

## Small Group Guide

# THE CENTERPIECE OF ALL HISTORY AND THE DETERMINANT OF OUR ETERNITY

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The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

April 1, 2012

Matthew 26-27

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and 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 with 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 review 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 for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)*

### Message Outline

#### Remember the holiness of God.

- He is sovereign over all. (Ps. 24:1-2)
  - We have denounced His sovereignty.
- He is righteous above all. (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 145:17)
  - We have despised His righteousness.
- He is just in all His wrath.
  - We have disregarded His wrath.
- He is loving toward all His creation. (1 Jn. 4:16)
  - We have denied His love. (Rom. 2:4)
- So how can a righteous God be *loving* to rebellious sinners who are due His *wrath*? (Prov. 17:15)
  - God's forgiveness of our sin is a threat to His character. (Rom. 3:25)
  - Before the cross is for anyone else's sake, the cross is for God's sake. (Jn. 12:27-28)

#### Tremble at the horror of wickedness.

- Jewish leaders: Rejecting, arresting, accusing, and judging the Son of God.
- Roman leaders: Sentencing and crucifying the Son of God.

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- Soldiers: Stripping, scourging, mocking, beating, and spitting on the Son of God.
- Crowds: Ridiculing, reviling, and shouting at the Son of God.
- Disciples: Betraying, denying, disobeying, scattering, and deserting the Son of God.

### Behold the humility of Christ.

- Substitution: Jesus died our death.
  - He is the Passover lamb (Exodus 12) who saves us with His blood.
  - He is the covenant keeper (Exodus 24) who seals us with His blood.
  - Before the cross, we were headed to eternal death; because of the cross, we now have eternal life.
- Propitiation: Jesus endured our condemnation.
  - The cup of the cross is not primarily physical suffering; it is predominantly spiritual suffering. (Ps. 75:8; Is. 51:17)
  - Jesus was not a coward about to face Roman soldiers; He was a Savior about to experience divine wrath.
  - Before the cross, we were afraid of God; because of the cross, we are now friends of God.
- Reconciliation: Jesus suffered our separation.
  - The cry on the cross...
    - NOT a cry of unbelief, confusion, or despair.
    - A cry of physical agony, spiritual anguish, and relational alienation.
  - The curse of the cross...
    - Jesus was cut off from the Father's favorable presence.
    - Jesus was given the full recompense of our disobedience. (2 Cor. 5:21)
  - Before the cross, we were cast out of God's presence; because of the cross, we are now invited into God's presence.

### Surrender your heart to God.

### Proclaim the hope of the gospel.

## Message Summary

The message of the gospel is not just a message of great beauty, but is also a message of great tension. The beauty of the gospel cannot be fully understood without an understanding of the incredible tension between a holy God and a sinful human race. God is utterly and unimaginably holy. He is ultimately sovereign and completely righteous; He is just and therefore despises sin and cannot allow it to go un-judged, lest His very character be put at risk. His wrath against sin is always inevitable and just. Yet, at the same time, He is loving and He desires to show His love to a sinful world. This sinful world is wicked at its core, even falsely judging, crucifying, and deserting God's only Son. God in the flesh came to our world, and we not only ignore His teaching, we live in the same wickedness that crucified Him. The ultimate tension of the gospel, then, is "How can a righteous and just God be loving to rebellious sinners who are rightfully due His wrath?"

The answer to that question lies in the humble actions of Christ, the Savior. As sinners, we deserve death, but Christ took that death sentence upon Himself. As a holy and perfect, Jesus took our sin and judgment upon Himself, which separated Him from the Father. He appeased the rightful wrath of God on our behalf through His crucifixion. Because of His death, He fully paid the price for sin. As a result, the righteous Father can respond lovingly to us and reconcile us to Himself forever as friends.

## Group Discussion

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?).

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- How does our human understanding of wrath cause us to question or see God's wrath as problematic?
- What does that say about our understanding of His holiness?
- Why can the gospel not be fully grasped without an understanding of the utter holiness of God?
- Whom have we typically understood the cross to benefit? How does this limited understanding point to a human-centered view of the gospel?
- How does a realization that the cross was primarily for the justice and righteousness of God point to a God-centered view of the gospel? How does it impact our view of our need for salvation and inability to do anything about it?
- How can we clearly communicate the role of Christ's crucifixion in relationship to the Father's holiness when we present the gospel to others?
- What is the appropriate response to the truth that Christ not only died the physical death we deserved, but He endured the spiritual condemnation and wrath of God on our behalf?
- How does the holiness of God reveal our own inherent and great wickedness?
- Who can you relate to the most in the text, the Jewish leaders, the Roman leaders, the soldiers, the crowds, or the disciples? Why?
- What was Christ's attitude toward His impending crucifixion? How did He approach the pain that He knew was coming? What led Him to respond the way He did?
- Why do we most often seem to focus on Jesus' physical suffering than Jesus' separation from the Father?
- How does the realization that the cross was predominantly a spiritual suffering over a physical suffering affect the way that we view the Crucifixion?
- How should this truth impact the way that we share the gospel and the way we view spiritual separation from the Father?
- Describe how the crucifixion of Christ speaks to the holiness and loving character of God. How should this affect the way we respond to God's invitation to come into His presence?
- What is the difference between "asking Jesus into your heart" and "surrendering your heart to Him?"
- How should the truths of this passage compel us to proclaim the hope of the gospel? Who do you know that needs to hear these truths? How will you pray for them? How will you make yourself available to share with them?

## ***Respond . . .***

*Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of today's study. 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 this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/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 study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church..

## ***Weekly Prayer Focus ... (from our worship guide)***

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- *Lives: As we study this week the events leading up to and including Jesus' death on the cross, praise God for sovereignly orchestrating his plan for salvation. Pray that we would honor him by worshiping him with our best. Pray that, as we celebrate the Lord's Supper together each week, we would remember his body broken for us and blood poured out for us. Ask for him to embolden us to stand as witnesses of the gospel. Pray for his strength to endure our own sufferings as we identify with Christ. Ultimately, Pray that many around the world will hear the story of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and come to confess as the centurion did that he is truly the Son of God.*
- *City: This week we are praying for Mountain Brook Community Church, Tim Kallam, Pastor. We are also praying for the ministry of Biblical Institute of Marriage. Founded by Brook Hills' members, Alonza and Vanessa Jones, BIM teaches couples how to mentor other couples, helps couples rekindle their marriage through Bible-centered retreats, and gives hope and biblical raining on marriage to inner city teenagers.*
- *World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills' Church Planters Chris and Leah M. who were part of the Brook Hills' church planting residency program and have been serving in East Asia for approximately 7 months. Chris and Leah are working among an unreached people group that is primarily Muslim and have never heard the gospel.*