

Small Group Guide THE CHURCH AT BROOK HILLS (PART 1)

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

September 7, 2014

1 Corinthians

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 August September 8-14

2 Samuel 2-10, 1 Corinthians 13-16, and 2 Corinthians 1-3

Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (2 Samuel)

Background of 2 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. Written by an unknown author, 2 Samuel chronicles the reign of King David from the death of Saul to his census of the people.

Structure of 2 Samuel:

- 1 Samuel 1-5 describes the transition of leadership from Saul's family to David.
- 1 Samuel 6-7 includes God's covenant with David.
- 1 Samuel 8-20 contains descriptions of God's faithfulness to Israel as well as God's judgment of David for his sin.
- 1 Samuel 21-24 records David's praise of God and his response to punishment for his sin.

This Week in 2 Samuel: Although God had anointed David to become the next king of Israel, the twelve tribes were not all in agreement about this. So when David was setting up his government around 1011 B.C., he established himself in Hebron, the land of the tribe of Judah since he was a Judahite, for he at least at support from his own tribe at this time. Saul had reigned from Gibeah in the land of Benjamin since he was from that tribe, and David dared not set up government there, especially since Saul's son Ish-bosheth sought the throne and was named king by Abner, Saul's powerful military commander. Ish-bosheth ruled for two years before being murdered by two of his own captains (2 Sam. 4), and David remained king at Hebron for the first seven and a half years of his rule.

David faced many political obstacles during his reign, and he demonstrated great diplomatic skills in how he responded to the men of Jabesh-gilead (2 Sam. 2), to Abner (2 Sam. 3), and to the men who murdered Ish-bosheth (2 Sam. 4). But when Joab killed Abner in revenge, David risked looking as though *he* was behind the assassination plot, which could have undermined his attempts to unify the nation. David's order for those with him to mourn Abner's death led the people to understand that David was not responsible for Abner's assassination (2 Sam. 3:36-39).

With Ish-bosheth dead, the elders of Israel came to coronate David as king over *all* the tribes. Now that the entire nation recognized him as king, David needed to relocate the capital. Hebron was not an option if he

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wanted to continue unifying the country because of its location in Judah, the land of his own tribe. Plus, it was too far south to be accessible to the other tribes, and it was a Levitical city (Lev. 35; Josh. 21), which would make it difficult for the government to remain neutral with regard to religious affairs. It would not have been wise for David to choose a northern city because that it would ostracize his own tribe. Situated centrally in the nation with a walled defense structure already in place and with ties to Abraham (Gen. 14), Jerusalem appeared as the top choice, but it required Israel to defeat the Jebusites who had taken control of the city (2 Sam. 5).

The bringing of the ark to Jerusalem did not likely happen until the latter part of David's reign. We assume this because the building projects led by King Hiram of Tyre did not occur until the last ten years of David's reign since he did not become king of Tyre until 980 B.C. (David reigned from 1011-971 B.C.), and 1 Samuel 6:17 and 2 Chronicles 1:4 both imply that David had some sort of tent structure constructed before he attempted to bring the ark to Jerusalem. Why would David wait so long before bringing the ark to his capital? It took time for David to acquire favor among all the tribes of Israel, and it would have been unwise to tamper with religious tradition without support from the people of Israel. He also had his hands full with creating a government and defending the nation from the Philistines and other enemies. Also, with the ark at the home of Abinadab in Kiriath-jearim and the Mosaic tabernacle in Gibeon, would David attempt to transition the worship site for the nation without a revelation from God? We are not told of any such revelation in Scripture, although Scripture mentions Yahweh's choice of Zion in Psalm 78:68; 87:2; 132 (none of these psalms were written by David, though). It is likely that David left the tabernacle constructed during Moses' leadership at Gibeon and built another tabernacle in Jerusalem.

Uzziah's death could have been construed as evidence of David's presumption, although the people had not followed God's specified instructions for how to move the ark (see Ex. 25:10-22). 2 Samuel 6:14 mentions that David led the ark's procession from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem wearing a linen ephod, which was the clothing of the priests, and this too could have been seen by the people as overstepping his role much as Saul had done in 1 Samuel 13-15. How was it okay for David to dress in a linen ephod and to offer sacrifices when it was unacceptable for Saul to do so, especially since neither man was a Levite? Psalm 110 provides some insight into this, for David wrote about himself (and also about the Messiah) that he was a priest after the order of Melchizedek, a man who was both a priest and the king of Jerusalem (see Gen. 14). Although not a Levite (neither was Jesus), David could perform priestly duties because of this.

Having moved the ark to Jerusalem, David contemplated the need to build a permanent dwelling for it (2 Sam. 7), but God denied David's request to build a house for the Lord because David was a man of war. Instead, God promised that David's son would build the temple, and God established a covenant with David (referred to as the Davidic Covenant). This covenant included the following promises:

- "I will make your name great" (v. 9). This echoes God's words to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3.
- "I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them" (v. 10). Although in the Promised Land at this point, Israel still lacked complete dominion over the land God had promised them, and they lacked rest from their enemies. Later, the prophets understood these promises to point to a future kingdom, one that will come at the end of the age (see Isa. 9:7; 16:5; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16).
- "Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house" (v. 11). God would build a dynasty from David's line in fulfillment of the prophecy in Genesis 49. Unlike Saul's line, David's descendants would rule after him.
- David's son would build a house for God (v. 13).
- "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" (v. 14). David and all of his descendants who ruled after him would be designated as God's son. This ultimately was fulfilled in Christ, a descendant of David.
- "Your throne shall be established forever" (v. 16). This would not be a regular, earthly dynasty. David's descendants would rule eternally. This would either mean that every king would have a son who would rule or that there would be a king who would rule forever. Christ is the descendant who is eternal and who rules forever.

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2 Samuel 8-10 records some of David's military victories against the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, Amalekites, and Edomites, and further sketches of his military exploits continue through 2 Samuel 20, causing chapters nine through twenty to be known as the "Succession Narrative." For a map that demonstrates the territory conquered by David, click on map 053 at: searchingthescriptures.net/main_pages/free_bible_land_maps/.

2 Samuel 9 contains a brief account of David's interaction with Jonathan's son Mephibosheth (see also 2 Sam. 4:4). A notable word of this chapter is "kindness" (v. 3). This Hebrew word (khesed) means "lovingkindness" or "steadfast love" and is a key word signifying faithfulness to promises in a covenant relationship. 2 Samuel 9 records David keeping a promise to Jonathan that was made in 1 Samuel 20:42 (see also 1 Sam. 24:21-22). While most kings would completely eradicate anyone who would be a threat to the throne, David not only spared Mephibosheth's life but also magnanimously provided for him.

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, testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, reasoned with the Gentiles about Christianity, and faced 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: 1 Corinthians 13 stands in the middle of a section on spiritual gifts and the body of Christ and must be understood in this context. The Corinthian church experienced division because it elevated certain gifts such as prophecy and tongues over others, hence the reference to these two particular gifts in 1 Corinthians 13:1-2. Without love, the gifts when demonstrated are empty and meaningless. *All* spiritual gifts are important to the body of Christ, and rather than prioritize gifts, the church should prioritize loving one another and putting each other's needs ahead of one's self-interests. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 addresses all of the behavioral problems mentioned throughout this letter, and Paul diagnoses the root of their actions as a lack of love.

Believers and denominations today disagree about the gift of tongues. Those who believe that gifts such as tongues and prophecy were practiced in the era of the early church but not today are called "cessationists," and those who believe that the Holy Spirit continues to give these gifts are called "continuationists." For those who do not know what speaking in tongues involves, David Garland provides the following definition in his commentary on 1 Corinthians: "Speaking in tongues is a euphoric experience that causes the speaker to emit

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a pattern of sounds that have no meaning to those who do not have the gift of interpretation. Without interpretation, glossolalia cannot edify, encourage, or exhort others. Instead, it cloaks the truth of the gospel in a veil of incoherence.” For more on speaking in tongues, listen to Matt Mason’s sermon “The Cross and Christian Gifts: Prophecy and Tongues” from October 2013 (radical.net).

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul addresses the misuse of tongues and prophecy in the Corinthian church and emphasizes that they are meant to build up the church. Essentially, they are beneficial gifts when used as intended by God, and they are even to be desired (see 1 Cor. 14:1). For corporate worship, Paul advocates that interpretation be given if someone speaks in tongues, and more than anything, he urges the believers to “strive to excel in building up the church” (v. 12). With regard to prophesy, Paul instructs the Corinthians to have others in the body weigh what is said by the prophet, which creates accountability by measuring the prophet’s words against Scripture.

The phrase in 1 Corinthians 14:34 that states “the women should keep silent in the churches” creates confusion and controversy among modern readers. When approaching difficult portions of Scripture, a good rule of thumb is to learn about the original audience, to learn about the situation being addressed in the passage and surrounding context, and to question how this passage fits with the rest of Scripture. Reading this statement in the context of 1 Corinthians 14 and the discussion of tongues and prophecy, it is unlikely that the statement means that women can never speak in church, especially since there are other passages in Scripture that mention female prophets as well as women praying in church (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5). 1 Corinthians 14:34 most likely is instructing the women not to question, correct, or challenge a prophecy in the church assembly, especially since the preceding context has to do with the evaluation of prophecy in corporate worship.

The chaos of people speaking over one another (vv. 30-33) also provides insight into Paul’s statement. Much as a classroom teacher will tell students not to waste the time of the entire class by asking a question that is better suited in a one-on-one conversation with the teacher, Paul instructs the women not to speak or ask questions in front of the entire congregation but to discuss these with their male family members at home. This gives the impression that women had begun asking questions or challenging what had been said in a prophecy during corporate worship gatherings. David Garland explains the situation by stating, “The key phrase is ‘if they want to learn...something,’ which implies a situation in which they are reacting to prophesy...It also implies that they do not understand and have no positive contributions to make on the topic at hand” (*1 Corinthians*). Throughout his letters, Paul supports the learning and growth of all believers – men and women, so we should not take Paul’s words to either belittle women or to discourage them from asking questions about the faith. The overarching concern in 1 Corinthians 14 has to do with order in the church and everyone acting in a manner that promotes unity and edification among the body; therefore, 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 should be read with this understanding.

1 Corinthians 15 centers on the bodily resurrection of the dead because some of the Corinthians were promoting the converse of this (see 1 Cor. 15:12), and this chapter roots our hope of a bodily resurrection in Christ’s bodily resurrection, which is a truth all of the Corinthians agreed on. His bodily resurrection from the dead is a type of firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20). Since we are all like Adam in our death and punishment for sin (vv. 21-22), we are also all like Christ with regards to our future resurrection (vv. 21-23). Christ conquered sin and death at His resurrection, and at the end of the age, His victory will be complete (vv. 24-28). Therefore, Paul argues that if there is no bodily resurrection of the dead then death has not actually been defeated. If this is true, then there is no hope for the future (vv. 29-34). 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 provides insight on *how* the dead will be raised and points to great joy and victory that is to come to all who follow Christ. 1 Corinthians 16 concludes with final instructions to the Corinthians and details of Paul’s travel plans.

Where We Are In The Story (2 Corinthians)

Background of 2 Corinthians: In 1 Corinthians, we learn that Paul sent Timothy to Corinth because of his concerns about this church (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10). Timothy’s experiences in Corinth prompted Paul to visit these

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believers in what he describes as a “painful visit” (2 Cor. 2:1), particularly because of his interactions with an unnamed Corinthian (2 Cor. 2:5-11). This visit and Titus’ report about the Corinthian church led Paul to write a “severe letter” to the Corinthians (see 2 Cor. 2:3; 7:8-12), which has been lost, so 2 Corinthians is actually the third letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. This letter was meant to prepare the Corinthians for his impending visit, which is described in Acts 20:3. Opponents of Paul who were preaching a false gospel also materialized in Corinth (2 Cor. 3:1; 11:4), and Paul provides a defense of his ministry in 2 Corinthians because of the accusations of these “super apostles” (2 Cor. 10-12). His defense leads to the theme in this letter of God’s power and sufficiency despite human weakness.

This Week in 2 Corinthians: Paul begins this letter with a message of comfort and explains how God had used his persecution and suffering because of his service of the gospel to bring salvation and ultimate comfort to others. Paul serves as an example of God’s purpose in suffering, and his example was meant to encourage the Corinthians to remain steadfast in the faith and faithful in their witness (2 Cor. 1:1-11).

Paul’s change in travel plans had become a sore subject with the Corinthians because he had yet to follow through on his promise to visit them again, which is why he gives such a detailed explanation of his travels in 2 Corinthians 1-2. 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 begins by Paul explaining that he is not like the “peddlers of God’s word” (2 Cor. 2:17), and he points out that the believers in Corinth are evidence themselves of Paul’s authenticity as an apostle and preacher of the gospel (2 Cor. 3:1).

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: Confess your surrender of everything in your life to Christ. Praise God for the journey on which He has each of us to grow in our knowledge of and dependence upon Him. Pray each of our walks with God will be strengthened daily. Ask God to help us abide in His peace and presence in the days ahead. Ask Him to help us show the world that He is the One that grows His church. Pray we will also grow to be known for our love for one another as well as for the nations.*

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- *Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for the new Central Park Ministry Center being developed by the Birmingham Baptist Foundation at the Central Park Baptist Church campus and for the Central Park Christian School that meets there. We are also praying for Trinity Baptist Church, Graymont, and John King, Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills partner, the International Mission Board (IMB). The IMB is the primary mission organization for Southern Baptist churches and works in every area of the world to make disciples of all peoples in fulfillment of the Great Commission. The IMB is one of The Church at Brook Hills' main partners in sending Short-Term, Mid-Term, Long-Term, and Church Planting teams overseas. To learn more about the International Mission Board, visit imb.org.*

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

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What I Am Hoping We Take Away From These Days...

- Surrender.
- Abide.
- Rest.
 - The same Lord who led me to this point will lead me from this point.
 - The same Lord who led Brook Hills to this point will lead Brook Hills from this point.

What I Am Trusting Will Be Evident In The Days To Come...

- Brook Hills has never been about one man.
- Brook Hills has always been about one message.
 - This church testifies to the authenticity of God's gospel.
 - This church demonstrates the sufficiency of God's Word.
 - This church follows the leadership of God's Spirit.
 - So seize this opportunity!
 - To show a watching world that God is the One who grows His church.
- Brook Hills is an army that cannot be stopped on mission.
 - They are zealous for holiness in this culture.
 - In their lives.
 - In their families.
 - In the church.
 - They are passionate about the lost in the world.
 - Across Birmingham.
 - Among the nations.
- Brook Hills is a body that consists of committed members.
 - They worship wholeheartedly as a church.
 - They love selflessly in community.
 - They give sacrificially in a world of urgent need.
 - They stand resolutely in the hope of Christ's return.

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Message Summary

In this message, Pastor David presents what he is hoping The Church at Brook Hills takes away from these days of transition and what he prays will be evident in our church in the coming days. Primarily, the takeaways include surrendering, abiding, and resting in Christ as we trust that the same Lord who led us *to* this point as a church will lead us *from* this point. Brook Hills has always been about one message rather than about one man, and it is a body of committed members who are an army that cannot be stopped on mission. As we face the days to come, may we seize the opportunity to show a watching world that *God* is the One who grows His church.

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.*

If your group spent last week processing Pastor David's news about his transition to the International Mission Board instead of discussing the content of the Small Group Guide, then consider incorporating into this week's discussion the group questions from last week's guide about surrendering and abiding, especially since Pastor David includes those two words as the initial points in this week's sermon. The concepts of surrendering and abiding provide a foundational understanding for this week's message.

An overarching question for this week and next week's sermon is: What is God saying to The Church at Brook Hills in these days? Because of His sovereignty, God knew and ordained that this transition would happen at this time, and He has purpose in it for our church, for the Platt family, for the International Mission Board, and for the unreached in the world. Continue to take time as a small group to pray for Brook Hills during this season. Both the staff of the church and the Elders of the church have retreats before next Sunday, so pray for the short-term and the long-term planning that will happen at these retreats. Ask God to grant us all wisdom and sensitivity to the Spirit as we read His Word and discern what God is saying to us as individuals and as a church.

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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?).

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, 9, 22-24, 26-29 and note Paul's use of the words "called" and "chosen." God has a will for your life, and He calls you according to it. Based on what is stated in Scripture, what is part of God's calling for us as believers?
- Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. We do not call the shots in our life because we have been called by God. Why do we *try* to call the shots on how we live, where we live, and what we do? How do we resist this inclination? What truths do we need to remind ourselves of?
- As a child of God – called by God, surrendered to Christ, and abiding in Christ – you can rest in Him. What type of rest is this referring to? How do you rest when you do not know the outcome or the answers to your questions? What does it look like to rest, even when everything around us is chaos? If we do not rest, what does that indicate about us and about our trust in God?
- What is true about God when we face seasons of unanswered questions and when so much about our life is unknown? How do these truths enable us to rest in Him?
- "The same Lord who led Brook Hills to this point will lead Brook Hills from this point." Discuss the implications of this statement for our church in the days ahead. How should this truth affect how we pray and how we think about the transition ahead of us? What reassurance does this truth provide?
- What do we mean when we say that God's Word is sufficient? How does The Church at Brook Hills demonstrate the sufficiency of God's Word? How has the Bible led us as a church? In your own life, how are you demonstrating the Word's sufficiency? What prevents God's people from living as though Scripture is true and enough? How do we know God's Word is sufficient?
- As a church, how do we continue to demonstrate the sufficiency of God's Word and follow the leadership of God's Spirit no matter *who* our senior pastor is?
- Read 1 Corinthians 3:6-9. God is the One who grows His church, and at the same time, He invites us to join with Him in His work. When it comes to evangelism and disciple-making, what does God do, and what does man do in this process?
- According to God's standards, what does it look like to be "zealous for holiness" in this culture? Define holiness. To be holy, what needs to change in your life? What sin(s) do you need to flee? Are you casual about sin? How can you be vigilant about holiness in what you watch, say, or think about?
- How can you encourage holiness in your family (as a parent, a child, or a sibling)?
- Some believers can easily become discouraged when hearing one more thing that God expects them to do, especially when they see how often they fail. How can we live in light of the truths of Romans 8 instead of the discouragement of Romans 7 when it comes to commands from Scripture about how we should live as Christ-followers?
- How is a passion for the lost currently manifesting itself in your life? How can you grow in the discipline of evangelism? How can you cultivate a fervency for mission and a burden for the lost? What is one step you can take this week? What does praying, giving, and going to the nations need to look like in your life?
- Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. What does it mean to be part of the body of Christ? Why is church membership important? What are the benefits of church membership? Why do some believers not commit to a local church? Why is church hopping dangerous for the believer? Describe the contrast between being committed to the local church and being committed to a local pastor.
- What does it look like to love selflessly in community? How can we as believers grow in our love for each other? What does it look like for your small group to love each other selflessly? When you grow tired or weary of loving the people in your group, what does it look like to respond in a Christ-like manner in those moments?

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