

Small Group Guide

OUR OBLIGATION TO THE UNREACHED (PART 2)

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

August 24, 2014

Romans 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 August 24-31

1 Samuel 17-24, Romans 15-16, and 1 Corinthians 1-5

Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (1 Samuel)

Background of 1 Samuel: Originally, 1 and 2 Samuel were one book but were divided into two books (probably because of length) in the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Old Testament. 1 Samuel spans Israel's history from the era of the judges to the establishment of a monarchy in Israel, and Samuel, Saul, and David stand as the main characters in this book. While we do not know who wrote 1 and 2 Samuel, one common conjecture assigns 1 Samuel 1-24 to Samuel and the rest to Nathan and Gad who were two prophets and contemporaries of King David.

Structure of 1 Samuel:

- 1 Samuel 1-7 describes the life of Samuel, the last judge of Israel.
- 1 Samuel 8-12 expresses the establishment of a monarchy in Israel with Saul as the first king.
- 1 Samuel 13-15 records the circumstances that led God to reject Saul and his line as rulers in Israel.
- 1 Samuel 16-31 chronicles the life of David beginning when God appointed him as the next king of Israel and concluding with the death of Saul when David assumed the throne.

This Week in 1 Samuel: Although he had been anointed as the next king of Israel, David did not immediately assume the throne because God had not yet removed Saul from his position, and David was to wait on God's timing. David served Saul as a musician then later as an armor-bearer. During his service to Saul (and during his own rule), the Philistines waged war against Israel. The Philistines were originally Greek people who were expelled from their land and then from Egypt after the fall of Troy, and they eventually settled on the coast of modern day Israel and Lebanon. They brought iron with them, which put the Israelites at a severe disadvantage in battle because their weapons were made of bronze (all of this is during the Iron Age of history). Warfare was necessary to obtain and to keep land, particularly for people like the Philistines who were not originally from the Middle East, and 1 Samuel 17 opens with a battle scene. Instead of each army losing thousands of soldiers, they decided to choose a warrior from each side to fight as a representative of the nation. The Philistines chose Goliath, a nine foot, nine inch giant, whose armor would have weighed almost as much as a Jewish person (126 pounds). Who would be willing to fight such a man? Who could fight him and prevail?

In defeating Goliath, David became famous in Israel, and it moved him into a position of leadership in Saul's army, which would be necessary training for him since he would spend most of his reign in battle against

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surrounding nations. It also enabled him to meet Jonathan, Saul's son, who would become a close friend and supporter of David's. Their relationship would have been more like father and son because of the significant age difference between them (Jonathan was about thirty years older than David), and although Jonathan would have inherited the throne from Saul, he recognized God's choice was David. 1 Samuel 18:1-5 demonstrates Jonathan's love for David, but it also indicates that he was pledging his loyalty to David and acknowledging him as the next ruler of Israel (see also 1 Sam. 20:14-16, 42; 23:17-18). Some liberals have interpreted Jonathan's actions to suggest a homosexual relationship existed between Jonathan and David, but these conjectures are unsubstantiated by Scripture.

Saul's jealousy of David's military fame leads him to attempt murder on several occasions, but God protected David during these years when he lived as an outlaw on the run. Keep in mind that Israel was in the initial stages of a monarchy at this time, so the rift between Saul and David presented a threat to the fledgling nation-state. 1 Samuel 21-23 demonstrates that David did not have the unanimous support of the Jewish people at this point in time. Despite Saul's attempts on David's life, David resisted what must have been a strong fleshly urge to kill Saul at En Gedi (1 Sam. 24). David continued to wait on God's timing for him to rule as king in Israel, and this perseverance, faith, and self-control would serve him well as king over the nation.

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

Background of Romans: Paul's wrote the letter to the church in Rome, which was a church he had not visited prior to writing the letter, to prepare them for his arrival before attempting to take the gospel to Spain. However, Paul did not make it to Rome until he was under house arrest while he appealed to Caesar (Acts 28), and as far as we know, he never made it further west than Rome. The church in Rome contained both Jewish and Gentile Christians, and this mixed community provided opportunity for conflict as seen in Romans 14-15. Romans 1:16-17 marks the thesis of Romans, for it explains the gospel as "the righteousness of God" that is available to all who believe. Romans 1-11 gives an overview of God's plan to redeem humanity, and Romans 12-16 describes how we should live in light of what God has accomplished.

Structure of Romans:

- Romans 1:1-15 contains Paul's greetings to the church at Rome and his tentative travel plans.
- Romans 1:16-4:25 unpacks God's wrath towards sinners and His grace towards those who trust in Christ.
- Romans 5-8 describes the hope and obedience of Christ-followers, despite a continued struggle against sin.
- Romans 9-11 surveys God's plan to save both Jews and Gentiles.
- Romans 12:1-15:13 explains how Christians are to live in light of the gospel.
- Romans 15:14-16:27 includes Paul's concluding remarks to the Roman believers, his upcoming travel plans, and his personal greetings.

This Week in Romans: Romans 15 concludes Paul's discussion that began in chapter thirteen regarding humility and unity between the stronger and the weaker in the Roman church. He upholds Christ as the example to emulate in this (Rom. 15:3, 7), for Christ limited His freedom for the sake of others. As Christ set aside Himself for others, so the believers should act in the best interests of other people instead of doing what was best for themselves. Paul's references to Christ transition into the reason for Christ's first coming – to confirm the God's promises to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and to bring salvation to even the Gentiles (Rom. 15:8-13). Therefore, Christ welcomes both Jews and Gentiles to the faith.

Romans 16 opens with a lengthy list of personal greetings and final instructions to the Roman believers before concluding with another doxology in which Paul prays for the believers to be strengthened according to the gospel and praises God for His wisdom.

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Where We Are In The Story ~ New Testament (1 Corinthians)

Background of 1 Corinthians: Acts 18 records Paul's initial visit to Corinth where he met Priscilla and Aquila, testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, reasoning with the Gentiles about Christianity, and facing opposition from the Jews. Despite the opposition, a church formed, and although Crispus the ruler of the synagogue was part of this local church, it consisted mostly of Gentiles (see 1 Cor. 12:2). Believers in Corinth also represented many different social classes – tradesmen like Priscilla and Aquila as well as rich householders like Crispus, Stephanus, and Gaius (Acts 18:1-4; 1 Cor. 1:26). Sexual immorality, Pentecostalism, disunity, and pride plagued this young church, which necessitated the writing of this epistle, and throughout the letter, Paul makes mention of various reports he had received regarding behaviors and beliefs among the Corinthians. Therefore, Paul targeted three specific problem areas in his letter: peace and love among the Corinthian believers, adherence to the gospel, and holiness in the world.

Structure of 1 Corinthians:

- 1 Corinthians 1-4 describes divisions in the Corinthian church and the wisdom of the gospel.
- 1 Corinthians 5-6 addresses the Corinthians' sexual immorality and lawsuits against one another.
- 1 Corinthians 7 contains instruction on singleness, celibacy, and marriage.
- 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1 uses the issue of eating food offered to idols to segue into a discussion on rights, Christian freedom, and idolatry.
- 1 Corinthians 11:2-34 discusses the behavior of men and women in worship and abuses with the Lord's Supper.
- 1 Corinthians 12-14 focuses on the purpose and appropriate use of spiritual gifts in the body.
- 1 Corinthians 15 provides an explanation of the resurrection of the believer.
- 1 Corinthians 16 details Paul's travel plans and final instructions to the Corinthians.

This Week in 1 Corinthians: Significant division existed in the Corinthian church, and Paul sought to unify this group of believers (1 Cor. 1:10). A primary reason for disunity included allegiance to certain teachers and factions that resulted from those allegiances (1:10-16). As a result, their pride, jealousy, and strife hindered their witness and prevented them from focusing on what is truly important. In response, Paul launched into a description of God's wisdom, for their spiritual pride demonstrated a lack of understanding of the gospel. The Corinthians would have been accustomed to philosophers traveling through their city, demonstrating great oratory skills as they expressed their different beliefs, and it is likely that the Corinthian believers were judging their Christian teachers according to these humanistic standards of style and delivery rather than focusing on the content they espoused. It is unlikely that Apollos or Peter (Cephas) were involved in these disputes, for Paul directs no instruction to these two men. However, the nature of the division in Corinth led Paul to provide an explanation of wisdom and a defense of his ministry and his relationship with the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 3:1-9; 4:1-20).

The division and arrogance of the Corinthians related to the instruction of their teachers stood as a symptom of a greater issue – a misunderstanding of the gospel. Pride has no place when salvation does not depend on the worthiness of a person to receive it. Also, according to human wisdom, a crucified Messiah seems ridiculous and weak, and Paul carefully distinguishes between worldly wisdom and divine wisdom as he corrects the Corinthians. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, David Garland quotes P. Lampe in explaining Paul's method of handling the Corinthians' party spirit:

Applying both general thoughts to the specific issue [All human, worldly wisdom will perish, and all Christian wisdom only comes from the Holy Spirit.], one arrives at the following conclusion: Either the wisdom of the apostles is a human quality and therefore a reason for praising them – but then it is also bound to perish – or the wisdom of the apostles is exclusively a spiritual gift from God, justifying God alone as the object of praise. In both cases the way is obstructed for praising apostles, which sums up the whole thought figure of 1:18-2:16.

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1 Corinthians 5:1-8 tells of a case of incest in the Corinthian church, and it seems to be a drastic change in conversation from the previous four chapters. The connection relates to pride. In 1 Corinthians 4, he describes the Corinthians as being “puffed up” and “arrogant” (4:6, 18, 19), and this haughty attitude also shows itself in their moral laxity (1 Cor. 5:2). This particular man engaged in incest, but the church body had not addressed this sin. They had developed a blasé attitude towards sexual sin. In relation, Paul’s command for them to “cleanse out the old leaven” in 1 Corinthians 5:7 is a reference to the Feast of Unleavened Bread when the Jews would rid their homes of anything that had leaven or yeast in it, and they would not eat any foods containing leaven until the feast was over. This feast came right after the Passover, and whereas the Passover symbolized God’s redemption of His people, the Feast of Unleavened Bread reminded the people of the purity and holiness that should occur in God’s people as a result of their redemption. In these verses, Paul applies the principle of this feast to the Christian life.

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 His gift of salvation. Pray we will all work together to bear the burden of reaching the nations with the gospel. Pray for others in our faith family to live as sacrifices, leaving a “blank check” on the table before God. Thank God for the faith family we have here at The Church at Brook Hills. Ask God where He would have you go to engage others with the gospel. Pray we will all work accomplish the mission of God while fixing our eyes on Christ.*
- Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for our college students’ return to classes in Birmingham and in other cities. We are also praying for New Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church and James Brooks, Pastor.*
- Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Mid-Termers John and Julie K. serving in Togo. John and Julie are on staff with Vapor Sports to help in the strategic development and operations of the Vapor Centers around the world.*

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Currently they are living and working in Togo engaging the community with the gospel and serving the needs of the center staff and those who come to participate in the sports camps. Join us this week as we pray for John and Julie and the work they are doing in Togo. For more information visit vaporsport.org.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

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Romans 9-16

Why a Blank Check?

- Because we've been saved by the gospel.
 - The inevitable reality...
 - The beauty of the gospel creates a burden for mission.
 - The bottom line...
 - The gospel is good enough to throw yourself into hell so that other people can have it.
- Because we've been sent by God.
 - For others' salvation.
 - For His glorification.
 - For our satisfaction.
- Because we are slaves of Jesus Christ.
 - We sacrifice our bodies for His worship.
 - We saturate our minds with His Word.
 - We surrender our wills in this world.
- Because we are servants in His church.
 - We're members of a family where everybody counts.
 - We're members of a family where everybody contributes.
- Because we are sure of His commission.
 - Jesus Christ died to redeem people from among all peoples for the praise of God.
 - We as Christians live to reach people from among all peoples for the praise of God.

What is a Blank Check?

- I will pray however You want me to pray...
- I will give whatever You want me to give...
- I will go whenever and wherever You want me to go...
- No matter what it costs...
- Knowing that You are my reward.

Message Summary

Paul gives an overview of God's plan to redeem humanity in Romans 1-11, and Paul surveys God's plan to save both Jews and Gentiles in chapters 9-11. He then closes the letter in Romans 12-16 by describing how we should live in light of what God has accomplished through the gospel. The "blank check" mentality gives God full rule of our lives with no strings attached to do whatever it takes to reach the nations with the gospel. The beauty and power of the gospel should create a burden to live out the mission and purpose of the church

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to spread the gospel to all nations. We are members of one body in Christ where everybody counts and is commanded to contribute as servants and slaves to Christ. As one body, we pray however He wants us to pray, give whatever He wants us to give, and go whenever and wherever He wants us to go for His glory and for the spread of the gospel. The more we give our lives, families, and church to this mission, the harder it will get for us in this world. Through God's power and promises, we can have hope and assurance with regards to our future knowing that He is our reward and worthy of all praise from all nations.

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.*

For some in your groups, this language of a blank check may be unfamiliar. As a group, unpack what this concept means. What is a blank check? What does this look like in our lives and families? *Why* should we give God a blank check? Discuss how a blank check mentality is the basis of what it means to be a Christian. If we are not willing to give God a blank check, why? What does that say about where we are in our relationship with God? Why is anything less than a blank check foolishness?

Because we use this phrase "blank check" a lot at Brook Hills, we get used to it. It becomes routine to us, but do we regularly take inventory of our lives to evaluate whether or not we are actually living this out? How do we avoid a mindset that acts as though the truths of this message and the gospel itself are common? For your small group and for our church, what are the implications of a blank check lifestyle? What will our lives, small groups, and churches look like if we have all given God a blank check? Take some time to pray together for God to reveal ways that He can continue His purpose and plan to receive praise from all peoples through your life, your family's life, your small group, and The Church at Brook Hills.

In the sermon, Pastor David walked through the Operation World website (operationworld.org). Consider selecting a country or a people group and reading and praying through the material during small group time. What if the group did this each week at small group? How can group members incorporate this into their individual time with God?

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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?).

- After reading through the book of Romans, have you said to God, "Whatever you want me to do to get the gospel to unreached peoples, I will do it"? Has your family said, "Whatever you want us to do to get the gospel to unreached peoples, we will do it"? Why are reasons for why believers are unwilling to give God a blank check? Why should we have a no strings attached mindset when we pray and submit our lives to God?
- How should being saved compel us to share the gospel with others?
- Do we revel in God's mercy and grace? Or do we act as though it is no big deal that we are saved? How do we cultivate an attitude of awe and gratitude in our lives? Why is this important?
- Read Romans 9:1-5. Paul is saying in a sense, "I would throw myself into hell if that would mean the salvation of these people." Why would Paul say that? What can we learn from Paul's burden for the Jews and how good the gospel? How do we develop a similar burden for the lost? Why is this important?
- Romans 5:8 says, "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." How is faith in that truth necessary? How does that show us God's love?
- How is giving a blank check to God *for our good*? If we are fearful of what God will ask of us, what truths should we remind ourselves of?
- Read Romans 12:1-2. How is this passage "blank check" language? As followers of Christ, we think differently than the world. What does it look like in our daily lives to "sacrifice our bodies for His worship"? "Saturate our minds with His Word"? "Surrender our wills in this world"?
- Read Romans 15:8-13. What is the call from the Old Testament to receive praises from all nations? If this has been the purpose of God all along, how can this truth fuel us today as individuals, families, and the church? What is God doing now in 2014 among His people to reach the nations for His glory? What have you seen Him do in your own life, family, and small group? Take time to praise God for how He has and is working in His people to reach the nations.
- Why should we say, "I will do whatever it takes no strings attached"? If we are honest, that sounds foolish to the culture. Why is being foolish to the world wise in the eyes of God? How does the reward of the future hope of the gospel far outweigh the cost of the challenges that come with the blank check mentality now?
- What would it look like in our lives to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20)? What needs to change in our life to fulfill the mission?
- How can we immediately be a part of what is going on in unreached places like Iraq and Syria through prayer? What part of your prayer life needs to grow or change to show a blank check mentality? What part of your giving needs to be more sacrificial? What does it look like practically in your life to say, "I will give whatever you want me to give"? What part of your "going" needs to show more of a blank mentality? This week, what steps can you take in one or in any of these areas?
- How can we live knowing that every follower of Christ counts and contributes for the sake of mission? What does this mean for your small group? Use this time to evaluate. How is everyone in the group contributing? What are ways that everyone can contribute? What gifts has God given the group members, and how are they using them to edify the Body? Does everyone in the group feel valued? Why or why not? You have much to give and are obligated to give it. What can you give this week for the sake of the lost and the glory of our King?