16

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

Before Small Group

Readings for March 3-9

Exodus 14-20

Luke 17-23

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

Background of Exodus: The title “exodus” comes from the Greek word meaning “going out” or “departure” and describes the major event that occurs in the book. Exodus opens where Genesis leaves off – the descendants of Abraham are living in Egypt instead of in the Promised Land. The events in Exodus occur approximately four hundred years after Jacob’s family moved to Egypt, and as prophesied in Genesis 15, Abraham’s descendants became slaves. While Genesis highlights God as Creator, Exodus focuses on God as the Deliverer of His people, for He keeps His promise to free His people and to bring them back to the land of promise.

Structure of Exodus:

- Exodus 1-18 focuses on the deliverance of the people Israel from Egypt and God’s provision for His people.
- Exodus 18-24 explains God’s covenant with Israel.
- Exodus 25-31 provides instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle and explanation for the priestly role.
- Exodus 32-34 describes God’s response to His people’s idolatry.
- Exodus 35-40 highlights the nation’s obedience in building the Tabernacle.

This Week in the Old Testament: Exodus 7-17 contains the pattern of God working in a mighty way, then Israel facing a challenge, Israel murmuring and doubting God because of the hopelessness of their situation, then God protecting and providing for His people. This pattern occurs four times in these 11 chapters with the plagues and the Passover causing the release of God’s people, the crossing of the Red Sea, turning bitter water into drinkable water, and providing manna and quail for the people to eat. These events prepare the Israelites to receive the Law that God gives on Mt. Sinai by showing them that God has authority over them and that *He* is their Deliverer, Provider, Protector, and Creator.

In Exodus 19, God brings Israel to Mt. Sinai to have a “defining the relationship” moment, and Exodus 19-24 records this Sinaitic Covenant between God and Israel. In Exodus 19:1-6, God calls the people to be in relationship with Him and to serve Him. God continues to develop the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) by making a covenant with Israel, forming them into a nation of His people and making them a “kingdom of priests” and a “holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). This meant that Israel would need to be distinct from the world in how they lived and why they lived that way, and as a kingdom of priests, they would teach God’s Word, make intercession for others, and help others

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know who God is and enter into relationship with Him. In 1 Peter 2:9, these same descriptions of a “royal priesthood” and a “holy nation” apply to Christ-followers and depict how we are to live and interact with the world.

Keeping the 10 Commandments and the other laws did not save the Israelites. God’s people have never been saved by their works. It has always been by grace through faith. The contents of Exodus 19-24 were given as part of God’s covenant with Israel, and the Law lacks the power to save. In Galatians 3:24-25, Paul calls the Law our “guardian,” “pedagogue,” or “tutor” because it was meant to show us our sinfulness and guilt. We are unable to perfectly keep everything that the Law demands. The Law shows us God’s standard of how He wants His people to live.

Commandments 1-3 have to do with a person’s relationship with God, and the fourth command involves keeping the Sabbath. In the Old Testament, covenants would include a sign, which was something that the participants in the covenant would do to remind themselves of their promise(s), and God gave the Sabbath as the sign of His covenant with Israel. Commandments 5-10 involve how we relate to other people, and Matthew 5-7 either repeats or augments many of these commands. In Matthew 22:36-39, Jesus sums up the 10 Commandments (and the Law as a whole) by stating that the two greatest commands are to love God and to love your neighbor.

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

Background of Luke: In Luke 1: 1-4, Luke explains why he wrote this book – for his friend Theophilus (and for us) to have certainty regarding the identity of Jesus and the beliefs that Christ-followers commit themselves to. While Matthew focuses on Jesus as the Promised Messiah and Mark emphasizes that He is the Son of God, Luke depicts Jesus as Savior. Jesus came “to seek and to save what was lost” (Lk. 19:10), and by featuring Jesus’ interactions with three unlikely groups of people (the poor, the sinners, and the Gentiles), Luke shows that Jesus came to save all types of people – not just the Jews. These three groups were on the fringes of Jewish society, but Jesus chose to interact with them despite the comments of the Jewish religious leaders.

This Week in the New Testament: Luke 17:1-19:27 take place as Jesus journeys to Jerusalem in the weeks leading up to His death, and Luke 19:28 through the rest of the book records the events of Passover Week. Luke 18 includes two parables that are only recorded in this Gospel: the parable of the persistent widow (Lk. 18:1-8) and the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector (Lk. 18:9-14), and both parables address the subject of prayer. As Jesus teaches on the coming of the Kingdom, He instructs the disciples to pray with perseverance as the widow who repeatedly sought vindication from the judge (Lk. 17:20-18:8). With the second parable, Jesus warns against prideful motivations for prayer and piety and advocates humility and dependence on God. Luke’s descriptions of Jesus in Gethsemane are unique from the other Gospels with regards to his emphasis on prayer. Luke records Jesus’ instructions for Peter, James, and John to pray that they not fall into temptation, describes Jesus earnestly petitioning God for a different path than the cross yet being strengthened by an angel, then urging the sleepy disciples to pray so they do not fall into temptation (Lk. 22:39-46). Jesus exemplifies what He teaches and establishes the importance of praying in the midst of trials.

As with the other Gospels, Luke records Jesus’ invitation to follow Him, warnings about the cost of being His disciple, and descriptions of how His followers should live (Lk. 9:23-27, 57-62; 14:25-33). In Luke 12-16, Luke describes money as a chief hindrance to following Christ, and this theme continues in Luke 17-23. The story of the rich young ruler demonstrates the danger of possessions and wealth (Lk. 18:18-30). In contrast to the rich young ruler, Zaccheus who was a tax collector trusted in Christ and demonstrated his repentance by restoring what he had taken (see Lk. 18:26-27). In this week’s readings, Luke contrasts wealth as a deterrent to following Christ with the generosity of both Zachaeus and the poor widow (Lk. 21:1-4).

As Jesus approaches Jerusalem on His way to Passover, Luke alone notes Jesus weeping over the city (Lk. 19:41-44). Although the people had praised Him (Lk. 19:28-40), Jesus had recently concluded a parable telling of His own rejection by the Israelites (Lk. 19:11-27), and He knew what the next week entailed. Jesus

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prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem that would occur in A.D. 70, and He weeps as He cites their rejection of Him as the reason for this coming judgment on the city (Lk. 19:44).

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 who He is and all He has done, not only for you but for the whole world, especially His great gift of salvation. Pray earnestly for God to send out more laborers into the harvest, to boldly proclaim the gospel and call people to faith and repentance. Pray for strength and perseverance to face adversity and persecution in the fallen world in which we live. Thank God for His daily provisions and ask Him to alleviate your worries and concerns. Ask God to guide you in obedience to His will to join Him on His mission of making disciples of all peoples. Pray for God to keep us focused on His mission and to not be turned from it by worldly temptation.
- *Pray for Our City:* This week we are praying for WorkFaith Birmingham's Workshop Kickoff on Friday, March 7, at New Rising Star Missionary Baptist Church in East Lake. WorkFaith Birmingham (workfaithbhm.org) mobilizes the Body of Christ in Birmingham to assist chronically unemployed adults and those in transition move forward in life through work and faith. We are also praying for Christ Church, UMC and Paul Lawler, Pastor.
- *Pray for Our World:* This week we are praying for field partner and Brook Hills member organization, Neverthirst. The Church at Brook Hills partners with Neverthirst in India, South Sudan, and Cambodia to provide access to clean water through the local church. The ultimate goal of providing clean water is sharing the gospel and seeing the church strengthened. Join us this week as we pray

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specifically for our projects in Cambodia through Neverthirst. For more information, visit neverthirstwater.org. This week, we are also praying for the Khmer peoples of Cambodia. For more information and ways to pray, visit brookhills.org/thisweek.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Summary

As we studied through Luke 9-16 this past week as a faith family, we read where Jesus defined what it means for us to follow Him. Based on Jesus' words to the three men in Luke 9:57-62, three questions can be asked of believing men and women in the twenty-first century. Are we going to choose comfort, or are we going to choose the cross? Are we going to settle for maintenance, or are we going to sacrifice for mission? Will our lives be marked by indecisive minds or undivided hearts? Each of the three men in Luke 9:57-62 had stipulations on following Christ, but He does *not* give us the option to follow Him on our terms. He has given us much to accomplish, but despite the cost, He is worthy of our trust and our obedience.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

As the leader, there are at least three directions the small group can take in light of the current Bible reading plan. Knowing the people in the group, prayerfully consider what would be the best route to help those in your group grow. The group's meetings could also vary with each week, so if one week's sermon prompts a lot of thought and discussion, option one could be what the group does that week while the next week could be different. As the leader, feel the freedom to take all or just some of the content in this guide and do what is best for your group.

- *Using the discussion questions below, the small group time can focus on discussing the sermon and how to apply it.*
- *The group can discuss the Bible readings from the past week. If choosing this route, ensure that the group does not simply discuss information but also focuses on how to apply what they have learned from the Bible readings. The information in the "Where We Are in the Story" section can assist the leader in knowing the background and context for the readings.*
- *Using the REAP (read, examine, apply, pray) outline for studying Scripture, the group can take one or both passages from that day's readings and discuss them. So if the group meets on Monday, then you could pick one or both of the passages for Monday. This also helps those who are new to studying the Bible or who struggle with reading it learn how to do so. To assist the group with REAP questions, download the Guide to Personal Worship from brookhills.org.*

As you prepare for small group, pray that the people in the group would not be defensive but would be open to the Spirit's leading in their lives, even if it involves a radical change in how they live.

In light of the sermon and the Bible readings in Exodus and Luke this past week (Ex. 7-13 and Lk. 10-16), what do these passages and this sermon teach us about what is involved in following God? What principles have you learned? In light of these truths, how does your life need to change? If our actions do not align with the Word, what does this say about our affections and how they need to change? What does an obedient response to the Word need to look like in your life?

In this sermon, Pastor David gives three guiding questions:

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- Are we going to choose comfort, or are we going to choose the cross?
- Are we going to settle for maintenance, or are we going to sacrifice for mission?
- Will our lives be marked by indecisive minds or undivided hearts?

Discuss these questions as a group. What do they mean? What does obedience look like? Resist the temptation to focus all of the group's time on discussing information at the expense of attending to why these truths are important and how we are to obey them this week. Encourage the group to pray and to think through how God wants them to live in light of these truths. How does this small group need to look in light of these truths? Urge the group not to deliberate into stagnation (to wait for a strong confirmation of what to do and, therefore, not doing anything) but to pray and to take action.

For those at The Church at Brook Hills, this coming Wednesday (March 5) is our church-wide prayer gathering and day of fasting. In conjunction with this sermon and our Bible readings, fast and pray for the unreached, oppressed, and impoverished people in this world. Fast and pray for laborers and for where God wants you to labor (Lk. 10:2). Fast and pray for your own affections, that you will fully trust God with your plans, dreams, and desires. As you fast and pray this week, put everything on the table before the Lord and ask Him what He wants you to give up or to do. If you are not at Brook Hills, consider setting aside a day to fast and pray together as a small group for these things.

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?).

- In what ways do we as American Christians and do you as a Christ-follower choose comfort over the cross in your lifestyle, your daily choices, etc.? What needs to change in our lives in order to shift to a cross-centered life?
- In what ways do we try to make serving God "comfortable"? How do we choose comfort in who, what, when, and where we serve or make disciples?
- Why is comfort a wrong motivation for our decision-making? What should be our motivation? What does choosing comfort say about our view of God?
- Read Luke 16:14-15. Identify ways in which we consume and indulge ourselves in this culture. In what ways do we justify our indulgences? How do we practically fight against our sinful tendencies and our own attempts to justify our actions?
- What would it look like to love your neighbor as yourself? How much time have you thought about yourself today – what you want, what you will do, etc.? Have you loved your neighbor as you have loved yourself today? How do you cultivate an increased awareness and love for other people?
- What is social justice? Why is it important? What should be the Christian's motivation for defending and helping the powerless, the poor, and the oppressed? What inhibits us from defending and upholding the dignity of the poor? What keeps *you* from fighting against social ills in your community and in the world? What would a step of obedience look like for you in this area?
- What needs are currently present in the world? In your city? In your circle of acquaintances, friends, and family members? How are you addressing needs? Obviously, there are more needs than one person can meet on their own, so how can you walk in obedience in the face of overwhelming need? Why is the attitude "I can't do everything so I won't do anything" the wrong mentality to have?
- Think about the dynamics and the direction of your small group. Does this group exemplify what it looks like to sacrifice your lives for the gospel and for the sake of urgent physical and spiritual need in the world? Why or why not?

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- Read Luke 9:59-62. The two men in this passage wanted to follow Christ on their terms. What stipulations have you placed on following Christ in your own life (“I’ll follow Christ if…” or “I’ll follow Christ when…”)? What does this mindset say about our understanding of God’s character and about what it means to be a Christ-follower?
- Luke 14:25-33 encourages people to count the cost when it comes to following Christ. How does not counting the cost relate to nominal Christianity? What does a nominal Christian’s daily life look like? How do we confront nominal Christianity in our culture? How can you lovingly confront this sin and share the gospel with the nominal Christians in your life (friends, co-workers, family members)?
- What is the difference between a peacetime mentality and a wartime mentality in how we live our lives as Christians? How do we live each day with a sense of urgency about physical and spiritual need in this world and in our community? What would it look like for you and for this small group to live as though it is wartime?
- Read Luke 15. What does this chapter teach us about God’s heart for the lost? Does your concern for the lost look more like the sheep owner, the woman, and the father, or does it look more like the grumbling Pharisees and scribes? Or are you apathetic? If we do not have a burden and concern for the physical and spiritual needs in this world, why? How do address this in our own hearts? When are we going to get to a point where the concept of unreached people groups is no longer tolerable for us? What will it take for you to get to that point? Why do we tolerate this unfortunate reality in the world?