

Small Group Guide GOOD NEWS FOR THE POOR

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

April, 27, 2014

Leviticus 25:8-55

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 April 28-May 4, 2014

Numbers 5-11

Psalm 39-48

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

Background of Numbers: Within two years of leaving Egypt, the Israelites arrive on the fringes of the Promised Land and enthusiastically send in twelve spies to scout the land, but instead of trusting in God's promises to give them the land, the people fearfully rebelled and made plans to return to Egypt (Num. 14:1-4). Written by Moses, this book contains the record of what happened to the Israelites during the forty years of wilderness wanderings that occurred because of their disobedience and doubt. The English title of Numbers refers to the prominent census accounts in the book that reflect the fulfillment of God's promise that none of the people who had experienced God's deliverance from Egypt would enter into the Promised Land, except for Caleb and Joshua (Num. 14:20-35).

Structure of Numbers:

- Numbers 1:1-10:10 occurs while Israel is still at Mt. Sinai, and it picks up where Exodus leaves off.
- Numbers 10:11-12:16 describes the Israelites' journey from Mt. Sinai to the outskirts of the Promised Land.
- Numbers 13:1-20:13 contains significant accounts of disobedience by the nation, a Sabbath-breaker, Korah, and Moses, and it includes God's response and instruction in light of those events.
- Numbers 20:14-22:1 tell of Israel's military victories against several hostile nations and emphasizes God's preservation of His people.
- Numbers 22:2-36:13 concludes the book with a census of the people, a reiteration of the laws and feasts given by God, and a transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua as the people prepare to enter the Promised Land after their wilderness wanderings.

This Week in Numbers: As God prepared the people to leave Mt. Sinai for the Promised Land, He gave them instructions for how to remain pure as they traveled to Canaan (Num. 5-10). This included what to do with lepers (Num. 5:1-4) as well as how to make reparations when committing an offense against another person (Num. 5:5-10) and how to respond when a woman is suspected of adultery (Num. 5:11-31). While the adultery test may seem unfair and severe to our Western perception (especially since only women were tested and not men), God places Himself as the ultimate Judge rather than having a human fulfill that role. Only God knew whether or not she was actually guilty, and He established the proceedings in a way where He alone rendered the verdict of guilty or not guilty, which He did by what supernaturally happened after the woman drank the bitter, cursed water. In a society where a woman could have easily been unfairly charged

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for adultery because they were under the legal protection and jurisdiction of their father or husband, God graciously prevented men from being able to judge her.

Numbers 6 explains the details of the Nazarite vow, which Israelites could voluntarily take if they wished to separate and dedicate themselves to God, and it involved both dietary regulations and no contact with dead bodies. Nazarites, such as Sampson (Judg. 13-16), were visibly identified by their long hair, which was the reason for the prohibition against cutting their hair.

Numbers 7 depicts the people's devotion to as they gave silver, incense, animals, and grain offerings for the sanctuary, and Numbers 8 follows by describing the consecration and the retirement plan for Levites. Before leaving Mt. Sinai, the people celebrated Passover for the first time since the original Passover plague in Egypt, and they learned how to observe the Passover when extenuating circumstances made them unclean and unable to participate in the celebration (Num. 9).

God supernaturally led His people through the wilderness, and He manifested His presence among the people by a cloud over the sanctuary during the day and by a pillar of fire over the sanctuary at night (Num. 9:15-23). When the cloud lifted, the people knew that it was time to pick up camp and move, and the priests would summon the people using two silver trumpets (Num. 10:1-10).

The people obeyed God as they set out from Mt. Sinai, and the Ark of the Covenant went before the people (Num. 10:33-36). Although they had experienced God's provision and power in tangible ways, the people began complaining as they journeyed from Sinai to the Promised Land, and God judged them by sending fire from heaven to consume some of the people (Num. 11). While God had given them manna to eat, the "rabble" among them expressed their discontent and cried for the meat and vegetables that they had in Egypt. This disgruntled group was the "mixed multitude" that chose to accompany the Israelites as they left Egypt (Ex. 12:38). Their desire for the previous life and their lack of satisfaction with God's care angered the Lord, and while He fed them with quail, He also struck them with a plague after spending a month watching their indulgence (Num. 11:18-21, 31-35). This demonstrated talionic justice where the punishment fits the crime, for what the people had so greatly desired became the source of their sickness and loathsome to them.

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

Background & Structure of Psalms: God used many different writers to write Psalms: David, Moses, the sons of Korah, Asaph, etc. The book is arranged in five parts, and this arrangement occurred after the people of Israel returned to the land after the Babylonian exile. A doxology concludes each book or arrangement of psalms (Psalm 41:13 for Book 1, Psalm 72:18-19 for Book 2, Psalm 89:52 for Book 3, Psalm 106:48 for Book 4, and Psalm 150:6 for Book 5), and the entire book of Psalms climactically ends with a grand doxology of several psalms (Ps. 146-150).

- Book 1: Psalms 1-41
- Book 2: Psalms 42-72
- Book 3: Psalms 73-89
- Book 4: Psalms 90-106
- Book 5: Psalms 107-150

This Week in Psalms:

- In Psalm 39, King David describes his efforts to keep silent in the presence of unbelievers about being chastened by God for sin he had committed. In the midst of suffering, he asks God for understanding of the brevity of life, and he hopes in the Lord and requests forgiveness for his sin and deliverance from his suffering.
- After describing God's saving acts, the psalmist of Psalm 40 expresses confidence that the Lord would not fail him in his current situation. The middle of the psalm focuses on dedication to the Lord,

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and the psalmist's devotion overflows from his praise of God. This devotion is what God desires instead of any ritual, tradition, or outward sign of obedience. Hebrews 10:5-7 quotes this psalm in reference to Christ, for the author of Hebrews recognized that this psalm found its fullest meaning in Christ's perfect dedication to the Father.

- In the Psalm 41, King David describes how God sustained him when he was ill and protected him from his enemies and even a close friend who had betrayed him during this time. King David notes how the Lord protects and delivers those who assist the needy and weak, and he gives thanks to God for His care of him. Psalm 41 concludes Book One of Psalms, and as the doxology of Book One, verse thirteen extols God as eternal and as the covenant God of Israel.
- Psalm 42 begins Book Two of Psalms. This section of Psalms continues to emphasize God's help in times of distress, but it also focuses on the believer's obedience. Psalm 42-43 stand as one psalm in Hebrew, and the refrain in Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5 serve as evidence of their unity. In this lament, the psalmist expresses a yearning for the Lord despite feeling forgotten by Him. The psalmist's situation leads him to cry out to God for vindication against the ungodly who oppress him.
- In Psalm 44, the people of Israel remember God's faithfulness to their forefathers, and in this national lament, they question why He has allowed His people to suffer such a great military defeat. They do not understand why He did not answer their prayers for victory and why He did not help them. Although they do not understand His ways, they continue to express hope and trust in Him and in His steadfast love, and they urge Him to come to their aid.
- As a psalm about a royal wedding, Psalm 45 praises the virtues of the king and his bride. Although it would have been written for a particular king for his wedding, we do not know the identity of the king, but the psalm would have commonly been sung at royal weddings. It begins with description of the king (vv. 1-9), instructions for the bride (vv. 10-15), and a benediction for the marriage (vv. 16-17). This psalm also serves as a messianic psalm, for it ultimately points to Christ as the ideal king coming for His bride, the church. Hebrews 1:8-9 quotes Psalm 45:6-7 regarding the reign of Christ, and Revelation 19 records the marriage supper of the Lamb when Christ is reunited with His bride in heaven.
- Psalm 46 describes the strength, reliability, and security in times of trouble. His people can rest in His presence with them and His power to uphold and protect them. His victory is certain.
- Psalm 47 acknowledges God as King over all the earth, and the psalmist urges the people to praise Him for His authority and His power of all people. All people should praise Him because He is worthy of their praise as the Most High Lord. While this psalm originally was written describing God's power and victory over nations who opposed Israel, it also applies to God's sovereignty over Satan and all evil spiritual forces.
- The focus of Psalm 48 is Mount Zion or Jerusalem, which was the place of God's presence since it is where the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant resided. The city is beautiful and celebrated because God's presence was there. He is the One who should be praised, and the psalmist encourages the people to tell the next generation about the Lord and about His mighty works.

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?

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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 His holiness and ask Him to continue to make each of us holy as He is holy. Pray for families within our church to be strengthened and united closer together through faith and love for one another. Praise God for His extravagant grace and the redemption available to all of us. Pray for those in our faith family struggling financially to be strengthened in their reliance upon God. Pray for the poor in our city to look to God as their ever-present help. Pray for the role we all have to play in assisting the poor and sharing the gospel with all those in need.
- *Pray for Our City:* This week we are praying for PAX student exchange program (academicexchange@pax.org), international high school students coming to Birmingham, and the families hosting them. We are also praying for Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster, and Matt Brooks, Pastor.
- *Pray for Our World:* For the next four weeks we will be spending our time highlighting and praying for the people of Turkey. This was our highlight for Secret Church, and we as a faith family want to join the thousands around the world who are praying for Turkey for thirty-one days. Join us this week as we pray for the people of Turkey. This week we are also praying for our Short-Term teams serving in Liberia and Greece.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

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What is the Year of Jubilee?

- It happened...
 - Every fiftieth year.
- It involved...
 - The return of everyone's land.
 - The restoration of everyone's freedom.
- It was...
 - Good news for the poor.
 - Sobering news for the wealthy.

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What Was Its Purpose?

- To acknowledge the holiness of God.
- To support healthy families.
- To prevent hopeless poverty.
- To promote holistic worship.
- To foreshadow hope in Christ.

How Does This Apply To Our Lives?

- God is the owner of all things.
 - We are His stewards.
- God is the Savior of His people.
 - We are His servants.
- God gives second chances to us.
 - We are recipients of extravagant grace.
- God gives clear commands to us.
 - We now reflect His extravagant grace.
 - We work to give the poor a chance to succeed.
 - We live to share the gospel with those in need.

Message Summary

God is holy and the owner of all things. He is gracious and merciful to His people, especially the poor. He established a celebration of redemption in Israel every 50 years called the Year of Jubilee where all land and freedoms were returned to the original owners, and it served as a once in a lifetime opportunity that was great news for the poor and sobering news for the wealthy. The Year of Jubilee promoted healthy families, giving the poor opportunities to provide for themselves. It also prevented excessive wealth, which provided opportunities for holistic worship. Ultimately, it provided reconciliation with each other.

The Year of Jubilee foreshadowed the hope to come in Jesus Christ. God did not leave us poor and hopeless in our sin. He provided Christ to reconcile us with Him and with each other forever. He did this by coming to us and paying the price for us so we could be set free. As Christians, we need to be good stewards and servants of all that God has given to us because it all belongs to Him and because He wants us to use it to serve others and give Him glory.

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.*

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- *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.*

Read the quote below from the book *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert:

Our relationship to the materially poor should be one in which we recognize that both of us are broken and that both of us need the blessing of reconciliation. Our perspective should be less about how we are going to fix the materially poor and more about how we can walk together, asking God to fix both of us.

Reflect and discuss what biblical evidence we can find in this statement and how that should affect the way we view God, the materially poor, and ourselves. Why shouldn't we try to "fix" the poor? Why do we so often attempt to "fix" them? How can we hurt the very people we are trying to help if we go about trying to "fix" them? In contrast, what does it look like to "walk together" with another person? Discuss ways in which you and those in your group can remember that we are all in spiritual poverty apart from Christ (Rom. 3:23) and how you can be better stewards and servants of God.

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?).

- Share examples in your personal life that you would consider a "once in a lifetime" opportunity. What made that experience so special?
- Read Leviticus 25:8-12. Imagine being someone who has fallen into financial hopelessness as an Israelite and who is hearing the Word of God announce the Year of Jubilee. Describe what you would feel and why.
- Read Leviticus 25:23. While we are not Israelites with the land of Canaan, 1 Peter 2:11 teaches that Christ-followers are also "strangers and sojourners." What does it look like to live as a sojourner or as a guest in a foreign land? What implications should this have for how we live on the earth?
- Read Leviticus 25:47-55. What are the primary differences between the slavery we think of in the western culture and the slavery that is described in these verses? As Christ-followers, who are we slaves to (v. 55)? How should this affect how we live and how we view and respond to God?
- Read Luke 4:16-21. Discuss how Jesus fulfilled the passage from Isaiah. How is Christ the ultimate Year of Jubilee?
- Read Romans 3:23; 6:23. We may not all be physically poor, but all of us are spiritually poor and desperately in need of a Redeemer. How should this attitude positively affect the way a wealthy person relates to a poor person, especially in sharing the gospel? How can we cultivate greater humility in ourselves?

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- Read the Parable of the Ten Minas in Luke 19:11-27. What is overarching truth of this parable? Imagine being given \$125,000 to invest. What would you do with it? Why is it so hard not to spend or keep such an investment for ourselves? How can we fight against such tendencies in our lives?
- What does it mean to be a steward? Describe the characteristics of a good steward. How does that translate to being God's steward? Knowing we are going to stand before the owner of all things, how should this affect how we steward the resources and the time God has given to us? Why is it so hard to let go of what we want and what we have?
- Read Galatians 2:20. Does your life exemplify the truths expressed in this verse? What are some common excuses we as Christians come up with when we hear "your life is not your own"? When we try to live as though our life is our own, what does that express about our view of God? What does that express about our view of ourselves? If you are unwilling to give God a blank check with your life, why? What prevents you from trusting Him with your life?
- God is the give of second chances, which is the heart of the Year of Jubilee. Give one example in your life where you know that you have received a second chance or numerous chances. How did it feel to receive that second (or third or fourth) chance? Do you express similar gratitude and praise to God for extending grace and forgiveness to you, a sinner? How can you grow in your praise and personal worship of God?
- Read Luke 17:7-10. As servants of Christ, we are called to reflect His love, mercy, and grace to those in our lives. Why is it important to remember that we are unworthy? How does that affect our attitude towards our owner and towards those we serve?
- How can you practically celebrate the Year of Jubilee in your life? How can you apply the truths expressed in Leviticus 25 and in this sermon?
- In your life, how are you reflecting God's extravagant grace? How are you advancing the gospel in your life?
- How are you working to give the poor a chance to succeed? Why is this important? How can you do this? What would a first step look like?