

Small Group Guide FROM BIRMINGHAM TO SEATTLE

The Church at Brook Hills
20:17-38

Dr. David Platt and Andrew Arthur

March 13, 2011

Acts

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word through His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—*a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.*

Review—*a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time. Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to revisit the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.*

Prayer—*a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.*

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications in our lives:

Sermon Outline

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Acts 20:17-38

Foundations...

- We are _____ serving _____ God together.
- We are _____ spreading _____ the gospel together.
 - As we become active in _____ sending _____ one another...
 - We will experience the pain of _____ separating _____ from one another.

To the Church in Birmingham...

- Please pray that we would be faithful in the midst of _____ uncertainty _____.
 - God always gives the _____ directive _____.
 - God sometimes gives the _____ direction _____.
 - Wherever you are, be all _____ there _____.
 - Wherever you go, be all _____ in _____.
 - God rarely gives the _____ details _____.
- Please pray that we would be faithful in the midst of _____ difficulty _____.
 - The analogy of Acts 20:24...

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- Not in the promise of Paul's _____ persecution _____...
- But in the passion of Paul's _____ perspective _____.
- The application of Acts 20:24...
 - Faithfulness to Christ is more valuable than _____ life _____.
 - Do difficulties too easily _____ side-track _____ our service to Christ?
- The appeal of Acts 20:24...
 - As difficulties arise, let's lift up our _____ eyes _____ and recognize the supreme worth of Christ.
- Please know that as you pray this way for us, we are praying this way for you.

To the Church in Seattle...

- Go for the _____ salvation _____ of others.
- Go with the _____ Word _____ of God.
- Guard your _____ hearts _____.
- Care for the _____ church _____.
 - Remember that the church _____ belongs _____ to Him.
 - Remember that the church was _____ bought _____ by Him.
- Be _____ alert _____.
 - You will face _____ persecution _____ from outside the church.
 - You will face _____ opposition _____ from inside the church.
- Be _____ devoted _____.
 - To the ministry of _____ prayer _____.
 - Have faith in _____ God _____.
 - To the ministry of the _____ Word _____.
 - Have confidence in the _____ gospel _____.
- Give _____ selflessly _____.
- Go _____ sacrificially _____.

Conclusions...

- We temporarily _____ separate _____ from one another for the progress of His gospel.
- We will eternally _____ join _____ with one another for the praise of His glory.

Message Summary

Acts 20:17-38 is a record of Paul's farewell address to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, a people he spent two years with and loved dearly. Paul was headed for Jerusalem and wanted to avoid stopping in Ephesus so he could reach his destination by Pentecost, so he sent for the elders of the Ephesian church and proceeded to exhort, encourage, direct, and pray with them as he said his good-byes.

Today's sermon, split between Dr. David Platt and Andrew Arthur, pastor of the church being planted in Seattle, Washington, highlights the foundations of serving God and spreading the gospel together as we send each other out from Birmingham to the rest of the world. Andrew Arthur shared ways in which The Church at Brook Hills can pray for the new church being planted in Seattle, specifically that they will be faithful in the midst of uncertainty and difficulty as the team moves and builds relationships in Seattle. In the process of requesting prayer, he affirmed truths about God: that He always gives the directive (to testify to the gospel), only sometimes gives the direction, and rarely gives the details as seen in Acts 20:22-23. From Acts 20:24, Andrew highlighted Paul's perspective in the midst of certain persecution and our responsibility to be faithful as we strive to avoid things that side track our service to Christ as we strive to fix our eyes on Christ alone.

Dr. Platt offered a challenge to the church being planted in Seattle that is also a challenge to all believers seeking to follow God wherever He may lead. From Acts 20:26-38, he exhorted them to go for the salvation of

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others with the Word of God, to guard their hearts as they care for the Church—God’s Church bought with Christ’s blood, and to be alert and devoted to prayer and the Word, all as they determine to give selflessly and go sacrificially. The Church at Brook Hills commissioned the team through prayer, realizing that as we temporarily separate from each other for the progress of the gospel, we will eternally join with one another for the praise of His glory.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review the Head (What does God want me to know?), Heart (What does God want me to value?), and Hands (What does God want me to do?) aspects of the message.

- As you read Paul’s words to the Ephesian church elders in Acts 20:18-35, what most stirs you? What most challenges you? What most convicts you?
- Have you honestly asked God where He wants to use you to spread the gospel—here or elsewhere? Why is a constant openness so important?
- As you think about Andrew Arthur’s statement that the one indisputable condition for following Christ is that it must be free from conditions, do you see any conditions on the way you follow Jesus? If so, what are they?
- If one of the most important directives we know for our lives as Christians is to testify about the gospel, why are we so tempted to replace or diminish our testimony with other good things such as service or giving?
- How can your future goals overshadow where you are today and interfere with an obedient response to the Holy Spirit’s leading in the present? Why is daily surrender to the Lord so important?
- Read Acts 20:24. How did Paul’s perspective overcome the persecution he knew he would face?
- How did Paul’s view of himself as “the chief of sinners” enable him to obey God in the midst of persecution? Why is it important to shift your perspective from “entitled” to “surrendered”?
- In what ways have you dignified your difficulties by taking your eyes off of your goal—Christ—and turning them toward your difficulties instead? (*See Heb. 12:1-2.*)
- In Revelation 2:1-7 (especially vs. 4), what do we learn happened to the church at Ephesus years after Paul spent this time with the elders there?
- As believers go for the salvation of others with the Word of God, what practical ways can we guard our hearts from the sin that entangles us and stay alert to persecution and opposition?
- Dr. Platt emphasized how throughout Scripture, God calls His people “sheep,” a relatively dumb animal, as opposed to a stronger, braver animal such as a tiger. How does this truth change the way you view yourself—and others—as you care for the Church?
- How is the point about devotion to prayer and the Word under “To the Church in Seattle...” the foundation or starting point for the other points in the message?
- How does selfishness, such as materialism, pride, and greed, destroy the Church? How can you intentionally commit to being more sacrificial with your life and the way you spend your time this week?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from the message?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

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Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.

Weekly Prayer Focus ... (from the worship guide)

- ***Global:*** *This week, we are praying for Andrew and Kim Arthur and our church planters to Seattle. We are also praying for Brook Hills teams in Atlanta and India.*
- ***Lives and Church:*** *Thank God this week for His providence. Praise Him for His blessing and all the resources He has provided to our faith family.*
- ***Local:*** *This week, we are praying for Truth in Love Ministry, a ministry that equips members of local churches to provide Biblical counseling to one another. We are also praying for Liberty Baptist, Chelsea, Tim Cox, pastor.*